The Mystery of the Ten Lost Tribes:
A Critical Survey of Historical and Archaeological Records relating to the People of Israel in Exile in Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia up to ca. 300 BCE

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By

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CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS

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To my husband Max

my children: Danny, Adrian, Leora and her husband Nigel

and my grand daughters: Amber and Marnie

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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A book seems to take on a life of its own once it is written and published. The more I think back, the more people I feel indebted to for this work coming to fruition.

I could go back to my school days and the wonderful teachers I had for learning the Bible, followed by the inimitable Professor Maurice Goldman at the University of Melbourne, all of whom instilled in me the love of the Bible. Later on, once pursuing a higher degree, Dr J. A. Thompson continued the development of this interest in the study of biblical history, enriched by the learning of the archaeology of the Bible.

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My gratitude also extends to my students, who enjoyed the introduction of Biblical texts into the study of Modern Hebrew literature, especially when the topic lent itself to comparative discussions of the characters in a poem or narrative text in fiction and in the original text of the Bible.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*
ABC	Anchor Bible Commentaries
ABL	*Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum*
ADD	*Assyrian Deeds and Documents Recording the Transfer of Property, Including the So-Called Private Contracts, Legal Decisions and Proclamations Preserved in the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum, Chiefly of the 7th Century BC,* 2nd edn
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AHI I	*Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions,* Vol. 1
ANE	Ancient Near East/Eastern
*ANET*3	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd edn
ARAB	*Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*
ARU	*Assyrische Rechtsurkunden im Umschrift und Uebersetzung, nebst einem Index der Personen-Namen und Rechtserläuterungen*
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
b. Megillah	*Babylonian Talmud Megillah*
b. Sukkah	*Babylonian Talmud Sukkah*
b. Yoma	*Babylonian Talmud Yoma*
BA	*The Biblical Archaeologist*
BARev	*Biblical Archaeologist Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBLAK	*Beiträge zur biblischen Landes-und Altertumskunde*

Bib	*Biblica*
BM	*British Museum number*
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BR	*Bible Review*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CTN III	*Cuneiform Tablets from Nimrud III: The Tablets from Fort Shalmaneser*
EI	*Eretz Israel*
EM	*Entziklopedia Mikrait [Biblical Encyclopedia]*
FRLANT	*Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
ISBE	*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
J. Gittin	*Talmud Yerushalmi (Jerusalem) Gittin*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
Jos. Ant.	*The Antiquities of the Jews,* Josephus
Jos. Apion	*Against Apion,* Josephus
Jos. Wars	*The Wars of the Jews,* Josephus
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*

JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
KJV	*King James Version*
KS	*Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*
m. Aboth	*Mishnah Aboth*
m. Baba Batra	*Mishnah Baba Batra*
m. Baba Kama	*Mishnah Baba Kama*
ND	*Nimrud Documents*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Journal*
PF	*Persopolis Fortification*
RA	*Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
SAA	*State Archives of Assyria*
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
ScrH	*Scripta Hierosolymitana*
TA	*Tel Aviv*
TUAT	*Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
WZKM	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZKTh	*Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*

INTRODUCTION

It can hardly be claimed that there is anything novel in an attempt to trace the story of Israel and Judah in exile in countries to the east of Land of Israel. Still, the story needs to be re-told from time to time, because of advances in our understanding of the ancient Near East (ANE).

It is the aim of this book to trace the history of Israel and Judah in exile from Davidic times to about the middle of the 3rd century BCE. The area of concern stretches from Syria (Aram) to Iran (Persia) and includes both north and south Mesopotamia, i.e. Assyria and Babylonia.

We have undertaken to re-consider the discussions of an earlier generation of scholars, to assemble the historical material that has been available for many years, and to present it in a systematic manner. More recently, new material has been published. Indeed, there is a continuing process of discovery. Archaeological work is shedding new light on hitherto unexplored areas of history. Documentary evidence that has become available more recently is used to supplement the records that were available to earlier scholars.

Sources of Information

In this book, Israel and Judah are treated separately. The first major source of information considered is the Bible. The biblical records are then supplemented by the annals of those nations in whose midst the captives dwelt, namely Assyria, Babylonia and Persia. Attention is also drawn to material in the books of the Apocrypha, in the Talmud and in the Midrash. This latter material, especially, requires critical examination as to its authenticity and historical accuracy. Furthermore, the work of the Jewish historian, Josephus, is taken into account.

Other invaluable sources of information are the tablet records, ostraca, seals and coins that have been found during archaeological excavations in Assyria, Babylonia and Persia, some of which have been discovered only in recent times.

Scholarly interest was renewed after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. In the eleven caves near Qumran, north-west of the Dead

Sea, parts of more than 700 ancient Jewish manuscripts were discovered. These had been written in the same period as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, mostly in Hebrew, with a lesser number in Aramaic and even fewer in Greek. The Dead Sea Scrolls, as they came to be known, are assumed to have been the library of a sectarian community at Qumran. The scrolls survived the Roman ravaging of Judea in the years 68-70 CE, because they were hidden in caves. They have been a major focus of scholarly and general interest for the last half-century.[1]

This period lies outside the purview of our book. However, an important aspect of the Dead Sea Scrolls is that they were discovered in a known archaeological and sociological context, firmly fixing them in the Second Temple period. Before 1947, only medieval, Christian manuscripts of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were known, and they could be dated only on the basis of details contained in them. This is not always a dependable procedure. The Dead Sea Scrolls, stemming from a clearly established archaeological context, are vital in dating the writings accurately.[2]

While historically, these periods fall outside the dates covered in this study, it should be mentioned that the author is aware of the significance and importance of the various texts, discoveries and research in the area that throw more light on the time with which we are dealing.

Lest we stray from the area of the people of Israel in exile, it may be worth mentioning that while many of the works were written in the land of Israel, in Aramaic or Hebrew, others were written in Greek, and these Jewish Greek writings were produced and widespread in the Jewish diaspora of the time.

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[1] Michael E. Stone, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2001 [cited July 2011]). Available from http://www.mfa.gov.il/.

[2] For an excellent discussion of the writings of the time that throws further light on the period, refer to Michael E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). For further study, it is interesting to refer to the earliest of the texts (Enoch) that may deal with the sects during the period of our timeframe of interest.

Sequence Followed

This book consists of chapters which can be read either in sequence or individually. In each enough references are given to related points found in the other chapters. The book as a whole follows a roughly chronological historical sequence. Commencing with the earliest contacts outside the borders of Israel and Judah, evidence of trade with other nations and migration is carefully considered. In particular, references to various captivities and to exiles living in other lands are collected. The discussion traces contacts with Aram, Assyria, Babylonia and Persia. After exploring early contacts with Aram, Israel and Judah are considered separately. Firstly, the biblical material relating to contacts between both Judah and Israel and other nations is examined, and then any non-biblical material. The distribution of the Jews in those areas to which they moved is investigated. Subsequent movements are considered, for example, as to whether any northern Israelite captives were eventually to be found among the Babylonian exiles. Finally, the fate of those who remained dispersed throughout the Near East, who came to be known as the 'ten lost tribes' is investigated. Recent attempts to retrace the wanderings of the ancient Israelites by isolating genetically-borne diseases peculiar to modern Jewish communities are also surveyed.[3] The discussion concludes shortly after the end of the Achaemenid rule in Persia, upon the threshold of the coming of Alexander the Great of Macedon and the Hellenistic era.

It will be seen that this inquiry maintains an approach not usually encountered in biblical scholarship, in that we recount the history of Israel by utilising the biblical records largely intact. The reliability, historicity, literary purpose, and veracity of the biblical accounts are then tested in the light of contemporaneous ANE archaeological and literary evidence. This approach has produced interesting results, and it is felt that the picture emerging may contribute in some degree towards clarifying many questions and enigmas surrounding the wanderings of the people of Israel and Judah from their land.

In order to present an adequate picture of history, a degree of objective scholarship is required and, in writing the history of the ancient past, one must of necessity plunder the treasures gathered by others. It is hoped,

[3] The author is well aware of the great strides and developments made in the area of genetics. This is not claiming to be a study of the latest findings in this area, but it was felt that the topic needs to be mentioned, even briefly, in the context of 'following' and tracing the people in exile and the far-flung places they reached.

however, that by examining previous reports in the light of new discoveries and additional source material, some new horizons may be opened regarding this very interesting and important period in the life of the Jewish nation. That alone justifies such an inquiry.

As wisely quoted in the correspondence between Judge Frankfurter and Franklin D. Roosevelt:

> If the judgement of time must be corrected by that of posterity, it is no less true that the judgement of posterity must be corrected by that of time.[4]

[4] James W. Vice, *The Reopening of the American Mind: On Skepticism and Constitutionalism* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998) 216.

Section I

Israel, Judah and Aram

CHAPTER 1

CONTACTS WITH ARAM

From what the Bible tells us, and from what we find in ancient documents, the communities of Israel and Judah were not insular. Contact with the outside world took place constantly, and people obviously moved from place to place for various reasons. Contacts with Aram are recorded frequently, and even where it is not specifically mentioned that people from Israel left their country or were taken from it, it is quite fair to surmise, as we shall see, that this did take place.[1]

After the fall of the Hittite Empire (late 12th century), and with the weakening of such powers as Egypt and Assyria, the Arameans, who had for some centuries already settled in the Fertile Crescent, formed a number of small city-states, and eventually formed a coalition in Syria and northern Transjordan, first under the major kingdom of Aram-Zobah, and later under Aram-Damascus. We find evidence of Aramean penetration as far as northern and north-eastern Palestine; names like Beth-Rehob or perhaps Tob, and later the satellite states Maacah and Geshur, come to mind.[2]

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[1] For an introduction to Aram see Wayne T. Pitard, 'Aram (Place)', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 338–341. There is not a vast amount of literature concerning Aram (see Gotthard G. G. Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels zu den aramäischen Staaten in der israelitisch-judäischen Königszeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 1989) 268, n. 2), and even less deals with the relations between Israel and Aram, actually looking at the people involved in these relations and thus not at movements of people between the countries.

[2] Benjamin Mazar, 'The Aramean Empire and Its Relations with Israel', *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies*, eds Benjamin Mazar, Shmuel Ahituv and Baruch A. Levine (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986) 151–172; Wayne T. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus: A Historical Study of the Syrian City-State from Earliest Times until Its Fall to the Assyrians in 732 BCE* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 87–89. For a detailed discussion see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 68–74.

Aram only gradually became the influential empire that eventually replaced the Phoenician influence under which Israel had previously stood. Therefore, Phoenicia[3] will be treated in this chapter alongside Aram. Archaeological explorations of Aram and of Phoenicia themselves are, however, as yet, only just beginning.[4]

Relations between Israel and Aram in the Days of King David (ca. 1005–965 BCE)[5]

With David's rise to power, some dramatic changes took place in Israel, as he made one important conquest after another.[6] Not least among these was his victory over Hadadezer the Aramean, king of Aram-Zobah.[7] In 2 Samuel 8:3–7, we read that:

> David smote also Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to establish his dominion at the river Euphrates. And David took from him a thousand and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen; and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for a hundred chariots. And when the Arameans of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David smote of the Arameans two and twenty

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[3] For an introduction to Phoenicia see Brian Peckham, 'Phoenicia, History Of', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 349–357; Philip C. Schmitz, 'Phoenician Religion', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 357–363.

[4] Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 BCE* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 531.

[5] We will mainly use the chronology laid forth in *Mordechai Cogan, 'Chronology', ABD, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols*, 1002–1011, for consistency's sake. The issue of chronology is not relevant to our argument.

[6] Abraham Malamat, 'A Political Look at the Kingdom of David and Solomon and Its Relations with Egypt', *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays* (Tokyo: Yamakawa-Shuppansha, 1982) 192–196. For a short survey of the consolidation of the state of Israel under David and Solomon, see Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988) 137–143. Actually Saul had already started to fight against the kings of Zobah (1 Sam. 14:47).

[7] Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 95, argues that 'control of the trade routes was probably one of the major factors in the conflict between Zobah and Israel', thus the importance of this victory. *Cf.* Mazar, '*Aramean Empire*', 156, who says that 'to gain control over the "King's Highway" ' was the policy of the kings of Damascus from Hadadezer on.

> thousand men. Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus; and the Arameans became servants to David, and brought presents. And the LORD gave victory to David whithersoever he went. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.[8]

In spite of the fact that David destroyed much of the plunder, there was also much that he kept: horsemen and footmen are listed as having been taken prisoner. On the other hand, on occasions where the Arameans had the upper hand, they would have taken prisoners from Israel into their own land. Furthermore, we read that David established garrisons in Damascus, which, as a junction of five important trade routes, was an international trade centre,[9] and these would have been manned by his soldiers. Here, too, there is evidence of the infiltration of people from Israel into these lands. The same is true for the cities of Berothai, Tibhath and Cun (2 Sam. 8:8; 1 Chron. 18:8), where David mined copper.[10] David's victories impressed the enemy, and it seems that Aram did not trouble Israel again until the time of Rezon, after the reign of David. Rezon was a military functionary in the militia of Hadadezer, who deserted his master's forces following their defeat at David's hand, and established a force at Damascus during Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 11:23–25).[11] At that time, the leadership over the Aramean states was transferred from Aram-Zobah into his hands at Aram-Damascus.[12]

Another reason for migrating was in order to seek refuge. The flight of David to neighbouring countries when Saul was pursuing him, or his parents' sojourn in Moab for fear of King Saul, are cases in point. Many other individuals may have had reasons for fleeing their own country and settling, whether for a time or permanently, in neighbouring countries. The area around Syria would have been a very likely refuge for the more northerly tribes, especially Naphtali, Asher, Zebulun, the Danites in the north, and Manasseh across the Jordan.[13]

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[8] English Bible passages are quoted from *The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955).
[9] Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 86.
[10] Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 84; *cf.* Mazar, '*Aramean Empire*', 156.
[11] Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 95f.
[12] *Cf.* Mazar, '*Aramean Empire*', 157.
[13] For the practice of the handling of refugees see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 101f.

Intermarriage with the nations all around must have also led to movement from one country to another. We know that kings intermarried with the neighbouring royal families in order to establish diplomatic alliances, and sometimes to avoid costly battles. David's marriage to Maacah (2 Sam. 3:3), daughter of Talmai, the king of Geshur, is one such example. There is no reason to doubt that this happened in many other affluent families not of royal stock. Such a practice would have led to Israelites settling outside their country.

Also, in times of famine, people moved from place to place, seeking 'greener pastures', a practice that is recorded as early as the time of Abraham and Jacob. The story of Ruth, which is dated in the Bible as in 'the days when the Judges judged',[14] gives famine as the reason for Elimelech and his wife settling in Moab, and tells of how their sons took Moabite girls for wives. The language and customs were similar enough in those areas to make these movements readily acceptable, should the necessity arise.[15]

Relations between Israel and Aram in the Days of King Solomon (ca. 968–928 BCE)

Solomon inherited a large kingdom from his father:

> And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt; they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life. (1 Kgs 5:1)

The summary description of the vast extent of Solomon's empire is buffeted by the many accounts of Israel's international relations, with Aram, Egypt, Tyre (i.e. Phoenicia), Kue (Keveh) in southern Anatolia (whence Solomon imported horses), and Ophir.[16] As the borders of the

[14] Ruth 1:1.

[15] For an introduction to Moab see J. Maxwell Miller, 'Moab (Place)', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 882–893. For the Moabite language, see John C. L. Gibson and John F. Healey, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions. Vol. I: Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 71–74.

[16] Malamat, '*A Political Look at the Kingdom of David and Solomon and Its Relations with Egypt*', 190; Herbert Donner, 'The Interdependence of Internal Affairs and Foreign Policy during the Davidic-Solomonic Period (with Special

state spread, so did its commerce. It was during this period that the Phoenicians went far towards developing sea trade in the Mediterranean.[17] To some extent, the Israelites took part in this development, especially in the northern tribes of Asher, Naphtali and Dan, together with their Phoenician neighbours in Tyre and Sidon.[18] Having achieved supremacy in the Mediterranean, the Tyrians sought to establish sea trade along the African and Arabian coasts. In this venture, Solomon[19] participated by allowing the Tyrians overland passage through Israel to the Red Sea Gulf, where a port was secured at Ezion–Geber. Clearly, the venture benefited both kingdoms, with various descriptions of fleets returning laden with silver, ivory, gold, precious stones, and *almug* wood, as well as exotic animals such as apes and baboons (1 Kgs 9:26–28; 10:11 – 12:22).[20]

Solomon's kingdom also served as a contact between Egypt and Syria for horse-trading. For example, in 1 Kgs 10:28–29, we read (*cf.* 2 Chron. 1:16–17):

> And the horses which Solomon had were brought out of Egypt; also out of Keveh, the king's merchants buying them of the men of Keveh at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty; and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Aram, did they bring them out by their means.

Regard to the Phoenician Coast)', *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Tokyo: Yamakawa-Shuppansha, 1982) 205–214.

[17] An interesting example of travel and communication throughout the ANE is seen in the story of Wen-Amon's journey to Phoenicia ca. 1,100 BCE: *ANET*[3], 25–29. 'Wen-Amon, an official of the temple of Amon at Karnak, tells how he was sent to Byblos on the Phoenician coast to procure lumber for the ceremonial barge of the god' (p. 25).

[18] It must be remembered that the Israelite towns of Abel and Dan were less than twenty miles away from Tyre, and already in the Song of Deborah we read of Dan's dealings in navigation (Judg. 5:17). Jacob Lewy, ישראל בעמים *[Israel among the Nations]* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved Publication, 1956).
Already David had a friendly relationship to Tyre from where he was even sent Cedar trees and carpenters and masons for his building activities (2 Sam. 5:11f).

[19] Besides shared economical interests Solomon is also reported to have loved Sidonian women and to have gone after their goddess Ashtoreth (1 Kgs 11:1, 5).

[20] J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: SCM Press, 1986) 212–213; Y. Ikeda, 'Solomon's Trade in Horses and Chariots in Its International Setting', *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Tokyo: Yamakawa-Shuppansha, 1982) 219–220.

Whereas Egypt was famed for the making of lavishly ornamented chariots for processional and ceremonial use, for collection and display, or for gifts and tribute, it needed to import much of the different kinds of wood required for their fashioning. Syria's abundance of lumber would have facilitated the involvement of Israel as the intermediary in this trade.[21]

Towards the end of his reign, it becomes clear that Solomon's hold over his vast territory weakened, although to what extent we do not know.[22] Edom under Hadad, which had been conquered by David, may have recovered its independence. It is uncertain to what extent the accession to the Egyptian throne of the aggressive Libyan chief, Shishak, around 931 BCE, played a part in the rebellion of Hadad, whose links with Egypt are attested in 1 Kings 11:14–22. With the rise of Rezon to power in Aram-Damascus, and his hostilities towards Solomon, it is possible that both Zobah and Damascus were lost. However, it is worth mentioning that the Chronicler reports that King Solomon actually built cities in Syria:

> And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it. And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store-cities, which he built in Hamath. (2 Chron. 8:3–4)

Here is another instance where Israelite citizens almost certainly travelled into Aram from Israel. Even though it may be argued that the bulk of the labour would have been taken from the conquered area, the supervisors and overseers of the building, as well as the highly skilled people in the work required, would most likely have been brought over from Jerusalem. Again, one might argue that their sojourn was a temporary one, but it is reasonable to assume that a number of people did migrate permanently.

An explicit case of this, though concerning Phoenicia, is stated when King Solomon actually brought a man of the tribe of Naphtali from Tyre to work on the temple:

> And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and

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[21] Ikeda, '*Solomon's Trade in Horses and Chariots in Its International Setting*', 224–225.

[22] John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd edn (London: SCM Press, 1981) 213f; *cf.* Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 96f.

> skill, to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work. (1 Kgs 7:13–14)

Here is an example of a man of the tribe of Naphtali who lived in Tyre, whose mother was an Israelite and whose father was Tyrian, and who was called back to Jerusalem to work on the temple.[23]

Israel[24] and Aram up to the Days of Omri

In the following era, border quarrels between Israel and Judah, once Solomon's kingdom had been divided into two parts, were used to its own advantage by Aram, to work towards regaining independence and even exercising influence on Israel.[25]

After the initial rise to power under Rezon, Damascus continued to gain strength, and became not only the well recognised leader of the Aramean states, but also a power to be reckoned with by all the surrounding states. It is thus not surprising to read that Asa, king of Judah (908–867 BCE), called on Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, for help against Baasha, king of Israel (906–883 BCE).[26]

> And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants; and king Asa sent them to Ben-Hadad, the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Aram, that dwelt at Damascus, saying: 'There is a league between me and thee, between my father and thy

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[23] For Hiram's role in the commercial and diplomatic relations between Israel and Tyre, see G. Bunnens, 'Commerce et Diplomatie Phéniciens au Temps de Hiram I e r de Tyr', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1976) 1–31.

[24] After the division of Solomon's kingdom following his death into a southern kingdom (Judah) and a northern kingdom (Israel), the northern kingdom naturally had by far more contact with Aram than Judah because of its geographical closeness. This will be obvious in the following paragraphs, where Judah will be mentioned only in the few instances where it is involved with Aram itself.

[25] Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 106f; *cf.* p. 117.

[26] Merrill F. Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans of Damascus: A Study in Archaeological Illumination of Bible History* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1957) 57ff.

> father; behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.' And Ben-Hadad hearkened unto Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah. (1 Kgs 15:16–21)

Technically, it seems that the Syrian invasions of Israel began with this king. Mazar thinks that under Ben-Hadad, apart from being harried in the north, Israel also lost some territory across the Jordan, north of the Yarmuk.[27] As a result of these events, again prisoners must have been taken from the captured towns. As cities changed hands, it would seem to be almost inevitable that many families were involved, and even if they were to continue living in their own homes, the new contact with the conquering Arameans must have made for movement into their country for various reasons.

The Time of Omri (882–871 BCE)

Due to his religious sins, Omri does not perhaps receive the important place he deserves from the writers of the Old Testament. Obviously, his name travelled far. He became famous for the building of the new capital, Samaria (1 Kgs 16:23f),[28] and even after the House of Omri had been

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[27] *Cf.* Mazar, '*Aramean Empire*', 158f. Mazar thinks that 1 Chron. 2:23 deals with the time after Baasha's death. J. Maxwell Miller, 'Geshur and Aram', *JNES*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1969) 61, however, doubts this.

[28] Chosen, according to D. N. Pienaar, 'The Role of Fortified Cities in the Northern Kingdom during the Reign of the Omride Dynasty', *JNSL*, Vol. 9 (1981) 151–157, for reasons of strategy and safety, also reflecting his rather positive attitude towards the Phoenicians and a reserved one towards the Arameans (*cf.* D. N. Pienaar, 'Aram and Israel during the Reigns of Omri and Ahab Reconsidered', *Journal for Semitics*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1994) 34-45). Albrecht Alt, *Der Stadtstaat Samaria*, Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-Historische Klasse 101, 5 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954) (= Albrecht Alt, 'Der Stadtstaat Samaria', *KS*, Vol. 3 (München: C. H. Beck, 1953) 3 vols, 258–302) considers Samaria to be a city state, created in order to deal with the Israelite–Canaanite problems. For archaeology, see Mazar, *Archaeology*, 406ff; Nahman Avigad, 'Samaria (City)', *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, eds Ephraim Stern, Ayelet Lewinson-Gilboa and Joseph Aviram, Vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Carta, 1993) 4 vols, 1300–1310.

purged, Assyrian documents[29] still refer to the northern kingdom as *Bīt-Ḫumrî*, that is, House of Omri. The Moabite Stone[30] tells of his military successes against Mesha, king of Moab. Against Damascus, however, he did not succeed. This is not reported directly regarding Omri, but we gather this information when we read about Ahab:

> And [Ben-Hadad] said unto him {Ahab}:[31] 'The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria.' 'And I [, said Ahab,] will let thee go with this covenant.' (1 Kgs 20:34)

This record seems to indicate that Omri was forced to give the king of Damascus a number of towns, and also make provision within Samaria itself, for a number of bazaars for Aramean merchants. Whether 'thy father' literally refers to Omri, or to one of the previous kings, is not certain.[32] M. F. Unger further argues that Ben-Hadad's use of the expression, *Samaria*, 'is to be understood as formulaic'—that the name was transferred to the northern kingdom of which it was the capital. 'The commercial privileges to which the Syrian king made reference may well have been established in Tirzah, Shechem, or some other Israelite towns'.[33] If this were so, and there are reasons for believing that it may well have been, since these other towns had long held places of prominence in the land, one can assume that there was even greater contact between the Israelites and the Arameans, and more inter-communication than is generally realised.

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[29] *ANET*[3], 284f.

[30] Stela, discovered at Dhiban (ancient Moabite site, east of the Dead Sea) in 1868, containing a 35-line inscription of Mesha, king of Moab. For text and further details see *ANET*[3] 320f, plate 274; J. A. Dearman and G. L. Mattingly, 'Mesha Stele', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 708f.

[31] The square brackets are found in the bible edition used. The word in {} is inserted by the author.

[32] Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans*, 61. Unger thinks that these towns may have been wrested from Israel during the reign of Jeroboam I (928–907 BCE) or Nadab (907–906 BCE). Bright, *A History of Israel*, 240f, agrees with this theory, though thinking 'that the Arameans had taken advantage of Israel's weakness during Baasha's reign or during the civil war following it', and supports it with the argument that the fact of Omri's being free to campaign in the south implies quiet on the northern borders (pp. 242f). However, for a completely different chronology see n. 34 below.

[33] Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans*, 61.

The Omride Dynasty after the Time of Omri

That there was both commercial and political contact between Ahab, Omri's son (873–852 BCE), and Ben-Hadad is clear from 1 Kings 20:[34]

> And Ben-Hadad the king of Aram gathered all his host together; and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses and chariots; and he went up and besieged Samaria, and fought against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel, into the city, and said unto him: 'Thus saith Ben-Hadad: Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine.' And the king of Israel answered and said: 'It is according to thy saying, my lord, O King: I am thine, and all that I have.' And the messengers came again, and said: 'Thus speaketh Ben-Hadad, saying: I sent indeed unto thee, saying: Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; but I will send my servants unto thee tomorrow about this time, and they shall search thy house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put in their hand, and take it away.'
>
> Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said: 'Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief; for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not.' And all the elders and all the people said unto him: 'Hearken thou not, neither consent.'
>
> …And they went out at noon. But Ben-Hadad was drinking himself drunk in the booths, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-Hadad sent out, and they told him, saying: 'There are men come out from Samaria.' And he said: 'Whether they are come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they are come out for war, take them alive.' So these went out of the city, the young men of the princes of the provinces, and the army which followed them. And they slew everyone his man; and the Arameans fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-Hadad the king of Aram escaped on a horse with horsemen. And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Arameans with a great slaughter. And the prophet came near to the king of Israel, and said unto

[34] The question of whether these events are to be placed in the time of Ahab or later under Joahaz (817-800 BCE) or Joash (800-784 BCE) does not contribute much to the issues we are concerned with here. For the discussion and bibliography of it see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 123ff. The same is true of the questions of chronology and names of the Aramean kings of the 9th century. For a detailed list of attempts undertaken towards a solution see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 113ff and 139ff.

> him: 'Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest; for at the return of the year the king of Aram will come up against thee'.

The prophet's words came true, and the two kings engaged in battle again a year later at Aphek, where the Israelites again won a victory over the Arameans. It was then that:

> [Ben-Hadad] said unto him [to Ahab]: 'The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore…' (1 Kgs 20:34)[35]

According to this record, it is evident that at the end of this battle which spelt victory for Israel, Ahab and Ben-Hadad became allies, probably due to the expediency of such a move in the face of the rising threat of the Assyrian power.[36] Israel and Aram were partners in a coalition of twelve nations that took part in the battle of Qarqar on the Orontes in 853 BCE, in an attempt to check the advance of the common threat of Assyria under Shalmaneser III (858–824).[37]

Two significant features of this report may be noted. Firstly, there is a mention of captives. Among other items which Ben-Hadad demanded were wives and children of the king. This was a regular practice in the ancient world. When conquerors demanded gifts or ransom, people were included. Secondly, Ahab is here reported as having 'streets in Damascus' such as the Arameans had in Samaria, in other words, reciprocal trading-posts.[38] This would undoubtedly have involved the movement of merchants to and fro, but the possibility of a more permanent settlement outside their own country, for some, should also be proposed.

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[35] See p. 13 above.

[36] The reason for these wars with Israel might in fact have been the Assyrian threat. Perhaps Ben-Hadad wanted to secure his rear as preparation to face Shalmaneser (see Mazar, '*Aramean Empire*', 159). According to Mazar, Ben-Hadad, also at that time, united the formerly more loosely connected Aramean states more closely (see vv. 24f) and thus turned Aram into a mighty empire (p. 160). For a different position see Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 152ff.
The major cities of Israel were fortified during the 8th century BCE, probably due to the Assyrian threat. See Mazar, *Archaeology*, 411.

[37] Bright, *A History of Israel*, 243; text from Assyrian Annals which tells of this event in *ANET*[3], 278f.

[38] For Phoenician ivories found in Samaria, possibly dating from Ahab's time see Mazar, *Archaeology*, 505.

The religious influences flowing from Aram and Phoenicia must also have made for contacts between Israel and the peoples of these areas. Ahab himself married Jezebel, the daughter of the Phoenician king, Ethbaal I, and consequently built a temple and altar for Baal in Samaria. Thus, he introduced Baal worship there (1 Kgs 16:31f), as probably did his daughter, Athaliah (842–836 BCE)[39], who was married to the Judean king, Jehoram (851–843 BCE), in Judah (*cf.* 2 Kgs 11:18). However, it was not merely that kings married Phoenician princesses and started to worship their gods, but various classes of the people, and especially the upper strata of Israelite society, must have visited centres of pagan worship.[40]

Zechariah later actually refers to the mourning for Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo (Zech. 12:11). This was probably a religious ceremony derived from the cult practiced in the temple of Hadadrimmon in Damascus. It would be reasonable to assume that when the priest, Uriah, was ordered to build an altar in the temple of Jerusalem, by Ahaz, king of Judah (743–727 BCE) (2 Kgs 16:10–16), he copied the pattern of the altar in the temple of Hadadrimmon. The story about Ahaz also emphasises the 'high esteem in which the Damascene cult was held in Jerusalem':[41]

> He sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him; and he said: 'Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me.' (2 Chron. 28:23)

Aramaic, which later became the *lingua franca* in the Persian Empire, from India to Ethiopia, had already, in the 8th century, spread well beyond the boundaries of Aramaic speaking countries.[42] This fact would have made contacts with Aram very easy, and would have enabled influences from there to easily penetrate cultural, political and religious life in Israel.

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[39] After the death of her son, Athalia took the Judean throne for herself.

[40] Israelites worshipping Aramean and Phoenician gods are reported as early as the time of the judges (Judg. 10:6): 'And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and the gods of Aram, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab…'

[41] Mazar, '*Aramean Empire*', 162; Emil Gottlieb Heinrich Kraeling, *Aram and Israel* (New York: AMS Press, 1966 [1918]) 121, thought, however, that it was an Assyrian altar and that Ahaz by this 'act of servility…hoped to please his lord Tiglath-Pileser'.

[42] For an excellent overview over the development of the Aramaic language see Klaus Beyer, *The Aramaic Language: Its Distribution and Subdivisions* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

Jehu's Dynasty

For a long time (from the time of David to the end of the Omride dynasty), Palestine had been under the political and cultural influence of the Phoenicians. B. Mazar states that traces of this influence, 'viewed against the alliance between the courts of Israel and Tyre, are clearly discernible in Israel's economic, religious, and cultic life, as well as in architecture, court practise, and upper class manners, and are strongly reflected in biblical literature and in material remains discovered throughout the country.'[43]

However, the rising influence of the Aramean Empire under Hazael, together with the bloody purge of Jehu (842–814 BCE) (2 Kgs 9f), witnessed the cessation of the Israel–Tyre alliance, and the waning of Phoenician influence upon Israel and Judah. This purge, which extended to both royal houses, is mentioned in a fragment of a commemorative stela, probably issued by Hazael of Aram, which was recently uncovered at Tel-Dan.[44] It narrates the slaughter of Jehoram of Israel (851–842 BCE) and Ahaziah of Judah (843–842 BCE), attributing their deaths to the Syrian ruler himself. The biblical account describes their deaths at the hand of Jehu, the Israelite usurper. It is possible that Jehu was perceived by Hazael as his agent, just as he was perceived as Yahweh's instrument by the compiler of the biblical narrative.

Due to the rising Aramean influence, great changes occurred in the Israelite culture during the second half of the 9th century, especially towards its end, as archaeological evidence on the one hand and biblical literature on the other hand show. The decline of Phoenician influence meant that the country came under the influence of the 'eclectic culture of the Aramean Empire, which blended ancient Syrian with Phoenician and

[43] Mazar, '*Aramean Empire*', 165. For architecture see Mazar, *Archaeology*, 408, 541; for other archaeological finds like ivories and seals confirming Phoenician and Aramean influence, see pp. 503–507, 518, *cf.* pp. 403f; for political influence see Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 159.

[44] Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, 'The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', *IEJ*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1995) 17–18. The stela does not carry Hazael's name, but he is the most likely candidate for it.

neo-Hittite elements, and also absorbed a constant stream of material and spiritual influence from Assyria.'[45]

During these years, close relationships existed between the court of Damascus and the prophets of Israel, Elijah and even more so Elisha. It seems that Elisha was not only involved in the rise of Jehu in his own country, but also that he had a hand in the military *coup d'état* in which Hazael took over the throne of Damascus (2 Kgs 8:7–15).

The beginning of the story is told in 1 Kings 19:15–17:

> And the LORD said unto him [Elijah]: 'Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus; and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Aram; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay...'

An important feature of the story of Elisha for our current discussion is the reference to a captive maid from Samaria being taken into Syria.[46] This provides a good illustration of the suggestion that has been argued above, that, from time to time, people from Israel were taken as captives to Syria.

> Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and held in esteem, because by him the LORD had given victory unto Aram; he was also a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper. And the Arameans had gone out in bands, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress: 'Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! Then would he recover him of his leprosy.' And he went in, and told his lord, saying: 'Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.' And the king of Aram said: 'Go now, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel.' And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. (2 Kgs 5:1–5)

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[45] Benjamin Mazar, 'The Aramean Empire and Its Relations with Israel', *BA*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1962); *cf.* Pienaar, 'Aram and Israel during the Reigns of Omri and Ahab Reconsidered', 43.

[46] We find this story four chapters before Jehu seizes power. It is a part of the Elisha-cycle, which relates stories of Elisha's life independently of the rest of the composition of the book of Kings. Thus, in some cases, as here, the names of kings are not given.

The reference here that 'the Arameans had gone out in bands' and had taken the girl captive, could imply that small bands of marauders would cross the border into northern towns and take spoils and captives, although the Hebrew word, גדוד, could also imply a military group on a more formal fighting occasion.[47] However, whatever the occasion, the fact remains that this passage refers to 'a little maid' who had been taken captive out of Israel, and was now waiting on the wife of the captain of the host of the king of Aram.

Before many years had passed, Hazael was exerting severe pressure on Israel.[48] He not only gained control over the Aramean countries in northern Syria and the Euphrates region, but also conquered Israelite territories in Transjordan, and succeeded, perhaps, in dominating the King's Highway throughout its length to Elath.[49]

In 815–814, Hazael undertook his great expedition into western Palestine, along the coast to Gath on the border of Judah. When he turned from there towards Jerusalem, Joash, king of Judah (836–798 BCE), was forced to pay him a heavy tribute (2 Kgs 12:18–19, *cf.* 2 Chron. 24:23–25).[50]

Aram had left Israel with a limited area and a very limited army that presented no danger to it (2 Kgs 13:7). The change for the better came to Israel with the increased pressure upon Damascus by the Assyrians, after the death of Hazael:

> And Hazael king of Aram oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. (2 Kgs 13:22)

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[47] 2 Kgs 6:8–23 tells of how the king of Aram tries to capture Elisha because of his involvement in the protection of Israel from Aram, but the latter by his doings in the end stops these Aramean 'bands' altogether.

[48] Probably because he needed the resources of these areas after the devastation of his country by Shalmaneser III. See Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 176f.

[49] 2 Kgs 10:32–33, 'In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short; and Hazael smote them in all the borders of Israel: from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the valley of Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.' *Cf.* Amos 1:3; Kraeling, *Aram and Israel*, 81.

[50] *Cf.* Mazar, '*Aramean Empire*', 167. It is reasonable to suggest that in this campaign, also some people may have been included in the ransom, although they are not specifically itemised in the text.

> And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Aram, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael, continually. And Jehoahaz besought the Lord…And the Lord gave Israel a deliverer, so that they went out from under the hand of the Arameans... (2 Kgs 13:3–5)

This 'deliverer' was none other than the Assyrian king, Adad Nirari III (810–783). Joash, Jehu's grandson, king of Israel (800–784 BCE), fought and won three battles against the Arameans, and took back many towns that had been taken from his father (2 Kgs 13:24f).[51] At this stage, Joash also fought the sister kingdom of Judah. Although he left Amaziah on the throne, he took hostages to ensure the continued subjection of Judah to Israel (2 Kgs 14:8–14). Such a practice was thoroughly in keeping with the custom of the times. Hence, it has been argued that on those occasions where the Arameans subjected Israel or Judah, they, too, took similar hostages into their own land.

A brief return to the illustrious days of David and Solomon took place during the reign of Jeroboam II, Joash's son, (788–747 BCE).[52]

> He [Jeroboam] restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah... (2 Kgs 14:25)

Details of this re-conquest are given in v. 28 of the same chapter:

> Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, for Judah in Israel…

Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor,[53] Galilee and all the land of Naphtali, as well as Dan, all the areas previously conquered by Ben-Hadad I, were now once more part of Israel. M. F. Unger, following H. Grätz, shows that further south in Transjordan, Jeroboam took back territories, since Amos 6:13 may be translated:[54]

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[51] *Cf.* Stephanie Page, 'Joash and Samaria in a New Stela Excavated at Tell al Rimah, Iraq', *VT*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1969) 493–494.
[52] See Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 200.
[53] For the archaeological levels at Hazor, see Mazar, *Archaeology*, 412.
[54] Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans*, 90, n. 42; p. 169. *Cf.* Alfred Jepsen, 'Israel und Damaskus', *AfO*, Vol. 14 (1944) 170; J. Alberto Soggin, 'Amos VI:13–14 und I:3 auf dem Hintergrund der Beziehungen zwischen Israel und Damaskus im 9.

Ye that rejoice in Lo-debar, that say 'Have we not taken to us Qarnaim by our own strength?'

השמחים ללא דבר האמרים הלוא בחזקנו לקחנו לנו קרנים:

The Last Days of Damascus

After the death of Jeroboam in 747 BCE, there was a great deal of internal strife in Israel, as one king after another usurped the throne. Finally Pekah, then king of Israel (735–732 BCE), was persuaded to renew the old alliance with Aram. He and Rezin, king of Aram-Damascus, who had already earlier attacked Judah (2 Kgs 15:37), hoped to hold back the approaching Assyrians with the aid of a coalition including Phoenicia, Philistia, Arab states and Judah. The latter's participation in the pact was needed not only for its added strength, but also in order to ensure contact with Egypt to the south, a stronger nation than themselves, from whom they could hope for some help. However, Judah's king, Ahaz, refused to join,[55] and called on Assyria for help when Aram and Israel threatened him (2 Kgs 16:5–9). The Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser III, came swiftly[56] and laid siege to Damascus. Within a year, in 732 BCE, the city fell. Rezin was killed and his country was laid waste. Hundreds of towns and villages were wiped out, and many citizens were transported to the region of Elam.[57] Also, Israel was restricted to the small territory of the mountains of Ephraim and the capital Samaria.[58] Ten years later, Samaria suffered a fate similar to that of Damascus.

As the fortunes of Israel and Aram are reviewed, it is evident that, during the period from the 10th to the 8th century, there was a great deal of contact between the lands of Aram and Israel, political, commercial and religious. In times of peace, people travelled to and fro for commerce, or, even at times, to seek the advice of a prophet or a healer. In times of war,

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und 8. Jahrhundert', *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971) 433–441.

[55] See ch. 4 below.

[56] Though perhaps not necessarily in reaction to Ahaz' appeal, but as part of a far greater campaign. See Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 185f, and ch. 3 below.

[57] *ANET*[3], 283; also Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 217.

[58] Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels*, 217ff. For an example of a city which obviously changed hands several times, and seems to have finally been destroyed by Tiglath-Pileser in 733 BCE, see Paul W. Lapp, 'Tell Er-Rumeith', *RB*, Vol. 70 (1963) 406–411.

armies crossed the borders into the neighbouring lands, carrying off loot and taking captives. There can be no doubt that over these centuries, many people from Israel found their way to Aram. It might even be conjectured that some of these were later led further afield by the Assyrian conquerors, when they led the Aramean captives away from Damascus.

Section II(a)

Assyria: Israel and Assyria

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL DATA

In order to obtain the complete picture of the sequence of events from the advent of the Assyrian power in Palestine to the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, and its eventual exile, one must combine the biblical narrative with the Assyrian documents and other evidence that is available. With careful research, the pieces of the puzzle start to fall into place, and present a clearer picture both of what actually took place and at what time. The separate pieces of evidence support one another. It is fortunate that there is good documentation both in the Bible and in the Assyrian records.

It is proposed, first of all, to trace the biblical evidence (this chapter) and then to correlate it with additional evidence available from Assyrian records (mainly ch. 3).

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The main biblical evidence comes from the 2 Kings 15–19. Additional information is to be found in the books of Chronicles, as well as in a number of the prophetic books.

The first reference to the Assyrians in the books of Kings is in 2 Kings 15:19–20:

> There came against the land Pul the king of Assyria; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.

The result of the visit of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727),[1] was that heavy tribute was taken from Menahem (747–737).[2] For a time, the king was

[1] Pulu (Pul in the Bible) was his second name, perhaps a 'hypocorism derived from the second element of his name': Albert Kirk Grayson, 'Tiglath-Pileser III to Sargon II (744–705 BC)', *CAH Vol. III Part 2*, 2nd edn, eds John Boardman, I. E. S.

thus able to hold off the Assyrians. The tax which he took, fifty shekels from every man of wealth, is now known to have been the average price for a slave.[3]

That was the first time that an Assyrian army had marched upon the land of Israel. After the death of Menahem, his son Pekahiah (737–735) reigned for only two years, before he was assassinated by an anti-Assyrian faction in his country, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah (735–732),[4] sat upon the throne.

Realising that only in the combined strength of a coalition was there any hope of holding back the powerful Assyrian, he combined with Rezin of Aram.[5] These two kings sought to win over Judah, which, however, could not be convinced, and preferred to remain neutral, whereupon Rezin and Pekah decided to attack it. They succeeded in driving Ahaz, king of Judah, into Jerusalem, where he was besieged. Ahaz called upon Tiglath-Pileser for help (2 Kgs 16:5–9; 2 Chron. 28:16–18). The Assyrian king was not long in coming. Possibly, he was ready to march anyway, when

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Edwards, E. Sollberger and N. G. L. Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 73.

[2] Tiglath-Pileser listed a 'Ra-hi-a-nu' (Rezin) of 'Šá-imēri-šu-a+a' (Damascus), and 'Me-ni-hi-im-me ^{uru}Sa-me-ri-na-a+a' (Menahem of Samaria) among those from whom he exacted tribute: Hayim Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria: Critical Edition, with Introductions, Translations, and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994) 68.

[3] J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, 3rd edn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 139.

[4] The 20 years attributed to Pekah in the biblical text (2 Kgs 15:27) have caused many problems concerning fixing the chronology of the kings of Israel (see e.g. William Foxwell Albright, 'The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel', *BASOR*, No. 100 (1945) 22, n. 26), since Menahem must have reigned at least until 743 BCE if not until 738 BCE (he is listed as having given tribute to Tiglath-Pileser (744–727)—see n. 2 above). After him was the 2 year reign of Pekahiah (v. 23) and Pekah himself was followed by Hoshea. However, Samaria fell around 722 BCE, which does not leave a 20 year reign to Pekah. As Thiele pointed out, these 20 years might be due to a rival reign of Pekah's in Gilead already from the very beginning of Menahem's reign on. Thus, in the 20 years are included not only the years when he actually reigned over the whole of Israel: Edwin Richard Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings: A reconstruction of the Chronology of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah*, rev. edn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 9, 121–140, 181–190.

[5] See ch. 1 above.

the call for help came.[6] In 733, he marched on Israel and Damascus, but approached them from the south, coming through Phoenicia and Gaza. He then turned his attention to Israel:

> In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maacah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. (2 Kgs 15:29)[7]

Damascus was besieged, and fell before the Assyrian king in the following year. Its inhabitants were deported. However, it is the conquest of Israelite territories in the west, north and east, and the deportation of their citizens to Assyria in about 733–732 BCE, some ten years before the fall of Samaria, that is of particular interest for the present study. These areas became the Assyrian provinces of Dor (*Duru*, the Sharon costal plane), Gilead (*Galaza*, the region east of the Jordan) and Megiddo (*Magiddu*, presumably Galilee).[8] Tiglath-Pileser possibly would have gone on to destroy Samaria at the time, had not a pro-Assyrian king, Hoshea (732–724), attained at least a certain amount of power in Israel. Hoshea finally assassinated Pekah, and took the throne in Samaria for himself (2 Kgs 15:30) as an Assyrian vassal.[9]

The biblical account of the final years of the Israelite kingdom has generated much debate, with little scholarly agreement.[10] In chapter three

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[6] See ch. 3 below.

[7] See the archaeological evidence at Hazor of the preparations for the confrontation with the Assyrians and the subsequent fall of the city: Mazar, *Archaeology*, 412–414.

[8] Albrecht Alt, 'Das System der assyrischen Provinzen auf dem Boden des Reiches Israel', *ZDPV*, Vol. 52 (1929) 220–242 = Albrecht Alt, 'Das System der assyrischen Provinzen auf dem Boden des Reiches Israel', *KS*, Vol. 2 (München: C. H. Beck, 1953) 3 vols 188–205). The provincial status of Gilead has recently been questioned by K. Lawson Younger, Jr., 'The Deportations of the Israelites', *JBL*, Vol. 117, No. 2 (1998) 203f.

[9] See ch. 3 below.

[10] See Nadav Na'aman, 'The Historical Background to the Conquest of Samaria (720 BC)', *Bib*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (1990) 206–225, and the bibliography therein. Na'aman who was convincingly rebuked by John H. Hayes and Jeffrey K. Kuan, 'The Final Years of Samaria (730–720 BC)', *Bib*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (1991) 153–181, and Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study*, Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992). Below, we will follow mainly the latter two, who, though on the grounds of different argumentation, come to a similar chronology.

we will attempt a reconstruction that does justice to both the biblical and non-biblical records of Samaria's demise. The biblical verses in question are in 2 Kings 17:3–6:

> Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him presents. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and offered no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.[11]

Probably after the death of Tiglath-Pileser, his son, Shalmaneser V (726–722), came up to secure the western part of his empire, and Hoshea paid him tribute (v. 3).[12] In one of the following years, however, he made overtures to Egypt for help, possibly to Tefnakhte (ca. 727–720) of the 24th Dynasty.[13] This proved to be his downfall. No help came from Egypt, and in the end Hoshea was arrested by the Assyrians and exiled to Assyria.[14]

The biblical text reports further that the Assyrian king 'came up throughout all the land', besieged Samaria, captured it after three years, and exiled 'Israel'. The question of an exact time frame for these events, as well as to whether all these deeds of the 'king of Assyria' are to be

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[11] See also ch. 18:9–11: 'And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the 7th year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it; even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. And the king of Assyria carried Israel away unto Assyria, and put them in Halah, and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.'

[12] See ch. 3 below.

[13] The bible recounts that envoys were sent to 'So, king of Egypt' (2 Kgs 17:4). This might be the Hebrew rendering of *Sais*, Tefnakhte's capital. See John Day, 'The Problem of "So, King of Egypt" in 2 Kings XVII:4', *VT*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (1992) 289–301, and the bibliography therein.

[14] It is not known how exactly the Assyrians took hold of Hoshea. Some scholars think he voluntarily offered a renewed tribute, while others consider this to be highly unlikely. See Hayes and Kuan, 'Final Years of Samaria', 162; Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 51; Na'aman, 'Conquest of Samaria', 218.

ascribed to Shalmaneser V, or the later actions rather to his successor Sargon II (721–705), who repeatedly claimed to have exiled the population of Samaria, will be dealt with in the following chapter, since their solution is largely dependent on a careful interpretation of the Assyrian and Babylonian sources.

> After deporting the leading citizens of Samaria, Sargon brought others from Babylon and from Cuthah, and from Avva, and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. (2 Kgs 17:24)

The subsequent narrative in 2 Kings tells how these new settlers were plagued by lions, and appealed to the Assyrian king for help. This plague was interpreted as a punishment by the god of the land for their worship of foreign gods. The Assyrian king sent back one of the priests who had been taken with the Israelite captivity, to teach them 'the manner of the God of the land' (v. 26). The worship of these people became a syncretism of the faith of Israel and their old beliefs. According to the traditional view, they later became an important element in the Samaritan population.[15]

Let us turn now to the places mentioned, to which the captives were taken.

The identification of 'Halah' (Heb. חלח) is disputed. It has been connected, for example, with Ptolemy's Chalchitis in Mesopotamia, near Gozan, and with the Assyrian town and district of Ḫalaḫḫu, north east of Nineveh.[16] '[I]n Habor on the river of Gozan' (Heb. בחבור נהר גוזן) may rather be translated as, 'in Habor, the river of Gozan.'[17] The Habor (Akk. *ḫabûr*) was a river and tributary of the Euphrates. 'Gozan' (Akk. Guzāna, modern Tell Halaf) was the capital of the Assyrian province Bīt Baḫian on the upper Habor. For '*the cities* of the Medes', the Greek texts read '*the*

[15] *Cf.* Mordechai Cogan, 'For We, Like You, Worship Your God: Three Biblical Portrayals of Samaritan Origins', *VT*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1988). The early history of the Samaritans remains largely unknown: Menahem Mor, 'The Persian, Hellenistic and Hasmonaean Period', *The Samaritans*, ed. Alan David Crown (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1989) 1–18.

[16] For a fuller list, see H. O. Thompson, 'Halah', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 25.

[17] According to Cogan, 'Samaritan Origins', 197, '[t]he designation of the Habor as a river of Gozan is so far unique and is apparently an Israelite designation'.

mountains (which in Hebrew would be הרי, instead of ערי) of the Medes.'[18] The region is that of the mountainous Zagros to the east of the Tigris valley.[19] Both Tiglath-Pileser and Sargon invaded Median territories repeatedly, and deported people from them.[20] Some Israelites seem to have been brought in their stead.

These places are mentioned also in the text of 1 Chronicles, where the scribe records the exile of the two-and-a-half Transjordanian tribes:

> And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tillegath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river of Gozan, unto this day.[21] (1 Chron. 5:26)

Further biblical evidence for contact between Assyria and Israel comes from the books of the prophets, especially from the 8th century prophets, Hosea, Isaiah[22] and Amos.

Hosea's words show the fluctuating policies and the changing loyalties of the kingdom of Israel. In its instability, it sought help at one moment

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[18] Perhaps reflected in 'Hara', 1 Chron. 5:26 (see below). See Cogan, 'Samaritan Origins', 197.

[19] Nadav Na'aman, 'Population Changes in Palestine', *TA*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1993) 107.

[20] Oded counts 18 references to deportations from the Median territory by the Assyrians: Bustenay Oded, *Mass Deportation and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1979) 26–32.

[21] James A. Montgomery and Henry Snyder Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960 [1951]) 467, comments that in 1 Chron. 5, the captivity of the two-and-a-half tribes, assigned to Pul, is given with a (near) repetition of the list of place names from 2 Kgs 17. Be that as it may, the areas listed represent the new home of at least some of the Israelite population in exile.

[22] The prophecies attributable to the 8th century prophet Isaiah are found in the first 39 chapters of the book which now carries that prophet's name. The book of Isaiah is widely regarded as the conglomerated work of at least three prophetic circles living during the 8th, 6th, and 5th centuries, and the book is accordingly divided into three sections: Proto-Isaiah (chs 1–39), Deutero-Isaiah (chs 40–55), and Trito-Isaiah (chs 56–66); e.g. S. C. Seitz, 'Isaiah, Book of (First Isaiah); Isaiah, Book of (Third Isaiah)', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 472–488, 501–507. For biblical prophecy in general, see John F. A. Sawyer, *Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

from Assyria, and at the next from Egypt. Such a policy would avail them nothing, but would only lead to destruction, in the opinion of Hosea.

> And Ephraim is become like a silly dove, without understanding;
> They call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria.
>
> (Hos. 7:11)

The outcome of the impending catastrophe was vividly painted by Hosea:

> Israel is swallowed up;
> Now are they become among the nations
> As a vessel wherein is no value.
> For they are gone up to Assyria,
> Like a wild ass alone by himself;
> Ephraim hath hired lovers.[23]
>
> (Hos. 8:8–9)

The book of Jonah also provides some evidence of contact between Israel and Assyria. Although scholarly opinions regarding the book's dating, authorship and historical authenticity remain largely conjectural, it harks back to the historical fact that Assyria was Israel's foe. The proposal that a prophet should preach to Nineveh, was, in the minds of many people in Israel, unthinkable. The point of the book is, of course, that even the Assyrians were answerable to the God of Israel, and might be called to repentance.

That a literary tradition should be built around the life and work of the prophet Jonah ben Amittai of Gath-hepher, who spoke of Israelite expansion in the face of Assyrian declension in the first half of the 8th century,[24] was fitting enough. Indeed, at a time of Assyrian weakness, it was a possibility that a prophet of Israel might visit Nineveh. The story, in any case, looks back to a day when people might travel from Israel to Assyria.

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[23] Similarly, also Hos. 12:2; 14:4, *cf.* 5:13.

[24] 'He [Jeroboam II] restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke by the hand of His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.' (2 Kgs 14:25)

However, the prophets, Amos and Isaiah, are more important for the present discussion. Amos tells the people what their fate will be in no uncertain terms:

> Therefore I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith He, whose name is the LORD God of hosts. (Amos 5:27)[25]

Isaiah also speaks of the catastrophe which overtook Israel as the worst kind that can overcome a people:

> The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria. (Isa. 7:17)

When he speaks of the redemption of the scattered captives, the prophet speaks also of the exiles of Samaria, who will be gathered back in their land:

> And it shall come to pass in that day,
> That the LORD will set His hand again the second time
> To recover the remnant of His people,
> That shall remain from Assyria, and from Egypt,
> And from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam,
> And from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.
> (Isa. 11:11)[26]

A general picture thus emerges. For one reason or another, there were those in Israel who found their way into Assyria during the 10th–8th centuries. However, the greatest exodus was, of course, the compulsory

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[25] *Cf.* Amos 4:1–3; 6:7, 14; 9:14–15.

[26] Commentators on the above prophecies point out the possibility that they were written in the light of experience due to the detailed description which seems to be given, and might point to a post-exilic origin of these utterances; e.g. William Rainey Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960 [1905]); *cf.* George Buchanan Gray and Arthur S. Peake, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, I–XXXIX*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962 [1912]). Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos*, ABC (Garden City: Doubleday, 1989) 141–144, however, have pointed out that the prophecies in Amos do not fit exactly what is known about the historical events to which they are attributed, and thus there is no proof that they were written after their fulfilment, and that in the case of Hosea's prophecies it is extremely difficult to attribute them to any historical events: Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, ABC (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980) 73–75.

one forced upon Israel by the Assyrian conqueror. There was no question about the might of the Assyrian army, which Isaiah described thus:

> None shall be weary nor stumble among them;
> None shall slumber nor sleep;
> Neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed,
> Nor the latchet of their shoes be broken;
> Whose arrows are sharp,
> And all their bows bent;
> Their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint,
> And their wheels like a whirlwind;
> Their roaring shall be like a lion,
> They shall roar like young lions, yea, they shall roar,
> And lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe,
> And there shall be none to deliver.
> And they shall roar against them in that day
> Like the roaring of the sea;
> And if one look unto the land,
> Behold darkness and distress,
> And the light is darkened in the skies thereof.
>
> (Isa. 5:27–30)

After the fall of Samaria, a considerable body of Israelites was scattered in far away regions.[27] Foreign captives were brought over and settled in their stead (2 Kgs 17:24).[28] Of those who remained in Samaria, we may conjecture that some mingled with the new arrivals and became the Samaritans, while others joined their brothers in Judah. Archaeological evidence points to a large expansion in the size of the city of Jerusalem around the end of the 8th century BCE.[29] Moreover the expansion, in the

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[27] The Annals of Sargon refer to 27,290 captives when Samaria fell (*ANET*[3], 284f): see ch. 3 below. However, the number was greater than this in view of the fact that captives were taken also by Tiglath-Pileser and perhaps others. Even if the number 27,290 is exaggerated, we may postulate many thousands of exiles.

[28] It seems, however, that, as generally in Assyrian deportations, also in Samaria the number of people resettled was by far smaller than the number of people deported. The majority of deportees were brought to the Assyrian heartland: Oded, *Mass Deportation*, 28.

[29] Magen Broshi, 'Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh', *IEJ*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1974) 21–29; *cf.* Hillel Geva, 'Jerusalem', *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, eds Ephraim Stern, Ayelet Lewinson-Gilboa and Joseph Aviram, Vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Carta, 1993) 4 vols, 704–708; Yigael (ed.) Yadin, *Jerusalem Revealed: Archaeology in the Holy City 1968–74* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1975) 41ff, 53, 57.

order of three to four times the size of the former city, occurred relatively suddenly, and 'cannot be explained by mere demographic or economic growth.'[30] It is estimated that the city's population grew from 6000–8000, to about 25,000 people,[31] an escalation largely attributable to a wave of mass immigration from the northern kingdom around 721 BCE, and increased, after 701 BCE, by refugees from the western parts of Judah, which Sennacherib had given to the Philistines.[32] Other areas in Judah were also settled and towns founded in the 8th century, such as in the Judean Desert, along the Dead Sea and in the Negev.[33] The establishment of centres throughout Judah should be attributed mainly to migrations from the north.[34]

By contrast, a sharp decline is revealed in most sites excavated in northern Israel. Some towns had been decimated, while others had been ravaged and abandoned.[35] By virtue of the abrupt population increase in Jerusalem and other Judean towns, the reduction in the population of Israelite towns is best explained by both emigration to the south, and by forced exile.

Those of the remnant of Israel who joined Judah became part of the salvaged core of the nation. Such an increase made Judah stronger and more viable. Attempts were later made to annex to Judah parts of the former northern kingdom, such as the districts of Bethel, Samaria and Shechem. There is no doubt that king Josiah (640–609) had free access to northern territories, where he set about destroying remnants of the cult of Baal (2 Kgs 23:19; 2 Chron. 34:6–7). We have, if not direct, at least indirect proof that, approximately fifty years before the fall of the Persian Empire, various parts of the Galilean population still continued to bear the names of the individual tribes of Israel. The book of Chronicles tells us that, after the fall of the kingdom of Israel, King Hezekiah (715–686) sent his messengers to all the northern Palestinian provinces, inviting their

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[30] Broshi, 'Expansion of Jerusalem', 23.
[31] *Cf.* Magen Broshi, 'Estimating the Population of Ancient Jerusalem', *BARev*, Vol. IV, No. 2 (1978) 11f.
[32] Broshi, 'Expansion of Jerusalem', 21, 23–25.
[33] See Mazar, *Archaeology*, 442f, 451–455.
[34] Broshi, 'Expansion of Jerusalem', 25f.
[35] See Ephraim Stern, 'ארץ ישראל בשלהי תקופת המלוכה: סקירה ארכיאולוגית [Israel at the Close of the Monarchy: An Archeological Survey]', קדמוניות *[Antiquities]*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1973) 2–17, translated as Ephraim Stern, 'Israel at the Close of the Period of the Monarchy: An Archaeological Survey', *BA*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1975) 26–54.

inhabitants to participate in the Passover celebrations at the temple in Jerusalem. In Ephraim and Manasseh (i.e. the parts occupied by Samaritans,) the messengers were received with sneers, but the people from the tribes of Asher, Zebulun and Issachar and even many from Ephraim and Manasseh, responded to the call and came to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 30:1, 10–11, 18).

What happened to the exiled elements of the former kingdom of Israel, later becomes the subject of a variety of legends. Some of these legends and midrashic stories may contain some elements of truth in them, or some echoes of an ancient tradition. Whatever historical merit there may be in such legends is perhaps secondary to the fact that they reveal a national hope that this large section of the nation was not lost forever, but would one day be found to join other remnants of the people of Israel, from which there might emerge once more one nation, as in the days of David.[36]

[36] For a further discussion as to the fate of the ten tribes, see ch. 11 below.

CHAPTER 3

NON-BIBLICAL MATERIAL ON ISRAEL— THE ASSYRIAN ANNALS AND INSCRIPTIONS

The Old Testament was, for many centuries, the main source of information for the history of Israel and Judah, and their contact with Assyria. However, with the discovery and decipherment of ancient Assyrian records, a new world was opened before the historian and archaeologist, a world which did not contradict the biblical story, but supported it and added much to the knowledge of the times in question. The best known among the records are the monuments—the annals recording the feats of the Assyrian kings. The sections which refer to the people of Israel are of particular importance in the present study. Since the reports of victories, quantities of booty, and numbers of captives listed in their annals are known to have been exaggerated often among the Assyrians, critical examination of the victories and successes, claimed by the Assyrians, becomes important.[1] A comparison of Assyrian reports with those of the Bible will help to establish a more realistic picture of what actually took place, than either record could by itself.

While the records in the annals are not new to the biblical historian, they require re-examination in the light of modern knowledge. In addition to the annals, historians now have access to exciting evidence about Israel

[1] Hayim Tadmor, 'Assyria and the West: The Ninth Century and Its Aftermath', *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East*, eds Hans Goedicke, Jimmy Jack McBee Roberts and William Foxwell Albright (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1975) 36, describes the nature of the Assyrian inscriptions in the following terms: 'grandiose figure of speech'; 'literary convention of exaggeration'; and 'inability to admit that Ashur's foe could in fact prevail over his armies'. *Cf.* D. M. Fouts, 'Another Look at Large Numbers in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions', *JNES*, Vol. 53 (1994) 205–211. E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 15th edn (Oxford: Phaidon, 1989) 44f, points out that in the Assyrian reliefs 'there are plenty of dead and wounded…but not one of them is an Assyrian.' He further comments that 'the art of boasting and propaganda was well advanced' among the Assyrians.

in Assyria, in the form of non-annalistic records that present 'living' examples of the people of Israel in their countries of exile.[2]

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Ironically, perhaps, the city of Samaria, which was founded by Omri (882–871 BCE) during the reign of the Assyrian king, Ashurnasirpal II (883–859), to provide a more secure capital for his kingdom in view of Assyrian resurgence, fell before the Assyrians some one hundred and fifty years later: the last stronghold of the northern kingdom. Ashurnasirpal II did not actually reach the kingdom of Israel, but he set his sight upon the west, as the road to Egypt, and to wider conquests. He describes in his annals his expedition to Lebanon.

> At that time I made my way to the slopes of Mount Lebanon (and) went up to the Great Sea of the land Amurru. I cleansed my weapons in the Great Sea (and) made sacrifices to the gods. I received tribute from the kings of the sea coast, from the lands of the men of Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, Mahallatu, Maizu, Kaizu, Amurru, and the city Arvad which is (on an island) in the sea—gold, silver, tin, bronze, a bronze casserole, linen garments with multi-coloured trim, a large female ape, a small female ape, ebony, box-wood, ivory, (and) *nāḫirus* (which are) sea creatures. They seized my feet. (Annals 3:84ff.)[3]

Ashurnasirpal came uncomfortably close to Israel, but did not actually come into contact with it. It was his son, Shalmaneser III (858–824), who met the Aramean coalition in 853, which included Omri's son, King Ahab (873–852).[4] This battle, which is not mentioned in the Bible, is recorded in the Assyrian annals:

> He [the king of Hamath] brought along to help him 1,200 chariots, 1,200 cavalrymen, 20,000 foot soldiers of Adad'idri [...] of Damascus (Imērišu), 700 chariots, 700 cavalrymen, 10,000 foot soldiers of Irhuleni from Hamath, 2,000 chariots, 10,000 foot soldiers of *Ahab, the Israelite* (A-ḫa-ab-bu ^{mat}Sir-'i-la-a-a), 500 soldiers from Que, 1,000 soldiers from Musri,

[2] *Cf.* ch. 5 below.
[3] Translation by Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions, Vol. II: From Tiglath-Pileser I to Ashur-Nasir-Apli II*, Records of the Ancient Near East (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976) 143.
[4] See ch. 1 above.

> 10 chariots, 10,000 soldiers from Irqanata… (Monolith Inscription from Kurkh II:90–92)[5]

In spite of the usual claims of a great and overwhelming victory over his foes, it seems that Shalmaneser suffered a setback in this battle. At the very least, it seems clear that his further advance was checked for the time being. The same coalition confronted Shalmaneser again in 849, 848 and 845, probably without Israel being included in it.[6] In 841, the Assyrians had a more successful encounter with Aram. By that time, Hazael (842–805) had ascended the throne in Aram-Damascus, and the coalition had broken apart. Shalmaneser III laid siege to Damascus, but was not able to make it capitulate. However, he collected tribute from many neighbouring countries, including Israel.[7]

> At that time I received the tribute of the people of Tyre, Sidon, and of Jehu, son of Omri. (Black Obelisk)[8]

One of the most interesting monuments of Assyrian times that has come down to us, is the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. The six foot high, black, basalt monument has five tiers of reliefs chiselled on all four sides. The second row, according to the accompanying inscription, represents the Israelite king, Jehu, prostrating himself before Shalmaneser. He appears in front of two Assyrian officials. Behind these two is a group of men carrying gifts for the Assyrian king. These are seen not only on the section in which Jehu himself appears, but on the second tier all the way round. A comparison of their dress with that of the Assyrians soon shows differences. Their gowns lack the belt and the embroidery at the waist. Their hats are like the one Jehu is wearing, their hair seems to be a little shorter than that worn by the Assyrians, and their shoes also differ from those of the Assyrians. On Assyrian obelisks generally, the story was

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[5] *ANET*[3], 278f; italics are mine.

[6] Albert Kirk Grayson, 'Assyria: Ashur-Dan II to Ashur-Nirari V (934–745 BC)', *CAH Vol. III Part 1*, 2nd edn, eds John Boardman, I. E. S. Edwards, N. G. L. Hammond and E. Sollberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 261f.

[7] According to M. C. Astour, '841 BC: The First Assyrian Invasion of Israel', *JAOS*, Vol. 91 (1971) 383–389, this would have been in connection with a first Assyrian invasion of Israel.

[8] Translation by D. J. Wiseman, 'Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia', *Documents from Old Testament Times*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (London: Thomas Nelson, 1958) 48.

continuous on all four sides of the same tier.[9] Thus Jehu is depicted with quite a large number of men accompanying him.

However, one has to be careful with the interpretation of this amazing document that has come down to us.[10] Often, it is called 'the only contemporary portrait of an Israelite king'.[11] Viewed in the context of the whole obelisk, this proves not to be the case. There is no pictorial distinction between Jehu and the king shown on the tier directly above him, who is, again according to the inscription above it, from the opposite end of the Assyrian Empire, and therefore surely would have looked and dressed differently. Rather, in accordance with Assyrian art, where portrait-like features are missing, the pictures on the top two tiers of the front side of the obelisk are a general depiction of two prostrating kings. The message of the obelisk is to show the greatness of the Assyrian king as warrior (1st tier) and pacifying ruler (2nd tier), and of his huge kingdom, which insures a continuous flow of wealth to Assyria. Thus, the two kings prostrating themselves before the Assyrian king are chosen to be from the furthest north east (Marduk-aplu-uṣur from Suḫi) and the furthest south west (Jehu from Israel) of the empire.

This is the more understandable if one considers the circumstances under which the Black Obelisk was put into its place on a big plaza. It belongs to the end of the reign of Shalmaneser III (perhaps around 827

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[9] Henri Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, Pelican History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 165. An earlier obelisk that Frankfort discusses is one erected by Ashurnasirpal II: 'Its reliefs are arranged in narrow bands, one above the other, but each band continues round the four sides of the stone; for instance, a war chariot is shown on one face of the obelisk, but of its horses one sees only the hindquarters; their front parts appear round the corner, on the next face. It has been suggested that this is due to Mesopotamian preference for cylindrical shapes; the square form of the obelisk was uncongenial and was, in fact, ignored. But it is also possible to explain this oddity of composition in another way: the Assyrians may have been impatient of the limitations which the high, narrow surface imposed, because they desired above all to present a circumstantial narrative. Later, under Shalmaneser III, a more orderly decoration of the obelisk was planned, and the submission of Jehu of Israel, the reception of his tribute, and other scenes, are placed in small closed panels on the four faces of the stone.'

[10] Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, 'Der Assyrerkönig Salmanassar III. und Jehu von Israel auf dem Schwarzen Obelisken aus Nimrud', *ZKTh*, Vol. 116, No. 4 (1994) 391–420. This article contains a detailed discussion of the Black Obelisk and its interpretation on which the present discussion relies.

[11] So Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, 136.

BCE), a time during which one of his sons led a rebellion against him, and he therefore would have used propaganda material to keep his people on his side. Still, let us return to the part of the inscription which deals with Jehu.

The text on the Black Obelisk reads thus:

> Tribute I received from Jehu the son of Omri: silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden *zuqutu* vessel, golden beakers, golden buckets, tin, a scepter for the hand of the king and *javelins*.[12]

In this particular text, people are not mentioned as part of the tribute. Frequently, people were included in the tribute and it may be assumed that Israelite citizens formed part of the booty at that time.[13]

Jehu's tribute is not mentioned in the Bible, but obviously Jehu and the other kings who presented themselves before Shalmaneser thought it wise to show their loyalty to him when he came to attack Damascus in 841 BCE. After Shalmaneser III's withdrawal, Israel was again at the mercy of the Arameans.[14] Shalmaneser's grandson, Adad-nirari III (810–783), however, returned to Syria, and, after conducting a number of victorious campaigns, he finally placed Ben-Hadad under an extremely heavy tribute in 802.[15] Adad-nirari also mentions, in an inscription, that he received tribute from Israel:

> …the country of the Hittites, Amurru-country in its full extent, Tyre, Sidon, Israel (^{mat}Ḫu-um-ri), Edom, Palestine (Pa-la-as-tu), as far as the shore of the Great Sea of the Setting Sun, I made them submit all to my feet, imposing upon them tribute. (From a broken stone slab found at Calah)[16]

The tribute that was paid by these countries was probably only a nominal one, and appears to have been designed rather to express loyalty

[12] Translated from German: *TUAT* I/4, 363; words in italics are unsure readings.
[13] This is attested to in their annals. For example, Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) says of one of his campaigns, 'Many captives from among them I burned with fire, and many I took as living captives'. *ARAB* I, 147.
[14] See ch. 1 above.
[15] *ANET*^{3}, 281f.
[16] *ANET*^{3}, 281.

to Assyria.[17]

During the first half of the 8th century, the kingdom of Israel gained strength as three weak kings reigned consecutively in Assyria: Shalmaneser IV (782–773), Ashur-dan III (772–755) and Ashur-nirari V (754–745). During this time, therefore, the capable and long-lived king, Jeroboam II (788–747), was able to restore the kingdom to the size and grandeur it had known in Davidic times. At the same time, the southern kingdom of Judah was also enjoying unprecedented prosperity, and trade must have flourished with the neighbouring countries.[18] Merchants from Israel certainly travelled to the various markets where their goods were being sold, and it is reasonable to expect that some Israelite merchants may have made new homes in other lands as a result. Excavations at Hazor and Megiddo show considerable material strength and wealth during this time.[19]

Jeroboam's reign, coinciding as it did with the period of Assyrian weakness, turned out to be the Indian Summer for the northern kingdom. After his death, anarchy reigned in Samaria. Jeroboam's son, Zechariah, had reigned for only six months (747), when he was murdered by Shallum, who held the throne for only one month before he in turn was assassinated by Menahem (747–737). His was a reign of terror, for he sought to secure his throne with acts of unspeakable cruelty.[20] In what was perhaps a further bid to secure the throne, Menahem gave tribute to Tiglath-Pileser

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[17] *Cf.* William W. Hallo, 'From Qarqar to Carchemish: Assyria and Israel in the Light of New Discoveries', *BA*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1960) 43.

[18] Bright, *A History of Israel*, 258: 'The two states being at peace with each other, and the major trade routes - up and down Transjordan, into northern Arabia, along the coastal plain, into the hinterland from the Phoenician ports—all once more passing through Israelite-held territory, tolls from caravans, together with the free interchange of goods, poured wealth into both countries. Though the Bible says nothing of it, it is quite likely that there was a revival of the once-lucrative trade with the lands of the south via the Red Sea. It is almost certain that Tyre—not yet at the end of her great period of commercial expansion—was again drawn into the programme by treaty, as in the days of Solomon and the Omrides.'

[19] Yigal Shiloh, 'Megiddo: The Iron Age', *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, eds Ephraim Stern, Ayelet Lewinson-Gilboa and Joseph Aviram, Vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Carta, 1993) 4 vols, 1020–1023; Yigael Yadin, *Hazor: The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975) 147–171.

[20] 2 Kgs 15:16.

III (744–727), the new Assyrian king who shook Assyria out of its weak state and advanced westward to enlarge his empire.[21] Tiglath-Pileser, in his annals, refers to Menahem among those who gave tribute:

> The tribute from Kushtashpi of Kummuh [*Ku-um-mu-ha-a+a*], Rezin [... *Ra-hi-a-nu*] of Damascus [*Šá-imēri-šu-a+a*], Menahem of Samaria [*Me-ni-hi-im-me* ^{uru}*Sa-me-ri-na-a+a*], Hiram [*Hi-ru-um-mu*] of Tyre […] (Calah Annals 13*, 10f)[22]

The heavy taxes which Menahem collected caused dissatisfaction in the kingdom, and strengthened the anti-Assyrian movement.[23] As a result, after his death, Pekahiah, his son, reigned for only a short time (737–735), when he was assassinated by Pekah, who seized the throne. With the accession of Pekah to the throne, the foreign policy of the northern kingdom was changed radically.[24] In place of Menahem's pacifying policy towards Assyria, there was now a new orientation towards Aram-Damascus, with the aim of establishing a firm treaty, together with some other neighbouring countries, against Tiglath-Pileser. Nevertheless, this time their calculation was mistaken from the start. The allies had missed the historic hour in which they might have still withstood the Assyrian conqueror as a united front.

Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus formed a coalition to oppose Assyria. For the success of this alliance, they had to be assured of the loyalty of Judah, since the southern kingdom controlled the road to Egypt, whence they might have hoped to get some help. However, Judah's king, Ahaz, would not be drawn into this federation, and Pekah and Rezin

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[21] See ch. 2 above. *Cf.* 2 Kgs 15:19–20.

[22] Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 68f. The year of Menahem's tribute is not absolutely certain. Most scholars attribute it to 738 BCE, or reckon with two payments, one in 738 BCE and one earlier (pp. 274–276), while some state that there are sufficient reasons to date it as early as 743 BCE (e.g. Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 126–128, 139–162).

[23] While most people argue that many of the Samaria Ostraca belong to the time of Jeroboam II (e.g. Anson F. Rainey, 'Toward a Precise Date for the Samaria Ostraca', *BASOR*, No. 272 (1988) 69–74), in 1961, Y. Yadin presented a revised list of numerical signs which would permit the dating of the Ostraca in the reign of Menahem who, possibly, collected the added taxes in order to raise the money for Tiglath-Pileser's tribute which he needed. Yigael Yadin, 'Ancient Judean Weights and the Date of the Samaria Ostraca', *ScrH*, Vol. 8 (1961) 9–25.

[24] Abraham Malamat, 'ישראל מול אשור [Israel Facing Assyria]', מערכות *[Maarchoth]*, Vol. 44 (1947) 64–67.

decided to attack Judah in order to gain their objective. According to the Bible, Ahaz called for the help of Tiglath-Pileser.[25] The Assyrian king would probably have come to the west, even without this invitation. In 734, he marched west, subduing firstly Gaza, and thus cutting off any possibility of help coming from Egypt. In 733/732, he struck Israel with full force. When he had completed his campaign, there was very little left of the once proud kingdom.[26] By these military acts, Tiglath-Pileser in fact sealed the fate of the northern kingdom, whose continued existence as an Assyrian vassal state for another decade was nothing but a slow death. Numerous cities were destroyed, a portion of the population was deported, and the occupied territory was divided into the three provinces, Dor, Megiddo and Gilead.[27]

The archaeologist's spade at Megiddo and Hazor bears testimony to the destruction wrought by the Assyrian army. One imposing Israelite citadel found at Hazor bears evidence of terrific destruction from the time of Tiglath-Pileser III. There was a one meter thick layer of ashes on the floor, the stones were black, and many burnt planks were found. Amongst the pieces of pottery on the floor, there was an inscription on one of the wine jars bearing the expression, לפקח, that is, 'to Pekah'.[28]

Two very fragmentary, but obviously parallel, annalistic texts of Tiglath-Pileser prove to be most interesting under analysis. The texts not only confirm the biblical narrative, but add some interesting details to his conquest in Palestine. Correlated, they look like the following:

> without [... like] a (dense) fog [I covered] him [...] without (?) [...] of 16 districts of Bit-[Humri] (Israel) I [demolished] ut[terly ... x] capti[ves from the city of ...]bara, 625 captives from the city of [...] 226 [captives from ... x] captives [from the city of] Hinatuna, 650 captives from the city of Ku[...] 400[(+x) captives from ... x captives from the city of Ya]tbite, 656 captives from the city of Sa...[... (altogether)] 13,520 [people ...] with their belongings [I carried off to Assyria ...] the cities of Aruma and Marum [situated in] rugged mountains [I conquered (?) ...] Mitinti of Ashkelon [broke] the loyalty oath [... and] re[volted] against me [... The defeat of Re]zin he saw and in an attack of [panic/ insanity...] / he saw and was

[25] See ch. 2 above.
[26] See ch. 1 above.
[27] See ch. 2 above.
[28] Yigael Yadin, 'Further Light on Biblical Hazor: Results of the Second Season, 1956', *BA*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1957), Area B.

fri[ghtened ... he was stricken] with panic… (Calah Annals 18:1'-9' and 24:1'-15')[29]

In these documents, Tiglath-Pileser lists the names of the places that he conquered in Israelite territory in 733, and the numbers of the people he deported to Assyria. Unfortunately, the documents are very poorly preserved, and some of the names of places and other details are beyond restoration. However, some information can be gleaned from them by completing names and details wherever possible. We are thus presented with the following details:[30]

The names of the towns mentioned in this document	*Possible identifications according to names in Hebrew sources*
a. ...]ba-ra-a	Dabara, Daberath (הדברת, Josh. 19:12), near Mt. Tabor
b. ^{uru}Hi-na-tú-na	Ḫanathon (חנתן, Josh. 19:14), near Beth-heṭophah Valley (Sahl el-Baṭṭopf),?Tell el-Bedeiwiyeh??
c. $^{\lceil uru \rceil}$Ku$^{\rceil}$ -[...	Chisloth-tabor/Chesulloth (כסלת תבר, Josh. 19:12; כסולת, Josh. 19:18), near Daberath
d. ...^{uru}Ia]-aṭ-bi-te	Yoṭbah (יטבה, 2 Ki. 21:19), near Beth-heṭophah Valley (Sahl el-Baṭṭopf)
e. ^{uru}Sa-$^{\lceil}$ $^{\rceil}$-[...	Samḫuna (שמרון, שמעון, Josh. 11:1), Khirbet Sammuniyeh on the north-west margins of the Jezreel Valley
f. ^{uru}A-ru-ma-a	Rumah (רומה, 2 Kgs 23:36), Khirbet er-Rumeh near Beth-heṭophah Valley (Sahl el-Baṭṭopf)
g. $^{uru\lceil}$Ma$^{\rceil}$-ru-um	Marom (מרום, מרון, Josh. 11:5 = מדום, מדון, Josh. 11:1), Tel Qarney Ḥiṭṭin, Lower Galilee

In the opinion of Na'aman, all the towns mentioned in Tiglath-Pileser's document are in Lower Galilee, along the periphery of the Jezreel

[29] *Cf.* Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 80–83.

[30] Na'aman, 'Population Changes in Palestine', 105f; Nadav Na'aman, *Borders and Districts in Biblical Historiography: Seven Studies in Biblical Geographical Lists* (Jerusalem: Simor Ltd, 1986) 141, has a map which includes all the sites mentioned here. For the identification of ancient places with modern sites see also Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979). References to different readings and interpretations are found in Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 80–83, and Younger, 'The Deportations of the Israelites', 212.

Valley.[31] Most of these places were probably close to the major routes which passed from the shores of the Euphrates and Syria, through northern Palestine, to the shores of the Mediterranean and to Egypt. Archaeological surveys conducted in this region confirm a rapid decline in population in the late 8th to 7th centuries.[32]

The numbers of the people who were deported from these cities to Assyria show that in the first half of the 8th century, there was dense Israelite population in Galilee. It would seem that only the men who were taken into captivity were listed in the document. If we add to these those who were not counted, i.e. the women and children, we have quite a large number of people.[33]

After the capture of most of Galilee and Gilead, and the exile of many of its people, Tiglath-Pileser turned towards the main objective of this campaign, Damascus, and besieged the city, which eventually fell in 732.[34] Its inhabitants were deported to Kir.[35] Meanwhile, in what appears to have been a pro-Assyrian move, a certain Hoshea, who eventually murdered Pekah (2 Kgs 15:30), must have appeared on the political scene. Whether Tiglath-Pileser actually put him on the throne, or whether he took it himself, as the Bible relates the story, it was obviously done with Assyrian consent, and Hoshea ruled as an Assyrian vassal (732–724).

This is how Tiglath-Pileser records the event:

> The land of Bit-Humria (Israel), [… its] 'auxiliary army', […] all of its people, [...] I carried off [to] Assyria. Peqah [*Pa-qa-ha*], their king [I/they killed] and I installed Hoshea [*A-ú-si-'i*] [as king] over them. 10 talents of

[31] Na'aman, 'Population Changes in Palestine', 106; Na'aman, *Borders and Districts*, 141.

[32] Z. Gal, 'The Lower Galilee in the Iron Age II: Analysis of Survey Material and Its Historical Interpretation', *TA* (1988–1989) 62, 64.

[33] Apart from exiling huge numbers of people throughout his empire, Tiglath-Pileser also boasts explicitly of taking people as booty, e.g. '...Hanunu of Gaza feared my powerful weapons and [escaped to Egypt.] [The city of Gaza…I conquered/entered. x talents] of gold, 800 talents of silver, people together with their possessions, his [i.e. Hanunu's] wife, [his] sons, [his daughters…his property (and) his gods I despoiled/seized.]' (Summary Inscription 8:14-16), Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 176f.

[34] Younger, 'The Deportations of the Israelites', 206, suggests that the Assyrian attack on Galilee and Gilead took place during the siege of Damascus.

[35] 2 Kgs 16:9. It is quite possible that a number of Israelites living in Aram were deported with the Arameans; *cf.* ch. 1 above.

> gold, x talents of silver, [with] their [property] I received from them and [to Assyria I car]ried them. (Summary Inscription 4:15'–19')[36]

Hoshea might in fact have assassinated Pekah, and thus have come to the throne over all that was left of Israel only some time after Tiglath-Pileser had left the region. This is indicated by the fact that Hoshea's tribute was sent to Tiglath-Pileser while the latter was on his campaign in Sarrabanu (somewhere in southern Mesopotamia), probably in 731/730, and not while he was still close. Hayes and Kuan suppose, therefore, that Tiglath-Pileser recognised Hoshea as king over Israel while being on his campaign to Syria-Palestine, and Hoshea in turn paid tribute to him (2 Kgs 17:3) once Pekah was assassinated.[37]

Hoshea remained subservient to Assyria for the following years, paying annual tribute and ruling a much reduced Israel. Already towards the end of Tiglath-Pileser's reign, however, rebellion seems to have risen in the west. The south-western region of the Assyrian Empire had not been visited since Tiglath-Pileser's campaigns of 734–732. Like Damascus and Tyre, Hoshea must have deemed the time ripe for throwing off the yoke of Assyria.[38] Tiglath-Pileser seems to have begun a campaign to the west in 727/726, which might have been finished by his son Shalmaneser V (726–722), soon after his father's death.[39] When Shalmaneser reached Hoshea, the latter capitulated and paid tribute.[40] In 726/725, Shalmaneser did not conduct any campaign. This gave rise to rebellion in Phoenicia.[41] Hoshea also withheld tribute, and sent to Egypt for help against Assyria.[42] The remnant of the Israelite kingdom, which was now limited merely to Samaria, was no longer viable. The annexations of its wealthy territories, on the one hand, and the great pressure of the heavy taxes which Tiglath-Pileser had put upon Hoshea, the last of the kings of Israel, on the other, had brought about the complete dwindling of the country's economy. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Israelite king, along with many other vassal

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[36] Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 140f.
[37] Hayes and Kuan, 'Final Years of Samaria', 153–156; *cf.* Riekele Borger and Hayim Tadmor, 'Zwei Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft aufgrund der Inschriften Tiglatpilesers III', *ZAW*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (1982) 244–245.
[38] So Hayes and Kuan, 'Final Years of Samaria', 159f. Others think that open rebellion broke out only after Tiglath-Pileser's death, e.g. Na'aman, 'Conquest of Samaria', 213f.
[39] Hayes and Kuan, 'Final Years of Samaria', 159–161.
[40] See ch. 2 above.
[41] Hayes and Kuan, 'Final Years of Samaria', 161.
[42] See ch. 2 above.

kings in Palestine and Syria, attempted to throw off the heavy Assyrian yoke. The fate of Israel was now sealed. Hoshea was imprisoned and possibly deported to Assyria.[43]

The chronology of the final years of the northern kingdom, and particularly the Assyrian conquest of its capital, remains a contentious issue among scholars today. A comparison between the biblical texts[44] and various Mesopotamian sources[45] yields apparent discrepancies regarding both the number of campaigns against Samaria, and the identity of the Assyrian king/s who led them.

As we have seen, in the biblical text, the verses dealing with the events from Shalmaneser's first campaign to the west, until the deportation of the Samarian population, mention Shalmaneser by name right in the beginning. Afterwards, they only speak about 'the Assyrian king'. The author of the text seems to think that all the events related in these verses happened under the rule of Shalmaneser.

In the Assyrian and Babylonian documents, however, Shalmaneser, as well as—and even more so—his successor, Sargon II, claim to have ravaged/destroyed (Shalmaneser) or conquered (Sargon) Samaria. In fact, the findings for Shalmaneser are rather meagre, while Sargon repeatedly boasts about conquering Samaria and deporting its people. However, the little documentation we have from Shalmaneser can be explained with his short reign, during which he did not have time to leave a lot of documents and impressive inscriptions. In the Babylonian Chronicles, all that is written about him is:

On the twenty-fifth day of the month Tebet Shalmaneser (V) ascended the

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[43] Hayes and Kuan, 'Final Years of Samaria', 162–165, suggest that the 'ravaging/destroying of Samaria' (see p. 48 below) occurred in conjunction with Hoshea's imprisonment as well as with the start of its provincialisation.

[44] 2 Kgs 17:3–6; 18:9–11.

[45] The Babylonian Chronicles, Sargon II Display inscriptions, Nimrud prism, Cylinder inscription, Bull inscription and Assur-Charter. For more recent transliterations and interpretations of these, see Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 22–36; Na'aman, 'Conquest of Samaria', 209–220 (Nimrud Prism, Babylonian Chronicles and Sargon II Display inscriptions, Bull inscription; also Josephus' reproduction of Menander's quotations from the Tyrian archives); Hayes and Kuan, 'Final Years of Samaria', 157–175 (Eponym Chronicle, Babylonian Chronicles, Nimrud Prism and Assur-Charter; also Josephus' reproduction of Menander's quotations from the Tyrian archives).

> throne in Assyria <and Akkad>. He ravaged [Becking: 'destroyed'] *Samaria*.
>
> The fifth year: Shalmaneser (V) died in the month Tebet. For five years Shalmaneser (V) ruled over Akkad and Assyria. (Bab. Chronicle 1.i:27–30)[46]

Sargon, on the other hand, reports the conquest of the city in the following words:

> I besieged and conquered Samerina [Samaria]. 27,290 people (AKK) who lived in its midst, I carried away. 50 chariots I gathered from their midst. The bereaved I taught proper behaviour. I appointed my commissioner over them. The levy of the former king I laid upon them. (Display Inscription 23–25)[47]

Scholars past and present have repeatedly attempted to reconstruct the events of this period, and to reconcile the various sources with one another. After the unearthing and decipherment of the Assyrian inscriptions, Sargon II was favoured as conqueror of Samaria. However, in 1958, Tadmor pointed out the unreliability of the Assyrian chronology concerning the conquest of Samaria as found in their inscriptions and annals. He proposed a hypothesis which proved to be very influential, namely that Samaria was conquered twice, firstly by Shalmaneser in 723/722, after a three year siege, and then by Sargon in 720.[48] This hypothesis has been refined by B. Becking.[49] Na'aman tried to contest the two-conquest hypothesis, but was rebuked by Hayes and Kuan,[50] who suggest a very attractive and more complex reconstruction of events. They put forward arguments for several (smaller) clashes between the Assyrian army and the rump state of the northern kingdom, like Shalmaneser's already-mentioned completion of his father's last campaign. According to their theory, Samaria became an Assyrian province in 725 BCE, in

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[46] Translation by Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Texts from Cuneiform Sources 5 (Locust Valley, N.Y.: J. J. Augustin, 1975) 73; italics are Grayson's. Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 22f.

[47] Translation by Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 26.

[48] Hayim Tadmor, 'The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study', *JCS*, Vol. 12, Nos 1, 3 (1958) 22–40, 77–100.

[49] Bob Becking, *De ondergang van Samaria: Historische, exegetische en theologische opmerkingen bij II Koningen 17* (Utrecht: ThD thesis, Utrecht University, 1985) ch. 2; revised and updated in Becking, *Fall of Samaria*.

[50] Hayes and Kuan, 'Final Years of Samaria', *cf.* Gershon Galil, 'The Last Years of the Kingdom of Israel and the Fall of Samaria', *CBQ*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (1995) 59.

conjunction with the imprisonment of Hoshea, but rebelled again, and finally fell after a half-heartedly conducted three year siege,[51] in the last year of Shalmaneser's reign (722/1). After Sargon II's accession to the throne, he first had to quell rebellion in his homeland, so there was enough time for rebellion to rise in the west of his empire as well, this time under the leadership of Hamath:

> Il[ubi'di of] Hamath, who had no right to the throne, who was not duly in the palace, who in the shepherdship over his people, did [not] attend [their fate. But] with regard to the god Assur, his land and his people searched the bad, not the good. He treated [them(?)] with disdain. He gathered Arpad and Samerina. Brought (them) at his side. ... he killed and he did not leave a living soul ... [unto Assur] I raised [my hands] and to conquer H[a]math ... [from the wide westland] I went to meet him. Assur, the [treat] god ... heard [my prayer] and acceded to my appeal ... [the way to the wes]tland I let [them] turn. Ha[math ...] ... earlier times, who had learned fame ... [The inhabitants of the wes]tland I made bow before my feet ... [T]o the [c]ity of Assur I brought [them]. (Assur-Charter 17–28)[52]

In a display inscription, he adds:

> A contingent of 200 chariots and 600 men on horseback I formed from among the inhabitants of Hamath and added them to my royal corps.[53]

Only in 720/719 could he campaign against the west. He then reconquered Samaria and deported its population.

We favour the main lines of this argument, since it does justice to all sources, even though many details in Hayes and Kuan's article—by their own admission—cannot be proven.

Thus, the final overthrow of Samaria was executed by Sargon in 720/719 but as for all the previous events leading up to it, and perhaps even including the commencement of deportations,[54] the evidence seems to point to Shalmaneser V as being responsible for them.

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[51] Due to Shalmaneser's absence from the region, rebellion in the army and parallel besieging of Tyre.
[52] Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 34f.
[53] *ANET*[3], 285.
[54] Also Younger, 'The Deportations of the Israelites', 214f, considers beginning deportations to be possible.

Following the fall of Samaria, Sargon deported its people and resettled others in their stead. Ezra 4:2 shows that the transplantation of exiles from other lands into Samaria occurred again in the time of the Assyrian king, Esarhaddon (681–669).[55]

In the last-quoted inscription, it is again interesting to note the comment regarding men and chariots being taken from among the inhabitants of Hamath and added to the royal corps. Neo-Assyrian administrative texts attest to the employment of Israelites from Samaria by Sargon II as mercenaries, skilled in chariotry.[56] In the inscription relating to the fall of Samaria (see above), Sargon says that he took 27,290 of the people and *fifty chariots*. These, too, may have been a contingent that he attached to his army.

The purposes of these mass transportations and transplantations of the population were many and various. They were punitive, aimed at weakening rival kingdoms, designed to break national consciousness and with it the will to resist the regime. They were designed to create a dependence upon the Assyrian monarch, to conscript captives into the military and enlarge the Assyrian army, to populate strategic sites throughout the empire and revitalise abandoned or desolate areas, and to provide skilled and unskilled labour.[57]

Sargon gives the number of the captives after the fall of Samaria as 27,290. These, no doubt, joined their brethren of Tiglath-Pileser's captivity some ten years earlier. Eventually, the exiles reached the capital cities of Kalah (Nimrud) and Nineveh, where Hebrew names have been found on written records.[58] It seems plausible to suggest also that those Israelite merchants and dealers, who had voluntarily left their country for Assyria through the years, would have been most likely to settle in the capital cities or the major trading centres.

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[55] 'Then they [the Samaritans] drew near to Zerubbabel, and to the heads of fathers' houses, and said unto them: "Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up hither." ' (Ezra 4:2)
The specific reference is to people being brought *into* the province of Samaria from other lands, but it is also possible that people were still being transported out of Samaria at the same time.

[56] Stephanie Dalley, 'Foreign Chariotry and Cavalry in the Armies of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II', *Iraq*, Vol. 47 (1985) 32.

[57] Oded, *Mass Deportation*, 41–74.

[58] *Cf.* ch. 5 below.

After the fall of Samaria, Israel became politically extinct. Many of its citizens were scattered in lands to the east, while others moved to the southern kingdom of Judah. The Assyrian system of ‘double exile’ probably caused many of the Israelites to become assimilated with the people of the land where they were forced to take up residence, in much the same way as those who were deported to Israelite territory assimilated with the native population. In either case, the people of Israel lost their purely national characteristics.

Section II(b)

Assyria: Judah and Assyria

CHAPTER 4

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE ABOUT JUDAH—BIBLICAL AND NON-BIBLICAL

Although Israel fell before the Assyrians in 722 BCE, the southern kingdom of Judah survived the Assyrian Empire by over twenty years. However, throughout the tragic years of Israel's struggle and final collapse, Judah did not escape the Assyrian forces unscathed.

Records of Assyrian military campaigns have been found in Calah (Nimrud), incised on tablets in cuneiform.[1] Several records of one of the campaigns mention a king whose theophoric name is compounded with Yahweh, and, as such, has generated some interest within biblical scholarship. In 738, Tiglath-Pileser III annexed several provinces belonging to the kingdom of Hamath in northern Syria, because they had defected to a king named Azriyau. One of the tablets that was thought to record this campaign, although fragmented, was restored to read, '[I]z-ri-ja-u *māt* Ja-u-di'.[2] Izriyau was considered to be a variant of Azriyau, and the latter equated with the Hebrew, Azariah, the name by which King Uzziah of Judah was at times known. Thus, it was argued that a record was found of an alliance between Judah and certain districts in northern Syria, and of the first military contact between Judah and Assyria.[3]

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[1] For the following discussion, the writer is indebted to Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 273ff.

[2] P. Rost, quoted in Nadav Na'aman, 'Sennacherib's "Letter to God" on His Campaign to Judah', *BASOR*, No. 214 (1974) 28.

[3] This restoration may be found in *ANET*[3], 282: '[In] the (subsequent) course of my campaign [I received] the tribute of the kin[gs … A]zriau from Iuda (Ia-ú-da-a-a), like a [... Azr]iau from Iuda in ... countless, (reaching) sky high … eyes, like from heaven … by means of an attack with foot soldiers. … He heard [about the approach of the] massed [armies of] Ashur and was afraid. … I tore down, destroyed and burnt [down … for Azri]au they had annexed, they (thus) had reinforced him … like vine/trunks…'
For the development of the discussion up to Na'aman's article in 1974 (see previous note), see Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 273f.

The difficulties associated with this restoration are many, and include language, grammar, chronology and geography.[4] An alternate restoration of the fragmented clay tablet proposed by Na'aman in 1974 reads, not the name 'Izriyau of Judah', but 'between my [bo]rder and the land of Judah.'[5] He redates the fragment to the 7th century, where it possibly refers to events between Hezekiah and Sennacherib. Na'aman's restoration, which resolves the considerable difficulties associated with identifying Izriyau as Uzziah, is preferable, in the absence of any further evidence. Still, the tantalising idea of a confrontation between Tiglath-Pileser and a coalition headed by Uzziah of Judah persists, with varying degrees of modification, in several histories of ancient Israel.[6] The presence of an Azriyau, who did not rule in Judah or Israel but in northern Syria, in the vicinity of Hamath, has led to the suggestion that Yahweh might have been worshipped there, although it is not known how that worship related to that of Israel.[7]

Uzziah's reign (785–733), coinciding as it did with the reign of Jeroboam II (788–747) in Israel, was a period of political and material prosperity. Being at peace with Israel, he conducted successful military campaigns against Edom, and strengthened the port of Elath. He was successful in the west against the Philistines and various Arab tribes, and laid tribute upon the Ammonites (2 Chron. 26:2, 6–8). While he had a well organised and well equipped army, he was at pains to strengthen the city walls of Jerusalem and to fortify areas in southern Judah (vv. 9–15). Within the country, the economy flourished, due both to improvements in

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[4] Na'aman, 'Letter to God', 28–31. In 1893, H. Winckler proposed that the reference is to another kingdom and a difference country—Sam'al. This district in Turkey, near the border with Syria, has at times appeared in Aramaic inscriptions with the word *y'dy* prefixed to it, whose vocalisation is unknown, and with *aleph* as the second consonant, whereas Judah has *h* as its second consonant. It is now known, however, that a certain Panammu, a staunchly pro-Assyrian king, ruled Y'dy-Sam'al during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser; Stephanie Dalley, 'Yahweh in Hamath in the 8th Century BC: Cuneiform Material and Historical Deductions', *VT*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1990) 25f.

[5] Na'aman, 'Letter to God', 27.

[6] E.g. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 270.

[7] Dalley, 'Yahweh in Hamath', cf. Hayim Tadmor, 'Azriyau of Yaudi', *ScrH*, Vol. 8 (1961) 269. Cyrus Herzl Gordon, 'The Origin of the Jews in Elephantine', *JNES*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1955) 56–58, suggests that Sam'al was a Jewish enclave from Solomon's time, which would explain Yahweh-worshipping people in this region. In a later article, Nadav Na'aman, 'Looking for KTK', *WO*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1978) 220–239, proposed that Azriyau was the ruler of KTK of Hadrach (KTK being an ancient Kingdom; pronounced Katikka).

agriculture and to the renewed Red Sea trade. Uzziah was later afflicted with leprosy, and his son, Jotham, became co-regent in 759 BCE (v. 21).

Not much is known of Jotham's reign (759–743), but it does appear that he was still a free agent as far as Assyria was concerned.[8] In his day, an attempt was made by Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, to draw Judah into their anti-Assyrian league (2 Kgs 25:37).[9] These attempts failed, and acts of enmity by these two kings against Jotham ensued, and continued even more bitterly in the days of his son and heir, Ahaz (743–727) (2 Kgs 16:5ff).

It is not difficult to imagine the drastic situation in which Ahaz found himself. The kings who had united against Assyria invaded his land, killed many and took many captive (2 Chron. 28:5ff). Judah's southern and western neighbours took advantage of the situation: both the Edomites and the Philistines attacked Judah, and captured sections of its territory, with the Edomites also taking some Judeans captive (vv. 17f, *cf.* 2 Kgs 16:6).

With enemies attacking him on every side, Ahaz could see no way out but to appeal to Assyria for help, sending him a lavish bribe (2 Kgs 16:7). As a result this, local enemies were indeed driven off, but his kingdom found itself in a worse state than before. It is interesting to note how the Chronicler expresses his opinion of Tiglath-Pileser's coming to the 'aid' of Judah:

> And Tillegath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. (2 Chron. 28:20)

The port of Elath was taken. It goes without saying that it is unlikely that the areas captured by the Philistines from Judah were returned to Ahaz. When the Assyrians captured them in turn, they came under the control of the Assyrian Empire.

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[8] This may be inferred from the fact that the Ammonites paid tribute to Jotham (2 Chron. 27:5) and were only listed later as paying tribute to Tiglath-Pileser alongside Jotham's son Ahaz (Summary Inscr. 7:11, Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 170f) a number of years later. *Cf.* Hallo, 'From Qarqar to Carchemish', 48.

[9] Roger Tomes, 'The Reason for the Syro-Ephraimite War', *JSOT*, No. 59 (1993) 55–71, argues that this war need not necessarily have been intended to win Judah into an anti-Assyrian coalition, but could have just as likely taken place because of internal border disputes.

Apart from the heavy damage done to Judah by the kings of the anti-Assyrian coalition before the coming of the Assyrians, Ahaz had now also forfeited the treasures of the palace and temple to Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kgs 16:8; *cf.* 2 Chron. 28:21). Worst of all, though, was the subjection of Judah itself to Assyria. From then on, it was listed among the nations paying tribute to Assyria:[10]

> [The tribute] of Kushtashpi of Kummuh, Urik of Que, [...][Mi]tinti of Ashkelon, Jehoahaz of Judah, Qaushmalaka of Edom, [...] Hanunu of Gaza [...]
>
> (Summary Inscription 7:7'.11'–12')[11]

The initial bribe to Tiglath-Pileser must have been quite large, because the king:

> stripped the house of the LORD, and the house of the king and the princes and gave thereof unto the king of Assyria. (2 Chron. 28:21)

Also, later on, in 732, when he went to Damascus to express his loyalty to the Assyrian monarch, he would not have gone empty handed. Josephus actually lists treasures which Ahaz took with him:

> [...] king Ahaz took all the gold there was in the king's treasures, and the silver, and what was in the temple of God, and what precious gifts were there, and he carried them with him, and came to Damascus, and [gave] it to the king of Assyria, according to his agreement. So he confessed that he owed him thanks for all that he had done for him, and returned to Jerusalem. (*Jos. Ant.* 9.12.2, para. 254)

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[10] Mordechai Cogan, 'Judah under Assyrian Hegemony: A Reexamination of Imperialism and Religion', *JBL*, Vol. 112, No. 3 (1993), 401, calls for a 'refinement of the nomenclature used to describe the political relationships within the Assyrian Empire and without', and points out that it is doubtful whether Judah was actually 'bound by a formal, written *adê* treaty' rather than having merely the duty of 'performance of servitude' (p. 410). Some scholars have inferred from the unique phrase, 'I am thy servant and thy son' (2 Kgs 16:7), that Judah might have become an Assyrian vassal already earlier on. Still, the overall presentation of the events seems to indicate that this was the beginning of Judah's vassaldom. See Hayim Tadmor and Mordechai Cogan, 'Ahaz and Tiglath-Pileser in the Book of Kings: Historiographic Considerations', *Bib*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (1979) 504f.

[11] Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 107f. Tadmor also points out that this tribute is not necessarily the same as the above mentioned bribe. The former was in 734 BCE, in conjunction with the campaign against Philistia. The latter might have been in either 735 or 733 BCE (pp. 235, 268, 277).

As was often the case, political domination by a foreign power facilitated foreign influences. Moreover, with the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BCE, Judah's border was conterminous with the Assyrian province of Samaria. Assyrian influence upon Judah, therefore, became stronger and more direct. Judah could freely trade with other parts of the Assyrian Empire.[12] Thus, it is also likely that more people from Judah would have travelled and made contact with the Assyrian culture. The prophets (e.g. Isaiah, Hosea and Micah) warned of the danger in this contact, which could only result in a growing influence in cultural and religious spheres.[13] However, their words seemed to fall upon deaf ears during the reign of Ahaz, although they bore fruit when his son Hezekiah came to the throne (727–698).

Morally and spiritually, there was no doubt that Hezekiah was a superior man to his father. The influence of the words of the prophets, Isaiah, Hosea and Micah, were evident in his deeds. He aimed at the purification of worship and the healing of many of the social ills (2 Chron. 29–31). Politically, his attempts at regaining complete freedom from the Assyrian overlord were doomed to failure. However, one cannot say that Hezekiah was foolhardy: he made his moves very carefully. During Sargon's reign (721–705) Judah did not oppose the Assyrians, nor did it

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[12] See Mordechai Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah, and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries BCE*, SBLMS 19 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974) 92.

[13] As opposed to long held views, Assyria's policy of subjugation did not require the vassal states to worship the Assyrian gods: Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, 60*, cf.* Cogan, 'Judah under Assyrian Hegemony', 403–414, against H. Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit*, FRLANT 129 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1982) 307ff. See also J. W. McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians 732–609 BC*, Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM Press, 1973). It has sometimes been argued that the altar Ahaz copied in Damascus (2 Kgs 16:10–16; 2 Chron. 28:16–24) was Assyrian (Bright, *A History of Israel*, 276f). This, however, has been disproved: Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, 73–77; Adolf Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) 186–189, esp. p. 192. It was obviously of Aramean origin. See ch. 1 above. It might rather be the case that the atmosphere of multiculturalism and open ways in the Assyrian Empire facilitated a renewed rise of old native pagan cults and made them highly attractive, *cf.* Cogan, 'Judah under Assyrian Hegemony', 412f; C. Uehlinger, 'Figurative Policy, Propaganda und Prophetie', *Congress Volume: Cambridge, 1995*, ed. John Adney Emerton (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997) 297–349.

take part in the revolt of the Philistine cities of 714–711.[14] He did, however, start his cultic reforms very early in his reign (2 Chron. 29:3ff). Apart from purifying the places of worship, which had come under strong pagan influence during the reign of Ahaz, a very important and meaningful move was the invitation of the northern residents to come and celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem together with Judah (2 Chron. 30:1 – 31:1).[15] This tentative overture seems to have escaped the close watch of the Assyrians. It is also quite possible that, between the fall of Samaria and the coming of Sennacherib, Hezekiah had succeeded in annexing to Judah areas on its northern border.[16] Hezekiah, meanwhile, though still ostensibly loyal to Assyria and paying his annual tribute, prepared for war and for a siege of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:2–8, possibly also Isa. 22:9–11a). He entertained Merodach-baladan, a Chaldean, who was one of the main instigators of several Babylonian revolts against Assyria (2 Kgs 20:12ff; *cf.* Isa. 39).[17] He was in contact with Egypt, where a new and strong dynasty gave rise to hopes of worthwhile help from this old time foe of Assyria (*cf.* 2 Kgs

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[14] At least not too actively. There is a prism from Sargon in which is stated, 'Togeth[er with[?] the kings] of Philistia, Judah, Ed[om and] Moab, who dwell by the sea, payers of tribute and gifts to Ashur my lord, they sent evil words and unseemly speeches (with) their presents to Pharaoh king of Egypt, a prince who could not save them, to set (him) at enmity with me, and asked him for (military) aid' (this is the translation of Na'aman, 'Letter to God', 32). Since, however, the Assyrian campaign, in answer to this rebellion, was directed against Ashdod alone, one can safely assume that Judah, together with the other Philistine cities apart from Ashdod, Edom and Moab, was quick to submit to Sargon when he came into the region (*cf.* Na'aman, 'Letter to God', 32ff). He obviously tried to avoid direct conflict with Sargon.

It seems that on this occasion the king heeded Isaiah's warning and remained loyal to Assyria. It has been argued that Isaiah supported Ahaz' policy of submission to Assyria, and that the oracles condemning Assyrian influences within Judah are Deuteronomistic interpolations. Jesper Høgenhaven, 'The Prophet Isaiah and Judaean Foreign Policy under Ahaz and Hezekiah', *JNES*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (1990) 351–354.

[15] See ch. 2 above.

[16] Zechariah Kallai, גבולותיה הצפוניים של יהודה *[The Northern Boundaries of Judah: From the Settlement of the Tribes until the Beginning of the Hasmonean Period]* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1960) 69.

[17] Was the alliance in the west, once Sargon II had died, supported by Babylonia? David Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib* (Tel-Aviv: The Institute of Archaeology, Tel-Aviv University, 1982) 15. Hezekiah's alliance with Merodach-Baladan is perhaps another reason why Sennacherib fought so fiercely against Judah (see below): Albert Kirk Grayson, 'Sennacherib', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 1088–1089.

18:21, 24).[18] The Philistine cities were restless, and they too were looking south to Egypt. Within Judah, the religious reforms encouraged the flourishing of patriotism, and increased trust in the LORD for deliverance from the oppressor. Jerusalem became a centre again, and many of those Israelites who were not exiled looked to it and actually came there.[19]

When Sargon died, many countries throughout the empire rebelled—a common occurrence upon the death of a king. Among them were Sidon, Ashkelon and Judah, and they could count on Egyptian help. According to an Assyrian inscription, the officials of Ekron rose against their pro-Assyrian king, Padi, and handed him over to Hezekiah, who held him in Jerusalem (Oriental Institute Prism).[20]

Hezekiah also took some of the cities near Gaza back that had been lost during the reign of Ahaz (2 Kgs 18:8).[21] It seems also that he took at that time a census of the population throughout the Negev, for military purposes.[22] Within the capital, he dug the Siloam tunnel, to ensure an adequate supply of water in case of siege, and arranged for the storage of food: grain, wine and oil[23] (2 Chron. 32:3f, 28–30). He also organised the

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[18] Perhaps as early as 713 BCE (see n. 14 above). Also, the constant rebukes by Isaiah against seeking the help of Egypt (e.g. Isa. 30:2ff.), indicate that hope for its help was held quite early in Hezekiah's reign. S. Yeivin, מחקרים בתולדות ישראל וארצו *[Studies in the History of Israel and Its Country]* (Tel-Aviv: M. Newman, 1960) 266–267, stresses that the army officers supported leaning upon Egypt for help (e.g. the Lachish letters at a later date), and these people who, in later years, fled to Egypt, probably laid the foundations of the Jewish military colonies in Egypt and probably served as mercenaries there, since they were professional soldiers.

[19] 'And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the Land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.' (2 Chron. 30:25–26).

[20] Oriental Institute Prism (*ANET*[3], 287).

[21] *Cf.* Na'aman, 'Letter to God', 27. These cities changed hands a number of times, from Judah to Philistia, and then back to Judah—only to be given back to the loyal Philistines again by Sennacherib; all this changing of hands must have involved large numbers of the population, some of whom may have travelled on. Others intermixed with neighbours, while some may have been taken captive and led further afield.

[22] Benjamin Mazar, 'מסע סנחריב לארץ יהודה [The Campaign of Sennacherib in Judah]', *EI*, Vol. 2 (1953) 171.

[23] Nadav Na'aman, 'Hezekiah's Fortified Cities and the LMLK Stamps', *BASOR*, No. 261 (1986) 5–21, suggests that the list of fortified cities in 2 Chron. 11:6–12

army and looked to Egypt for cavalry help. Eventually, the formal break came:

> …and he [Hezekiah] rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. (2 Kgs 18:7)

The rebellion throughout the region brought Sennacherib to the west, to quell the uprisings.[24] Having settled matters in all the surrounding countries, Sennacherib was then able to turn his full attention to Judah. This is how he reports the campaign:

> As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered (them) by means of well-stamped (earth-) ramps [...] *I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old, male and female*, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered (them) booty. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthwork in order to molest those who were leaving his city's gate. *His towns which I had plundered, I took away from his country and gave them (over) to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza. Thus I reduced his country, but I still increased the tribute* and the katrû—presents (due) to me (as his) overlord which I imposed (later) upon him beyond the former tribute, to be delivered annually. Hezekiah himself, whom the terror-inspiring splendor of my lordship had overwhelmed and whose irregular and elite troops which he had brought into Jerusalem, his royal residence, in order to strengthen (it), had deserted him, did send me, later, to Nineveh, my lordly city, together with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, antimony, large cuts of red stone, couches (inlaid) with ivory, *nîmedu* -chairs (inlaid) with ivory, elephant-hides, ebony-wood, box-wood (and) all kinds of valuable treasures, *his (own) daughters, concubines, male and female musicians. In order to deliver the*

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should be attributed to Hezekiah's time rather than to that of Rehoboam. He points out that, as far as archaeological evidence can indicate so far, the cities listed correspond to the sites on which LMLK stamps were found. Thus, the jars stamped with LMLK could be storage jars especially for oil and wine as part of the measurements taken in order to prepare the cities along the south western defence line for war and siege.

[24] 'The Assyrian vassals Ekron and Ashdod were taken by Hezekiah and Biq'at Ono and Jaffa were apparently captured by Zidqu in order to fortify the defensive line of the coalition in this area. But Sennacherib captured Jaffa, Azuru, B'nei Braq and Beit-Dagon. He defeated the Egyptians and turned against Hezekiah with all his might.' Jacob Kaplan, הארכיאולוגיה והסטוריה של תל־אביב־יפו *[The Archaeology and History of Tel-Aviv – Jaffa]* (Tel-Aviv: Massada Publication, 1959).

> *tribute and to do obeisance as a slave he sent his (personal) messenger.* (Oriental Institute Prism)[25]

The biblical text is in close agreement on reporting the above campaign:

> Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them. And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying: 'I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest on me I will bear.' And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. (2 Kgs 18:13–14)

The slaughter during the capture of these fortified cities must have been fearful, and the number of captives great. Whether the number of deportees that Sennacherib gives—namely 200,150—is exaggerated or not, there must have been very many. Archaeological evidence attests the enormous destruction that was wrought upon these cities.[26]

We have an especially large amount of evidence from Lachish.[27] Lachish seems to have been a royal chariotry garrison of Judah, as indicated by allusions in the Bible, archaeological finds, and depictions of burning chariots on Sennacherib's reliefs, which we will discuss below.[28] It was, apparently, set up as Sennacherib's headquarters while he

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[25] *ANET*[3], 288; italics are mine.

[26] *Cf.* I. Finkelstein, 'The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh', *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*, eds Philip J. King, Michael David Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum and Lawrence E. Stager (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 172f (summary of Y. Dagan, שפלת יהודה בתקופת המלוכה לאור החפירות והסקר הארכיאולוגי *[The Judean Shephela during the Monarchy Period in the Light of the Excavations and the Archaeological Survey]* (Tel-Aviv: MA thesis, Tel-Aviv University, 1992)).
The town lists in Isa. 10:28–32 and Micah 1:10–16 seem to mention some of the towns taken by name.

[27] The most comprehensive studies of Lachish are found in Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish* (which includes excellent photographs and drawings of the reliefs depicting the conquest which were found in Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh, and a detailed discussion of these reliefs) and David Ussishkin, 'The Assyrian Attack on Lachish: The Archaeological Evidence from the Soutwest Corner of the Site', *TA*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1990) 53–86 (being a summary of the excavations at Lachish, 1973–1989).

[28] Micah 1:13; Ussishkin, 'The Assyrian Attack on Lachish', 81–85; the plates in Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish*.

campaigned against Judah, for it was there that Hezekiah sent messengers with offers of gifts and tribute in order to save Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18:14), and it was from there that Sennacherib sent his officials to Jerusalem (v. 17). Lachish is a unique case in biblical archaeology. We have the general historical outline in the biblical and Assyrian records (2 Kgs 18:13 – 19:37, Isa. 36f and 2 Chron. 32; Oriental Institute Prism of Sennacherib, Taylor Prism and other smaller parts of inscriptions[29]). Well preserved archaeological evidence bears witness to the fact that the city was under siege and finally destroyed,[30] but, even more interesting, are the well preserved sculptured reliefs of Sennacherib from Nineveh, which are to be found in the British Museum. The city is identified in a cuneiform inscription.[31] The siege mounds and machinery are shown, and from the gate, the native population streams out in surrender. This must be the first pictorial representation of Judeans that have come to hand.[32] The men who

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[29] *ANET*[3], 287f.

[30] The identification of Tell ed-Duweir with ancient Lachish is generally accepted (see Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish*, 19), though the evidence is only circumstantial. For doubts of this identification, see Gösta W. Ahlström, 'Is Tell Ed-Duweir Ancient Lachish', *PEQ*, Vol. 112 (1980) 7–9, and Gösta W. Ahlström, 'Tell Ed-Duweir: Lachish or Libnah', *PEQ*, Vol. 115 (1983) 103f, but also Graham I. Davies, 'Tell Ed-Duwei = Ancient Lachish: A Response to G. W. Ahlström', *PEQ*, Vol. 114 (1982) 25–28.

The siege ramp discovered at Lachish is 'the only Assyrian siege ramp known today', even though the Assyrians were specialised in this method (Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish*, 11ff). For the little evidence which has survived concerning Judean preparation for a siege, see Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish*, 54 and Ussishkin, 'The Assyrian Attack on Lachish', 59–64, 69–76. A 'counterramp' has been discovered opposite the Assyrian ramp which was obviously built in an effort to strengthen the wall (David Ussishkin, 'Excavations at Tel Lachish – 1978–1983, Second Preliminary Report', *TA*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1983) 143–146). A mass grave found at Lachish might bear witness to the great slaughter which must have taken place there (*cf.* Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish*, 56).

[31] Austen Henry Layard, *A Second Series of the Monuments of Nineveh: From Drawings Made on the Spot, during a Second Expedition to Assyria* (London: John Murray, 1853) 3 and plates XX–XXIII.

The arrangement of the reliefs in his palace show the importance given to Lachish by Sennacherib (Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish*, 69). This is also evident by his personal presence at the site (shown in the reliefs and mentioned in the Bible, Isa. 37:8). Judah obviously was the strongest power in the region at the time (*cf.* Na'aman, 'Letter to God', 34ff), and in his annals Sennacherib tries to cover up the fact that he did not succeed in taking it completely (see above).

[32] *Cf.* the plates in Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish*. *Cf.* M. Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrer Neoassyrischer Darstellungen*, *AOAT* 26 (Neukirchen-Vlyn: Neukirchner

are led to exile wear sleeveless shirts, held together by a wide girdle, fringed tassels hanging down between their legs, and a scarf wound around their head with fringes over the ears. Women and girls are depicted in simple, long garments, with a shawl over head and shoulders to the feet. There is, however, a second group of men. They are dressed in long robes, and are bareheaded. They appear on their knees in front of Assyrian officials, or as being tortured or killed by Assyrians. Therefore, they are often thought to be Judeans sent to Lachish by Hezekiah in order to support and encourage Lachish's population in resisting the Assyrians.[33] These people of Lachish are evidently reckoned by the Assyrians among the Philistines. They are depicted again in other reliefs in Sennacherib's palace as part of the forced labour who built his palace at Nineveh, as musicians and guards.[34] Captives taken from the other Judean cities captured by Sennacherib at the same time might well be included in these depictions, since they would certainly have been used in a similar way.

The question whether Sennacherib conducted one or two campaigns into Palestine has been widely discussed. It has been suggested—mainly for reasons to do with Egyptian chronology—that 2 Kings 18:13–16 refers to a first campaign in 701 BCE, whereas 2 Kings 18:17 – 19:36 refers to a second campaign at a later date, possibly around 688/7 BCE.[35] However, if one accepts F. Yurco's proposal of a co-regency between the Egyptian Pharaohs, Shabaka and Shebitku, there is no need for a second campaign by Sennacherib, since Pharaoh Tirhaka (Egyptian Taharka) of 2 Kings 19:9 would already be in a position to conduct campaigns in 701 BCE.[36] Yurco also refutes Shea's other arguments for a second campaign. In the absence of greater evidence, we will adopt the position that Sennacherib campaigned into Palestine only once, in 701 BCE, and that 2 Kings 18:13 – 19:36 refers to this one campaign.

Verlag, 1975) 52–67 and plate 2f; Ruth Jacoby, 'The Representation and Identification of Cities on Assyrian Reliefs', *IEJ*, Vol. 41, No. 1–3 (1991) 122–131.

[33] Richard D. Barnett, 'The Siege of Lachish', *IEJ*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1958) 161–164.

[34] Barnett, 'The Siege of Lachish', and for a more detailed description, and plates, see Wäfler as cited in n. 32.

[35] More recently, William H. Shea, 'Sennacherib's Second Palestinian Campaign', *JBL*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (1985) 401–418; William H. Shea, 'The New Tirhakah Text and Sennacherib's Second Palestinian Campaign', *AUSS*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (1997) 181–187.

[36] Frank J. Yurco, 'The Shabaka-Shebitku Coregency and the Supposed Second Campaign of Sennacherib against Judah: A Critical Assessment', *JBL*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (1991) 35–45.

The tribute and gifts which Hezekiah sent to Sennacherib included people. These were not merely musicians, handmaids and concubines that are mentioned, but—according to Sennacherib's annals—included are daughters of Hezekiah.[37] By the time the captives of Sennacherib's campaign into Judah were added to the people who were included in the tribute, there must have been quite a little community in Assyria, and these must have had close ties with their northern brothers, who had suffered a similar fate earlier.

Jerusalem was eventually saved from destruction by the Assyrian army through the miraculous withdrawal of Sennacherib's forces (2 Kgs 19:35f; 2 Chron. 32:21; Isa. 37:36f), and this deliverance left a very deep impression upon the people.[38] Hezekiah was then allowed to end his days in peace.

After the death of Hezekiah, his son, Manasseh (698–642), was completely obedient and thoroughly docile under his Assyrian master. Manasseh lived during the reigns of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon (680–669) and Ashurbanipal (668–627). Esarhaddon succeeded in conquering Egypt in 671 BCE. For a number of years, the forces of Esarhaddon, and later those of Ashurbanipal, travelled southwards to Egypt. This military flood, as it went through Palestine, swept along with it the rulers of the lands through which it passed. The kings of Philistia, most of Phoenicia, Transjordan and Judah, were forced to pay tribute to the world conqueror, and perhaps even to send battalions of soldiers to his aid. From the Assyrian records and from the book of Kings (2 Kgs 21), it seems that Manasseh remained loyal to his overlords. Assyrian records mention his name amongst other kings who had paid their due tribute to Esarhaddon:

> I called up the kings of the country Hatti and (of the region) on the other side of the river (Euphrates) (to wit): Ba'lu, king of Tyre, Manasseh (*Me-na-si-i*), king of Judah (*Ia-ú-di*), Qaushgabri, king of Edom, […] Ahimilki,

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[37] See above.

[38] Jewish legends have it that Sennacherib's two sons, as well as his vassal troops, became Jewish proselytes, and that the Pharaoh of Egypt and the Ethiopian king, Tirhaka, spread 'the report of the greatness of God everywhere'. Louis Ginzberg, Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols, Vol. IV: From Joshua to Esther (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968) 269–271.

For the withdrawal, see Antti Laato, 'Assyrian Propaganda and the Falsification of History in the Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib', *VT*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (1995) 198–226, and esp. pp. 213ff.

> king of Ashdod—12 kings from the seacoast; […] together 22 kings of Hatti, the seashore and the islands; all these I sent out and made them transport under terrible difficulties, to Nineveh, the town (where I exercise) my rulership, as building material for my palace: […]
>
> (Prism B, V:1–27)[39]

Also, Manasseh is later mentioned amongst the tribute payers of the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, as well as being one of those who had to give supplies to his army on his march to Egypt in 667 BCE:

> During my march (to Egypt) 22 kings from the seashore, the islands and the mainland,
> Ba'al, king of Tyre, Manasseh (Mi-in-si-e), king of Judah (Ia-ú-di), Qaushgabri, king of Edom, [...] 12 kings from the seashore, the islands and the mainland;
> servants who belong to me, brought heavy gifts (tâ-martu) to me and kissed my feet. I made these kings accompany my army over the land—as well as (over) the sea-route with their armed forces and their ships (respectively).
>
> (Rassam Cylinder i; list inserted from Cylinder C)[40]

In 2 Chronicles 33:11–13, however, we read of the episode in which Manasseh was led in fetters and brought before the king in Babylon. This episode is also recounted by Josephus (*Jos. Ant.* 10.3.2, para. 40). It may be that Manasseh was suspected of disloyalty and found innocent, or that he was pardoned like Necho of Egypt and returned to his throne (2 Chron. 33:13).[41]

When Manasseh started to reign, he had to rebuild Judah, which lay largely in ruins and was greatly diminished. Agriculture had to be reorganised after the fertile Shephela was lost, and the country had to be repopulated. Slowly, the economic conditions became stable for Judah, and, during the extended period of peace, and due to the open market within the Assyrian Empire, commerce flourished and dealings with other countries increased. Judah expanded into the Beersheba valley, and took

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[39] *ANET*[3], 291.
[40] *ANET*[3], 294.
[41] *ANET*[3], 295. *Cf.* Roy E. Gane, 'The Role of Assyria in the Ancient Near East during the Reign of Manasseh', *AUSS*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1997) 25. Gane states in this context that the 'historicity of the Chronicles account is plausible but lacks direct extrabiblical corroboration'.

part in the thriving trade with Arabia, especially in wine oil and balms.[42]

Still, it is interesting to note that during this period in particular, a certain movement of emigration from the country took place.[43] This was probably mainly for reasons of trade with other countries. In this way, some emigrants from Judah possibly came into Egypt, where they were readily accepted, and where they settled down and worked at their trade.[44] Similarly, people may have travelled towards Mesopotamia via Syria, and settled there of their own accord, joining some of their brethren in the diaspora. Having seen how Assyria exploited the manpower of its vassals in its building and military activities,[45] it seems reasonable to assume that in this way, a number of Judeans would have settled down in the Assyrian heartland as well.

Emigration might have been also partly due to the wish of some people to escape from the influence or persecution of Manasseh's godless policy (*cf.* 2 Kgs 21:2–16; *Jos. Ant.* 10.3.1).[46] If this is true, it is interesting to see how Manasseh's reintroduction of foreign cults actually forced people to move to foreign countries, and thus into the very surrounding of the foreign influences from which they wanted to escape.

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[42] Finkelstein, '*The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh*', 178–181; I. Finkelstein, 'Horvat Qitmit and the Southern Trade in the Late Iron Age II', *ZDPV*, Vol. 108 (1992) 156–170; B. Halpern, 'Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability', *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*, eds B. Halpern and D. W. Hobson, JSOTSup 124 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 63f; 7th century Palestinian pottery has been found at Nimrud and vice versa, Ruth Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land: From Its Beginnings in the Neolithic Period to the End of the Iron Age* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970) 291.

[43] Lewy, *Israel among the Nations*, 294, n. 6.
Ehud Ben Zvi, 'Prelude to a Reconstruction of the Historical Manassic Judah', *BN*, No. 81 (1996) 32, writes that the integration into the Assyrian region brought 'increased contact between Judahites and non-Judahites, in which not only the Judahite elite took part'.

[44] *Cf.* Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) 8–13.

[45] See above; *cf.* Gane, 'The Role of Assyria', 22.

[46] *Cf.* Walter Dietrich, *Israel und Kanaan: vom Ringen Zweier Gesellschaftssyteme*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 94 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1979) 101f. According to Jewish legends, the prophet Isaiah was among those killed by Manasseh: Ginzberg, Szold and Radin, *The Legends of the Jews, Vol. IV*, 279.

Through its conquest of Egypt, Assyria had strengthened its hold on Judah, as the empire stretched from the Tigris to the Nile. Judah must have been considered loyal by the Assyrians, as Manasseh was permitted to continue with his building extensions and repair work in the fortified cities that he had started in the later part of his rule (2 Chron. 33:14).[47] Judah occupied an important strategic position between Egypt and Assyria. Being a buffer state between the two, building activity in Judah would have been welcomed, if not encouraged, from the Assyrian side, in order to counter the Egyptian threat.[48]

An expansion of Judah can be observed in archaeological surveys. Many new sites are built, whereas previous ones are mostly left in ruins. As to whether these sites should be attributed to Manasseh, or rather to his grandson, Josiah (639–609 BCE), who ruled in the later part of the century (in a time of peace without destruction layers, it is difficult to date finds exactly), it seems that Manasseh was the one who started such activity, even though settlement expansion in Judah continued for the rest of the century.[49]

Although the Assyrians seem to have left Manasseh pretty well alone, they certainly continued to maintain a careful and close watch over their regions in the west. Twice, during the reign of Esarhaddon and again during the reign of Ashurbanipal, they brought more people from distant lands into what had once been Israel—thereby increasing the foreign population, and lessening any nationalistic feelings in the area (Ezra 4:1f, 9f).[50] These new captives were at least, in part, captives from the conquest of Elam, who had helped Babylonia in its struggle against the Assyrians (652–648 BCE).

During the long reign of Manasseh, the extension of the great Assyrian Empire had reached its zenith. By the end of the life of his son, Amon (641–640), and at the beginning of Josiah's reign (639–609), it had begun to decline. Half way through Josiah's reign, Judah became, in effect,

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[47] *Cf.* Dan Bahat, 'The Wall of Manasseh in Jerusalem', *IEJ*, Vol. 31 (1981) 235–236.
[48] Gane, 'The Role of Assyria', 24.
[49] Finkelstein, '*The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh*', 175–178; Lynn Tatum, 'King Manasseh and the Royal Fortress at Horvat 'Uza [*sic*]', *BA*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (1991) 141–145; Magen Broshi and Israel Finkelstein, 'The Population of Palestine in Iron Age II', *BASOR*, No. 287 (1992) 47–60.
[50] *Cf.* Oded, *Mass Deportation*, 66, 133.

independent, by virtue of the fact that Assyria no longer held sway in the area. Ashurbanipal had died in 627, and was followed by several weak kings.[51] Josiah was even able to widen the borders of his kingdom (*cf.* 2 Kgs 23:15; 2 Chron. 34:6),[52] and to undertake far reaching socio-religious and politico-economic reforms (2 Kgs 23:1 – 24:27; 2 Chron. 34:1 – 35:19). In spite of Assyria's absence, Josiah eventually died in Megiddo, fighting Necho II from Egypt, who was on his way to help Assyria against Babylonia (2 Chron. 35:20–24). Egyptian help, though, could not save Assyria. Nahum's prophecy concerning Nineveh was soon to come true:

> But Nineveh hath been from of old like a pool of water;
> Yet they flee away;
> 'Stand, stand';
> But none looketh back.
> Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold;
> For there is no end of the store,
> Rich with all precious vessels.
> She is empty, and void, and waste;
> And the heart melteth, and the knees smite together,
> And convulsion is in all loins,
> And the faces of them all have gathered blackness. (Nahum 2:9–11)

The Babylonians and the Medes were looming on the horizon. In 612 BCE, Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, fell, and in 609 BCE, Assyria was partitioned between Babylonia and Media.

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[51] Nadav Na'aman, 'The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah', *TA*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1991) 38–41, opposes the commonly held view that the Assyrians lost control over Syria-Palestine after 639 BCE. According to him, they exercised strict control in the area until they handed it over to the Egyptians in exchange for help against the Babylonians and Medes. In this view, Judah possibly became formally an Egyptian vassal, but even if this were the case, Judah would have enjoyed a great amount of freedom, since Egypt was busy elsewhere.

[52] For a summary of the discussion of the extent of this process, see Ephraim Stern, 'The Eastern Border of the Kingdom of Judah in Its Last Days', *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*, eds Philip J. King, Michael David Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum and Lawrence E. Stager (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 399; Gershon Galil, 'Geba'-Ephraim and the Northern Boundary of Judah in the Days of Josiah', *RB*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (1993) 364–367.

Section II(c)

Assyria: Israelites *in Situ* in Mesopotamia

CHAPTER 5

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

There is a quantity of material available that gives evidence of the presence of Hebrews in Mesopotamia, and which is of particular interest. This is not biblical material, written through the eyes of a man of faith, who therefore has his own interpretation of the content, nor is it from the Assyrian annals, reflecting the official opinions of the time. Rather, this is ideologically neutral material: receipts, lists of names, etc., which are shreds of evidence, direct from the ground, that speak for themselves; traces that show us how these people really lived.[1]

The most reliable way of determining whether a person was an Israelite,[2] is if he bears a Yahwistic name, i.e. a name with the component, *yahu*.[3] There are lots of names that are common in several West Semitic languages, and the occurrence of just a 'biblical' name in a document in Mesopotamia is therefore no proof that the person was an Israelite.[4] Only when the name is compounded with *yahu*, or where additional information is given, such as place of origin, can we be reasonably certain.

Most of the documents that have been found are written in Akkadian. A few, however, are written in West Semitic dialects and scripts. Attempts have been made to locate such documents according to their scripts. Thus,

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[1] Pictorial evidence for Israelites in Mesopotamia has been discussed in the previous chapter, in connection with the Lachish relief, and will not be repeated here.

[2] The term, 'Israelite', unless otherwise specified, will be used in this chapter as a general term, including both Israelites and Judeans. The term, 'Judean', is used more frequently after the exile of the northern kingdom.

[3] *Cf.* R. Zadok, *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponomy and Prosopography* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1988) 1. The shorter ending, *-ya*, cannot be taken into account, since this is a very common and early suffix in West Semitic languages.

[4] For this reason, lists of names which have previously been connected with Israelites now have to be assessed more carefully. J. B. Segal, 'An Aramaic Ostracon from Nimrud', *Iraq*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1957) 139–145. *Cf.* William Foxwell Albright, 'An Ostracon from Calah and the North-Israelite Diaspora', *BASOR*, Vol. 149 (1958) 33–36; Bob Becking, 'Kann das Ostrakon ND 6231 von Nimrūd für ammonitisch gehalten werden', *ZDPV*, Vol. 104 (1988) 59–67.

the Ivory Inscription from Nimrud, which we will deal with below, has been classified as Hebrew, because of its language and especially its script.

The most comprehensive work on evidence of Israelites and Judeans in Mesopotamia is found in R. Zadok's, *The Pre-hellenistic Israelite Anthroponomy and Prosopography*,[5] in which he examines the Israelite names which are found in documents from Mesopotamia and elsewhere. Concerning the region of Mesopotamia, he lists the names of about 50 persons, from the time before the fall of the Assyrian Empire, which to a high degree of certainty can be taken as Israelite.

It is worthwhile examining some of these finds in depth, in order to deduce some conclusions about the life of Israelites in exile.

a. The Sale of Hoshea and his Wives[6]

Seal of Urda-Issar, owner of the people being sold.

(stamp seal impressions)

Hosea and his two wives, Me'sâ and Ba-dia; Se'-gabbâ and Bel-Harran-taklak; two weaned daughters; a total of 7 persons, servants of Urda-Issar - Se'-madi has contracted and bought them for 3 minas of silver.
The money is paid completely. Any revocation, lawsuit, or litigation is void.

[witnesses]

Month Tishri (VII), eponym year or Da-nanu.
Aramaic caption: Deed of Hosea and 6 *others*, 7 people of Urda-Is[sar].
(*ADD* 229)

This tablet was written in the reign of Esarhaddon, in the 7th month of the year 680 BCE. We have here a man by the name of Hoshea (written in Akkadian as *Ú-se-'*), who is obviously in a subservient position. The place of issue is possibly near Dūr-Šarru-kēn, the new capital that Sargon II founded about 200 miles north of Nineveh. In a pavement inscription, he

[5] See n. 3 above.
[6] *SAA* VI, 111 = *ADD* 229.

states that it was built by enemy captives.[7] The city is within the district of Ḫalaḫḫu. If the identification of Ḫalaḫḫu with Halah, mentioned in the Bible as a place where part of the population of the northern kingdom was exiled to, is the correct one,[8] one would expect to possibly find some evidence of Israelites there. On the other hand, one might ask whether these people could not also be from Judah. We know that successive waves of people from Israel came into Mesopotamia. The date of the document is such that it could refer either to someone of the northern tribes, or to some of the captives taken by Sennacherib from Judah.

What of the names that we find in the document? *Hoshea* (הושע; most likely a Hebrew name) in the biblical record is a name more commonly found in the northern kingdom. We are already familiar with the prophet Hoshea, who probably prophesied in the north, and also with the last king of Samaria by that name. The name, *Hoshea*, appears in the Bible in reference to three other people only: Joshua, who is sometimes referred to as Hoshea bin Nun, who was of the tribe of Ephraim (a tribe which settled in the north);[9] the head of the tribe Ephraim during David's reign;[10] and Hoshea, mentioned amongst the Levites in Nehemiah 10:24. In fact, the name is not explicitly mentioned in connection with Judah at any time in the Bible. A Hoshea appears in the Wadi Murabba'at Papyrus B, in the 7th century BCE,[11] as well as in several seals, some whose provenance is unknown, and five from the territory of Judah, mainly from the 8th century.[12] The latter ones come from a time when they could have been from northern refugees. One would tend to believe, therefore, that the slave referred to here is of the northern tribes.[13] One, however, can never be quite sure, since the name may have also been used in Judah without there being any record of it.[14]

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[7] *Cf.* Younger, 'The Deportations of the Israelites', 221f. For the building activities in Dūr-Šarru-kēn, see *SAA* XI, xv–xviii.

[8] See ch. 2 above.

[9] Numb. 13:8, 16; according to v. 16, Moses renamed him 'Joshua'.

[10] 1 Chron. 27:20.

[11] *AHI* I, 33.002.1.

[12] See references in *AHI* I, 333.

[13] If the name is not Phoenician or Transjordanian: Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 303.

[14] The name הושעיה, for example, which is similar and comes from the same root, does appear in Judah only, *cf.* Jer. 42:1; 43:2; Neh. 12:32, as well as in three ostraca from Judean territory from this time: Meṣad Ḥashavyahu (late 7th cent.

It is interesting to note the names of the wives listed in the Assyrian document. There is no name in the Bible similar to *Me-'-sa-a*. The closest to it is *Mesha*, in the forms of מישא and מישע, a descendant of Benjamin and a descendant of Judah respectively,[15] or else *Maaseiah* (מעשיהו/מעשיה), which occurs in a number of books in the Bible as a man's name.[16] The latter seems to have been particularly popular in the period during and after the exile. Most of these are from the tribe of Judah, or of priests who seem to have their origin in the southern kingdom.

The nearest biblical name to *Ba-di-a*, is also a masculine name, *Bedeiah* (בדיה), who was one of the returning exiles who married a foreign wife.[17] The only other name close to it is *Bithiah* (בתיה),[18] who was Pharaoh's daughter, and who married Mered of Judah. There is a seal from the Buqei'ah Valley from the 7th century, with the masculine name, בדיהו,[19] and an ostracon from Samaria from the 8th century BCE, with the name, בדיו,[20] on it. *Ba-di-a* could otherwise be the Assyrian rendering of a later Hebrew name, *Bat-iah* (daughter of God), but this is not certain. Thus, the two wives' names give no hint as to whether the two women have their roots in the northern or the southern kingdom, and in fact if they are Jewish at all.

The names of the other two adults sold—*Se'-gabbâ* and *Bel-Harran-taklak*—are Assyrian.

All seven slaves are said to have been acquired together by Se'-madi for three minas of silver. Se'-madi was 'village manager of the crown prince', and several documents attest to him buying slaves.[21] Probably all of the documents had belonged to the royal library, as they were found in

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BCE), *AHI* I, 7.001.7; Horvat Uza (7th/6th cent. BCE), *AHI* I, 37.001.3; Lachish (589/588), Lachish Letter 3, *AHI* I, 1.003.1.

[15] 1 Chron. 8:9; 2:42; *cf.* the name of the Moabite king in Ahab's time, מישע, 2 Kgs 3:4.

[16] See Jer. 21:1. A shorter form, מעשי, occurs in Arad Ostracon 22, *AHI* I, 2.022.4. A longer form with an additional final ו occurs in a few seals, mainly from Judah, see *AHI* I, 432, for references. One has to keep in mind, however, that most names we find in archaeological material are masculine. Therefore, not finding a certain feminine name does not say much about its existence or non-existence.

[17] Ezra 10:35.

[18] 1 Chron. 4:18.

[19] *AHI* I, 100.393.1.

[20] Samaria Ostracon 58, *AHI* I, 3.058.1.

[21] *SAA* VI, 100–103.

the south west palace of Nineveh. Se'-madi obviously belonged to the ruling class of the empire, and had acquired considerable wealth.[22] From these documents, it is not clear if he bought the total of 23 persons privately, or if buying slaves to increase the workforce in his village was one of the duties he had in his position.

b. The Sale of the Woman Banā-(E)saggil[23]

Hebrews do not, however, appear only in the low position of slaves who can be sold, but also on the opposite side:

> Seal of Iadi'-iau, the … of the chief of the construction sections, owner of the woman being sold.
> (Seals)
> The woman Banā-(E)saggil, his maidservant, Nabû-mītu-uballiṭ, son of Aššur-šarru-uṣur, chief of the collection centers, has contracted and bought for 34 shekels of silver. […]
>
> (*BM* 103956)

This contract is from the year 637/636, but the place is unknown. Iadiau is connected with the building trade, and in a position to own and sell a servant.

A similar name to Iadiau appears twice in the Bible, in the form of ידיה. One is a man who was among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah.[24] The other one is a prince of a family in the tribe of Simeon, mentioned in the book of Chronicles.[25] Otherwise, it could stand for the Hebrew name, Jedaiah (ידעיה—since Akkadian does not represent the letter ע), which name was borne by at least a priest in David's time,[26] and again by a priest in the time of the prophet Zechariah.[27] This name occurs as ידעיהו in Arad ostraca and a few seals.[28] With so few occurrences, nothing can be concluded about their origin from the former northern or southern kingdom.

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[22] *SAA* VI, xv–xviii.
[23] F. M. Fales, 'Studies in Neo-Assyrian Texts II', *ZA*, Vol. 73 (1983) 243–245.
[24] Neh. 3:10.
[25] 1 Chron. 4:37f.
[26] 1 Chron. 24:7.
[27] Zech. 6:10.
[28] See *AHI* I, 363f, for references.

c. A Commercial Document from the Time of Sargon II[29]

Seal of D[agan-milki], owner of the people being [sold].
(blank seal space)
Immannû, the woman Un[n...]ni, and Milki-uri, a total of 3 persons -
Šumma-ilani, chariot driver of *the royal corps*, has contracted and bought them from Dagan-milki for 3 minas of silver by the mina of Carchemish.
[…]
Witness Addâ, scribe.
Witness Ahi-ram, ditto.
Witness Paqaha, village manager.
Witness Nadbi-Ya'u, chariot driver.
Witness Bel-emuranni.
Witness Bin-dikiri.
Witness Ṭab-šar-Issar. Witness Tabnî, scribe, keeper of the tablet.
Month Ab (V), 20th day, eponym year of Mannu-ki-Aššur-le'i.
(*ADD* 234, Obv. 1–5, Rev. 6–13)

This document is part of the legal corpus found on the acropolis of Nineveh, and is dated to the year 709. Several of the names mentioned are of interest to us.

Milki-uri, one of the persons sold, could be an Israelite on account of his West Semitic name. This, however, cannot be shown, and he could equally be Phoenician or Transjordanian.[30]

However, we can be certain about the witness, *Nadbi-Ya'u*, since he bears a Yahwistic name. *Paqaḥa* is likely to be a Hebrew name, and will be discussed below. The name, *Bin-dikiri*, is elsewhere only attested in the Israelite onomasticon: in 1 Kings 4:9, an official of King Solomon bears the name *Ben-Deker* (בן־דקר). In later times, the name obviously shortened to *Bidkar* (בדקר), as attested for a captain of the Israelite king, Jehu.[31] The witness in our document can thus be assumed to be Israelite.[32]

The date of the document assures us that in all probability, we are dealing here with Israelites, since it dates well before the Judean exile,

[29] *SAA* VI, no. 34 = *ADD* 234.
[30] Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 303.
[31] 2 Kgs 9:25. *Cf.* Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 59.
[32] Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 303; at least until new evidence might come up which would relativise this assurance, i.e. evidence for a non-Israelite bearing this name.

unless, of course, one person or the other belongs to the group of Judeans who moved to Mesopotamia for reasons of trade.[33] The appearance of a chariot driver might be a hint for an origin of this person from the northern kingdom.[34] The document belongs to the same legal corpus, found at the palace in Nineveh, as the one concerning Hoshea and his wives. Like Se'-madi, Šumma-ilani belonged to the ruling elite of the empire. He is called the 'chariot driver of *the royal corps*'. The very substantial amount of 23 documents recording his business deals has been found. All of them, apart from the one we have dealt with here, are from the time of Sennacherib.

In this corpus of documents, very often also the witnesses belong to the ruling class. It is interesting to find among them an Israelite in the position of a 'village manager'—the same title Se'-madi, who bought Hoshea and his wives, had. Paqaḫa appears again, in a document from 693 BCE, as witness for Šumma-ilani, in the purchase of seven slaves.[35]

d. A Complaint of a Master-Builder[36]

> [To] the king, my lord: [your servant Ṭab]-šar-Aššur. [Good health] to the king, my lord!
>
> Paqaha, the master-builder in charge of the ditch came and had an audience with me, saying: "The king has added to the men working on the ditch but there are no (work) leaders. The governor of Talmusa is not able to direct the men, he said to me as follows:
>
> '1,000 men […
> (Break)
> .... we [can]not do the work.' "
>
> Paqaha told me: "I (must) personally take the lead of 100 men and spend a full month on the work. Let the king my lord call the leaders to account for the fact that I (must) spend a full month on the work employing (only) 100 men."
>
> (ABL 102)

[33] See ch. 4 above.
[34] See the discussion of the Horse List below, item e.
[35] *SAA* VI, no. 41 = *ADD* 240.
[36] *SAA* I, no. 65 = *ABL* 102.

This document belongs to the correspondence of Sargon II, and is written by Ṭab-šar-Aššur, Sargon's treasurer of his new capital, Dūr-Šarru-kēn. Ṭab-šar-Aššur has the second highest number of letters found amongst Sargon's correspondence.[37] He was obviously a very powerful and influential man. His letters show that he acted as a filter for messages and requests which are directed to the royal court. People relate their concern to him—orally or in writing—and he would then pass on to the king himself what he finds necessary to reach the palace. In the light of Sargon's building activities in Dūr-Šarru-kēn, and the fact that 'each provincial governor was responsible for providing the labour force for a specific sector of the city wall, and at times also the relevant materials',[38] this text fits in well with Sargon's huge building project there. Paqaḫa is called a 'master-builder', and is obviously in a responsible position in these royal building activities, which enables him even to send a complaint to the king through his treasurer.

As to the name, *Paqaḫa*, we have come across the Israelite kings, *Pekahiah* (פקחיה) and *Pekah* (פקח). They are, however, the only persons in the Bible who bear this name. The name is derived from the very common Hebrew root, פקח, 'to open', but at this time this root is unknown in most other Semitic languages. Thus, *Paqaḫa*, is very likely to be a Hebrew name, but could also refer to a Phoenician.[39]

e. A List of a Unit of Charioteers[40]

This list is part of the so called 'Horse Lists', which are administrative texts found in a military building at Fort Shalmaneser in Calah. According to S. Dalley, one of the editors of these lists, they name 'many, perhaps most, of the top officials and the equestrian officers in Sargon's army at that period, and they also contain information about the different units

[37] *SAA* I, nos. 41–67; *cf.* p. xviii.
[38] *SAA* XI, xvi.
[39] Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 70, 191.
[40] *CTN* III, 99. Treated in Dalley, 'Foreign Chariotry', *cf.* Israel Eph'al, '"The Samarian(s)" in the Assyrian Sources', *Ah, Assyria... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed. M. Cogan (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991) 41f; Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 74–77; Younger, 'The Deportations of the Israelites', 219–221.

which made up the royal army.'[41] Their date is disputed, being possibly around 710/709 BCE. A list of 13 names is referred to in the text as forming a unit of equestrian officers or 'commanders of teams':[42]

Ib-ba-da-la	Da-la-aḫi(PAP)
Ia-u-ga-a	A-tam-ru
Aḫi(PAP)-id-ri	Ab-di-mil-ku
^{d}Bēl(EN)-dūr(ī) (BÀD)	Na-ar-me-na-a
Gab-bé-e	Sa-ma(?)-a
Aḫi(PAP)-id-ri	Ba-ḫe-e
Aḫi(PAP)-i-ú	Total 13, city of Samaria (^{uru}Sa-miri-ni),

hand of Nabu-bēlu-ukin.

(*CTN* III, 99, col. ii:16–23)[43]

In his annals, Sargon II reports:

> I besieged and conquered Samaria (*Sa-me-ri-na*), led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants of it. I formed from among them a contingent of 50 chariots…
>
> (*ANET*^{3}, 284f)[44]

In the Horse Lists we now seem to have a list of such Samarian charioteers.

The two names, *Iauga* and *Aḫiu*, are obviously Hebrew, since they contain the theophoric element, *yau*.[45] *Iauga* does not have any equivalent in either the Bible or other epigraphic material. Its second part comes from the known root, *g-'-y*, so that the name would mean something like, 'The Lord is exalted'.[46] This root is also used in the biblical name, Geuel.[47] *Aḫiu* is known in the Bible as Ahiah, in both its forms, אחיה and אחיהו, and

[41] Dalley, 'Foreign Chariotry', 31.
[42] Dalley, 'Foreign Chariotry', 36.
[43] The spelling of the names is taken from Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 302f; translation from Eph'al, '*The Samarians*', 41.
[44] According to the Nimrud Prism, he took 200 chariots, Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 74.
[45] In Akkadian, sometimes rendered -i-ú. Elsewhere, this name appears also as Aḫi(PAP)-ia-ú (*CTN* III, 99, i:2). See Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 303.
[46] *Cf.* Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 25.
[47] Numb. 13:15.

is born by persons from the north and the south.[48] It has also been found on several ostraca from Judah dating to the same period.[49]

Atamru and *Gabe* are Akkadian.[50] *Bēl-dūrī* could be either Akkadian or Aramaic,[51] whereas *Baḫe* is Aramaic.[52] *Aḫi-idri* is well known as an Aramaic name, but it cannot be excluded that it represents here a phonetic variant of what could be a Hebrew name, *'ḥ'zr*, having a parallel structure to the biblical name Joezer (יועזר).[53] The latter also occurs in a Wadi Murabba'at Papyrus from the 7th century.[54]

Ibadala, *Dalaḫi*, *Abdimilku*, *Narmena*, and *Sama* are West Semitic names, and as such can be Hebrew.[55]

For the reason that there are non-Hebrew names in this list, Eph'al has argued that the listed people should not be considered exiled Israelites, but rather mainly non-Israelites who were exiled to Samaria.[56] The question arises, however, if so soon after the repopulation of Samaria, a highly qualified equestrian unit could be formed from there.[57] Samaria was obviously famous for its excellent chariotry, as S. Dalley has shown,[58] Sargon II states explicitly that he formed a chariotry unit of Samarians, and the possibility remains open that some Israelites changed their names—be it voluntarily or by obligation.[59]

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[48] See 1 Chron. 2:25, a Judean; 1 Kgs 15:27, the father of the Israelite king, Baasha, from the tribe of Issachar.
[49] See *AHI* I, 273, for references.
[50] Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 175. Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 76, however derives the latter from the West Semitic root, גבה. In Neh. 11:8, we find the name, גבי.
[51] Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 174.
[52] Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 174.
[53] Zadok, *Israelite Anthroponomy*, 173. יועזר is to be found in 1 Chron. 12:7.
[54] Wadi Murabba'at Papyrus B, l. 4, *AHI* I, 33.002.1. There is also a seal from the 7th century (provenance unknown), with the name יהועזר on it, *AHI* I, 100.42.1.
[55] See שמא in 1 Chron. 7:37.
[56] Eph'al, '*The Samarians*', 41f.
[57] Arabians were settled there in 715 BCE. Dalley, 'Foreign Chariotry', 34.
[58] Dalley, 'Foreign Chariotry', 38. *Cf.* S. Timm, 'Die Eroberung Samarias aus assyrisch-babylonischer Sicht', *WO*, Vol. 20–21 (1989–1990) 79f.
[59] *Cf.* Younger, 'The Deportations of the Israelites', 220, n. 77.

f. A Report about the Affairs of an Assyrian Province[60]

This lengthy document is addressed to King Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE). More precise dating of the text is difficult due to mutilation. The author of the letter is unknown. He reports several happenings connected to Gozan, mainly the misdeeds of certain people.

The first section contains two Hebrew names:

> As regards six men and one woman, responsible for misdeeds against the king my lord (?): Kutî, the scribe; Tutî, inspector of settlements; Adad-kilanni, priest; Qurdî, charioteer; Niri-Iau, reviser of accounts; Palṭi-Iau, [his servant(?)]; the woman Zazâ, wife of Taraṣî: (all) servants of the governor. As regards the (well known) affair of Guzana, if it took place, they know (it); if nothing happened, they also know (it). May the king my lord speak with them personally. (*ABL* 633, Obv. 1ff)

The two persons bearing the Hebrew names, *Neriau* and *Paltiau*, appear again in the next section:

> [Thi]s[?] I have heard: Šamaš-emuranni, the governor, advised himself with Palṭi-iau and Niri-iau in the following terms, 'Which prefect is desired?' They replied to the governor, 'The one who will have clothed you in red wool and given you a golden ring and a golden sword'. […] said the governor, 'Out of here! Gather for me the elders of the cit[y and the servants of] the queen and of the crown prince. [They] will not speak to me of rings and swords!' (*ABL* 633, Obv. 27ff)

Both Hebrew names are found in the Bible. *Neriyahu* (נריהו) or, at times referred to as *Neriah* (נריה), was the father of Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe.[61] Probably the same Neriah was the father of Seraiah, one of Zedekiah's princes.[62] We find also the similar name, *Ner* (נר), earlier in the Bible: referring to Ner, the father of Abner, the chief of David's armies.[63] The name is also found in several ostraca and inscriptions from Judah: in Lachish (early 6th century), Arad (7th century) and Beersheba (8th century),

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[60] F. M. Fales, 'New Assyrian Letters from the Kuyunjik Collection', *AfO*, Vol. XXVII (1980) 142–146 = *ABL* 633.
[61] Jer. 36:14, *cf.* Jer. 32:12.
[62] Jer. 51:59.
[63] 1 Sam. 26:5.

and a number of seals.[64]

As for *Palṭi-Iau*, one finds *Platyahu* (פלטיהו), one of the princes in the days of Ezekiel.[65] The name, פלטה, was found inscribed on a stone in the City of David in Jerusalem, which was perhaps part of a wall in the stratum dating to the 10th to the 7th centuries.[66] פלטיהו occurs on several seals, mainly from the Tell Beit Mirsim Area.[67] Similarly, there is the name *Platiah* (פלטיה), a 'chief' during the time of Nehemiah,[68] and also a man from the tribe of Simeon.[69] There are other similar names to be found as well.[70]

In the third section the author states that:

> Ḫalbišu, from Samaria, fowler (?) of the king my lord, and Bar-ūrī, chief of the offering-burners for the god Be'l-rakab of the city of Sam'al, related to me the following circumstance: […] (*ABL* 633, Rev. 9ff)

Ḫalbišu, a man from Samaria, is obviously showing his loyalty to his lord, and telling him about the underhand dealings of some other people. The name, *Ḫalbišu*, is Assyrian. He might have chosen to bear it as a second name, or his parents might have named him this way, in an attempt to assimilate to their new linguistic surrounding. One would tend to assume that this reference to a Samarian in connection with Gozan[71] must almost inevitably be to a member of the Israelite captivity of 720, or to one of their children.[72]

Neriau and Paltiau are more difficult to locate. The connection to

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[64] See *AHI* I, 444f, for references.
[65] Ezek. 11:1, 13.
[66] Yigal Shiloh, *Excavations at the City of David 1978–1982: Interim Report of the First Five Seasons*, Qedem 19 (Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1984), 18.
[67] See *AHI* I, 471f, for references.
[68] Neh. 10:23.
[69] 1 Chron. 4:42.
[70] Names like *Pelet* (פלט, e.g. 1 Chron. 2:47), *Palti* (פלטי, e.g. 1 Sam. 25:44), *Piltai* (פלטי, Neh. 12:17), and *Paltiel* (פלטיאל, e.g. 2 Sam. 3:15).
[71] See ch. 2 above.
[72] Eph'al, '*The Samarians*', 40–44, points out the possibility that the term, 'Samarian', might also refer to people deported to Samaria or their children, and considers Ḫalbišu rather to be of this group.

Gozan, however, tempts one to associate them with the northern kingdom of Israel.

All three men had obviously attained official positions in the social ladder of Gozan. Neriau and Paltiau, though unknown from other sources,[73] seem to be state officials; they are asked by the governor to give advice. Ḫalbishu is also mentioned by name as an informant in a letter to Esarhaddon himself.

g. A Hebrew Inscription on Ivory from Nimrud[74]

Remains of three lines of a Hebrew inscription have been found on a fragmentary ivory plaque in the size of 9 x 5.3 cm, among a great number of other ivories discovered in Fort Shalmaneser at Nimrud. A. Millard, who published this inscription, describes the script in general as 'characteristic of the inscriptions from Palestine', and the letters as 'carefully engraved with a sharp point and each word separated by a dot.'[75]

Some of the letters are very much like those in the Samaria ostraca—especially the *aleph*, the *yod* and the *mem*. Although only a part of the letters of the inscription have been preserved, lines two and three have been tentatively reconstructed thus:

> (May God curse any) of my successors, from great king to private citizen who may come and destroy this inscription. (*ND* 10150)[76]

The reconstruction has been made on the grounds of parallels of words and their order found in two Phoenician and a Judean inscription.[77] Thus, this inscription is thought to be of similar nature.

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[73] As opposed to some of the other officials listed in this letter. Fales, 'New Assyrian Letters', 145.

[74] A. R. Millard, 'Ivories Found in Nimrud', *Iraq*, Vol. 24 (1962) 41–51, and plate XXIVa = *ND* 10150.

[75] Millard, 'Ivories Found in Nimrud', 45.

[76] Millard, 'Ivories Found in Nimrud', 47.

[77] Shmuel Aḥituv, אסופת כתובות עבריות. מימי בית־ראשון וראשית ימי בית־שני *[Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: From the Period of the First Commonwealth and the Beginning of the Second Commonwealth]* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1992) 205.

In attempting to date this fragment on the basis of its letter forms, one would tend to place it around 750 BCE.[78] The script is far more like the Samarian script of the 8th century, than that of the Judean writing preceding the fall of Jerusalem, which is more developed. In other words, it is more like the ostraca preceding the invasion of Tiglath-Pileser in 732 BCE.[79]

The find is interpreted by most scholars as either booty, taken by Tiglath-Pileser in 732, or part of tribute paid by Manasseh or even Hezekiah, on account of the amount of ivories found in Nimrud originating in various places, and the many long lists of spoils that mention gold, *ivory*, cattle, *people*, etc.[80] Alternately, it could indicate that a captive from Israel had brought it with him, or that someone in Nimrud wrote Hebrew. There is no name on it, but it could have been written by a captive. Still, given the place where it was found, and the fact that Samaria was famous for its ivories, one would tend to seek its origin in Samaria itself.

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What may be concluded from this evidence?

It is both interesting and fascinating to find Israelite names in places where it is known that these people lived. These receipts and letters give us a tiny glimpse into how they lived and what they did. The documents we have looked at, and which were chosen in order to give a representative view, show a wide variety of professions and social standing among the Israelites in Mesopotamia: from slaves to high officials, soldiers and a master builder, somebody who sells a servant and thus we might assume also buys servants, others who are sold and again others who appear as witnesses in contracts. For all of these categories, there are more examples than the names we are able to discuss here, and the list could also be extended: thus we find an Israelite who is a prefect,[81] a merchant,[82] and

[78] *Cf. AHI* I, 112.
[79] Millard, 'Ivories Found in Nimrud', 48.
[80] E.g. ch. 4 above, the list of Hezekiah's tribute. Millard, 'Ivories Found in Nimrud', 51; *cf.* Aḥituv, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 205.
[81] V. Scheil, 'Quelques Contrats Ninivites', *RA*, Vol. 24 (1927) 112f.
[82] *ARU*, 325.

somebody who acts as guarantor.[83]

This agrees with B. Oded's findings on the status of deportees in general.[84] He writes that 'the deportees had no clearly defined and distinct status among the local inhabitants' and further concludes that there was a 'lack of uniformity in the status and position of the deportees.'[85] Our finds also confirm that the policy of the Assyrian Empire was not to degrade foreign experts, but to use their abilities either directly in the services of the state (e.g. charioteers or builders), or indirectly to boost trade. We have to consider, as well, that we have certainly only identified a part of the material referring to Israelites, due to the problem of locating people with general West Semitic names.

As to whether an Israelite had his origin in the northern or the southern kingdom, we also very often have difficulties. Unless a place indicator is added to a name, or a document predates Sennacherib's campaign to the west or even Judah becoming an Assyrian vassal, we can never be sure whether a person belonged to the northern or southern diaspora.

Evidently, Israelites soon reached the capital cities. It is quite likely that the voluntary exiles went directly to these big towns, where they were joined, later, by the captives. Conversely, voluntary exiles may have settled in areas where captives lived.

It seems that many Israelites in Mesopotamia were influenced by their surroundings, and, in time, most of them were assimilated. However, there is no doubt that part of the Israelite community guarded its national unity, and kept in touch with their homeland.[86] In later years, they must have joined the Judean exiles. This would explain, in part, Ezekiel's message of redemption to the House of Israel, and the feeling of unity with the captivity of Judah that we find in the prophets of the era.[87] When Ezekiel prophesied the restoration of all the Israelite theocracy and planned its future constitution, he mapped out, at the same time, a complete territorial reorganisation of the Holy Land.[88] This plan proves that, at the time it was

[83] *ARU*, 638.
[84] Oded, *Mass Deportation*, 75–115, the chapter, 'Observations on the Position of Deportees'.
[85] Oded, *Mass Deportation*, 81.
[86] 2 Kgs 17:28.
[87] Ezek. 16:53ff, and especially 37:16f. *Cf.* Isa. 49:6.
[88] Ezek. 37:13ff.

prepared (some fourteen years after the final defeat of Judah), the twelve tribes of Israel continued to exist, and people were referred to by the tribe from which they came.

It seems more than likely, then, that the remnants of the ten tribes may have returned with the people of Judah in the days of Cyrus and later.[89] Their names may be found in lists, and are often hinted at elsewhere.[90]

Even when the two kingdoms had existed side by side in their own land, and despite periodic wars between the two states, intermarriage between Judah and Israel was very common: among the kings, among the upper classes and also among the rest of the people. How much more likely that, in a strange environment, beset by troubles, and wrenched from their homeland, they should be drawn together into one community. It is reasonable to surmise, therefore, that the northern diaspora did join with the later arrivals from Judah, and any later traces we find of the Judean captivity could, very likely, include some of the people of Israel.

h. A Document relating to the Redemption of a Hebrew Captive Woman[91]

This document, which comes from Tel-Halaf (Gozan), dates from the later half of the 7th century BCE. This official document states that Belbarech ben Nanni is to hand over the woman, Da-a-a-na-a, to a man by the name of U-si-'a, and, if he should not hand the woman over, he must pay U-si-'a a total of three minas of silver. U-si-' is described as a merchant ($^{1\,u}$*tamkaru*).[92] This document is witnessed by Milkirame, who bears the title, *saknu* (governor), Atûru (who is also referred to as *saknu*), Rimanna Istar, Ya-si-me-'i-il and Rahime. There is no doubt that Usi'a is a Hebrew name.[93] It is also very plausible that Dayana is the biblical name,

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[89] For further discussion, see chs 10 and especially 11 below.

[90] Zech. 8:13; 10:6ff; Ezek. 2:2; Neh. 7:7, where the names of the 12 representatives are listed and after them is written, 'the number of the people of Israel'.

[91] J. Friedich and Arthur Ungnad, *Die Inschriften vom Tell Halaf*, AfO Beihefte 6 (Berlin: AfO, 1940), document no. 111. Referred to by Benjamin Mazar, 'גולי ישראל בגוזן [Israelite Captives in Gozan]', *Yediot*, Vol. 15 (1950) 84, n. 4. See also Oded, *Mass Deportation*, 109.

[92] Oded, *Mass Deportation*, 103.

[93] See this chapter, section a. above, for discussion of the name.

Dinah (דינה),[94] which was perhaps popular in Samaria. If this assumption is correct, then it appears that Hoshea, one of the Israelite captives in Gozan, bought, from an Aramean by the name of Belbarech ben Nanni, a handmaid or a captive by the name of Dayana, who was also of the people of Israel. The very high fine that Belbarech undertook to pay, if he should not keep his promise and hand Dayana over to Hoshea, gives rise to the supposition that the reference here is to the redemption of an Israelite captive from a foreign man—apparently an Aramean from Gozan.[95]

It is also worth noting that, among the witnesses, there is at least one who bears an Israelite name, and that is Yasime'il, which is the Hebrew (ישמעאל),[96] but Milki-râme is a common west Semitic name, and was quite popular amongst the Hebrews, Phoenicians and Arameans.

i. A List of Names from Calah[97]

This ostracon contains a list of twenty-one proper names written on both its sides. It is interesting to us because the names appear to be Hebrew. Moreover, the script is Aramaic, and not the native cuneiform.[98]

The list of names is as follows:[99]

Convex

1. (…So)n of `aNa'el	'eLiNur son of Me Na Hem
2. HaNaN'el son of `aNa'el (?)	'eLiNuR son of (…) 'eL
3. MeNaHeM son of BeYad'eL	ZeKaR'el son of SiNoR
4. SuBa'el son of 'uZZa'	NeDaB'el son of HaN(n)uN
5. HaNan'el son of HaZi'el	
6. GeNe son of NeNaHem	

[94] Jacob's daughter, Gen. 30:21.
[95] Mazar, 'Israelite Captives', 84.
[96] The exact reading of the cuneiform is probably *Yi-si-me-'i-el*. The name, Yishmael, was quite common in Israel and Judah, and is also known from Hebrew seals. Mazar quotes, as further reference to this, David Diringer, *Le Inscrizioni Antico-Ebraiche Palestinesi* (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1934) 121, 204.
[97] Segal, 'An Aramaic Ostracon from Nimrud', 139–145.
[98] Albright, 'An Ostracon from Calah and the North-Israelite Diaspora', 33–36, points out that ten of the names are biblical, eight occur in Hebrew inscriptions or have Hebrew associations, and three are not Hebrew but could still come from Palestine. He also points out the constant use of the Hebrew, *ben*, and not the Aramaic, *bar*.
[99] This is according to Albright's reading of the names.

Concave

7. MeNaHeM son of e'LYaSad
8. 'eLiNuR son of M(?)iKa'el
9. 'aYNaDaB son of HaGgaY
10. eLTaMaK (son of ?) KeBes
11. `aKBoR (son of ?) BeLNaTaN[100]

The ostracon was found at Fort Shalmaneser, in the last level of occupation, and the place was destroyed in 612 BCE. The two sides (i.e. concave and convex) are written by a different hand. Comparison with other Aramaic texts seems to indicate that the text was written in the 7th century, and this seems to agree well with archaeological evidence. It could be dated between 725–675 BCE. It may thus date from the first years after either the 733 or 721 captivities—or even the first or second generation of the diaspora. Perhaps, also, Aramean names have been added to the Israelite ones. It may also be significant that there are no Hebrew (*yahu*) in the list. In general, it seems that there were less *Yau* names in northern Israel than in Judah.[101] There is also a suggestion of kinship among the people in the list, which shows a surprising degree of homogeneity.[102]

Fascinating as it is, we do not know, unfortunately, what the purpose of this register was. It was found in the same building where horse and cavalry-lists were discovered, and may thus be a list of soldiers in the Assyrian army.[103] However, the room in which it was found had been used for the storage of wine, and as such, the list may be a register of workmen, or a list of people to whom rations of wine, oil or grain were given. There

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[100] 'ana'el, Elinur, Hananel and Menahem appear seven times, a fact which strongly suggests close ties of kinship among members of the group. Although Albright has pointed out that Elinur, Gene and BeLNaTaN were probably not Hebrew, it may be that Elinur was, especially as we could possibly read it as Eliner, and we have already seen that Ner was quite a known Hebrew name (*cf.* this chapter, section b. above), so that it may have been combined with Eli (אלי, 'my God'). Belnatan could be Ba'al Natan in its Hebraised form, which might point to Aramean influence, although the reference of Ba'al (בעל) could be to God and not to the god, Ba'al.

[101] *Cf.* William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 4th edn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956) 160ff, where he analyses the frequency of the Ba'al and Yah elements as they appear in names found in the Samaria Ostraca.

[102] See n. 20 above.

[103] So Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 83.

is no way of knowing its exact use. The ostracon is the first of its kind to be found at Nimrud.

Section III

Judah and Babylon

CHAPTER 6

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

In its last days, Assyria no longer had any control over the far corners of her empire. Assyria's demise afforded Josiah[1] a measure of military freedom to expand Judah's borders into northern Palestine, and to undertake sweeping socio-religious and politico-economic reforms. The precious days of independence, however, were not to last, and the consequences of the blow to the nation, with the defeat and fall of Josiah at the battle of Megiddo in 609 BCE, cannot be over-estimated. As a result, Judah once more lost her independence, and came, this time, under Egyptian control.

Josiah's son, Jehoahaz (609 BCE), who had the Pharaoh and deported to Egypt reigned but three months following Josiah's death, was deposed by the Pharaoh and deported to Egypt, where he died (2 Kgs 23:30–34). In his place, Eliakim, his older,[2] probably pro-Egyptian, brother, was placed on the throne (608–598 BCE), and his name changed to Jehoiakim (v. 34).[3] A heavy tribute was laid upon the land. This had to be raised by means of a head tax upon all the free citizens (vv. 33, 35).[4] It is very likely, also, that the areas which Josiah had annexed were now taken away from Judah.

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[1] See ch. 4 above.

[2] *Cf.* vv. 31 and 36. This poses the question if Jehoiakim sought Egyptian help in order to secure his rights as heir to the throne. See Abraham Malamat, 'The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah', *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Memory of D. Glenn Rose*, eds D. Glenn Rose, Leo G. Perdue, Lawrence E. Toombs and Gary L. Johnson (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987) 289.

[3] Jehoiakim lacked his father's zeal for religious purity and social justice (2 Kgs 23:37; 2 Chron. 36:5). Prophets whose oracles displeased the king were persecuted or killed (Jer. 26). Jeremiah accused him of contempt towards his people, and of gross financial mismanagement when he used forced labour to have a new palace built for himself (Jer. 22:13–19).

[4] Jehoahaz had been anointed as king by 'the people of the land' (עם־הארץ, v. 30), probably an anti-Egyptian faction mainly in the country. Jehoiakim seems to

Egyptian rule over Judah was to be short-lived. In 605, Nebuchadnezzar (604–562 BCE), then still crown-prince of Babylonia, confronted and defeated the Egyptian army at Carchemish. After his coronation in 604, he returned to the area to assert his rule there. The formerly Assyrian provinces, and Judah, now came under his dominion (*cf.* 2 Kgs 24:1), as Habakkuk had predicted:

> For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans,[5]
> That bitter and impetuous nation,
> That march through the breadth of the earth,
> To possess dwelling-places that are not theirs.
> They are terrible and dreadful;
> Their law and their majesty proceed from themselves.
> Their horses also are swifter than leopards,
> And are more fierce than the wolves of the desert;
> And their horsemen spread themselves;
> Yea, their horsemen come from far,
> They fly as a vulture that hasteth to devour.
> They come all of them for violence;
> Their faces are set eagerly as the east wind;
> And *they gather captives as the sand*.
> And they scoff at kings,
> And prices are a derision unto them;
> They deride every stronghold,
> For they heap up earth, and take it.
>
> (Habakkuk 1:6–10)[6]

This is how the event is reported in the Babylonian Chronicles:

> All the kings of Hatti came into his presence and he received their vast tribute.[7]

It is possible that during these two years, Jerusalem was besieged for the first time by the Babylonians, and that the very first Babylonian captivity took place then.[8] This is referred to in the book of Daniel:

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avenge himself by taxing the people who made his younger brother king before him. *Cf*. Malamat, '*The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah*', 288f.

[5] The English rendering of the biblical כשדים, a term for the area of Babylonia and its inhabitants.

[6] Italics are mine.

[7] Bab. Chronicle 5 = BM 21946. Translation by Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 100.

> In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the LORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God; and he carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god, and the vessels he brought into the treasure-house of his god. And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz his chief officer, that he should bring in certain of the children of Israel, and of the seed royal, and of the nobles, youths in whom was no blemish, but fair to look on, and skilful in all wisdom, and skilful in knowledge, and discerning in thought, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace; and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. (Dan. 1:1–4)[9]

Josephus, quoting Berosus, also speaks of a campaign by the young 'Nabuchodnosor', who was sent by his father, Nabopolassar, to deal with a revolt by the governors of Egypt, Phoenicia and Coelesyria. This he carried out successfully, taking captives, including Jews.[10] However, the extent of this captivity must have been very limited. Jehoiakim himself might have been taken to Babylon (*cf.* 2 Chron. 36:6). If this were the case, he must have been returned to Jerusalem very soon after.[11] For the following three years, he was Nebuchadnezzar's vassal (2 Kgs 24:1).

Jehoiakim's allegiance to Babylonia was not deep-seated. In 601, following a battle between Egypt and Babylonia which proved heavily debilitating to both, Jehoiakim seized his chance and rebelled.[12]

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[8] See Udo Worschech, 'War Nebukadnezar im Jahre 605 v. Chr vor Jerusalem?', *BN*, No. 36 (1987) 57–63; Mark K. Mercer, 'Daniel 1:1 and Jehoiakim's Three Years of Servitude', *AUSS*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1989) 183–188.
It has repeatedly been stated that Nebuchadnezzar campaigned in the west again in 603 BCE. However, the destination of the campaign is broken in the Chronicles and therefore not known and, according to Nadav Na'aman, 'Nebuchadrezzar's Campaign in Year 603 BCE', *BN*, No. 62 (1992) 41–44, it is more likely that it was closer to Mesopotamia.

[9] Although Daniel is widely accepted as a 2nd century BCE composition, it is not unlikely that the writer was well informed about much of the historical material he used.

[10] *Jos. Apion* 1.19, paras 135–137. In *Jos. Ant.* 10.6.1, paras 86–87, he states that Judea was not taken until after the fourth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. If he was of the same opinion while writing *Against Apion*, the above-mentioned Jewish captives would probably be soldiers fighting under the Egyptians.

[11] *Cf.* Mercer, 'Daniel 1:1', 188.

[12] Mercer, 'Daniel 1:1', 188–191, thinks that Jehoiakim rebelled first and became voluntarily Egypt's vassal under a very small tribute, and that this alliance caused Nebuchadnezzar to come to the west.

Nebuchadnezzar could not attend to Judah immediately, but mobilised local troops of Arameans, Moabites and Ammonites, along with some Babylonian contingents stationed in near-by areas, to harass Judah:[13]

> In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, and bands of the Arameans, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by the hand of His servants the prophets. (2 Kgs 24:1–2)

In 598, the Babylonian army finally marched on its belated punitive campaign against Judah, and, at the same time, Jehoiakim died. It is possible that he was assassinated by the pro-Babylonian faction, who replaced him with Jehoiachin (597 BCE), his eighteen year old son.[14] Within three months, the city fell. Nebuchadnezzar describes this campaign in his records:

> The seventh year: in the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his army and marched to Hattu. He encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Adar he captured the city (and) captured (its) king. A king of his own choice he appointed in the city (and) taking the vast tribute he brought it into Babylon.[15]

The conquest of Jerusalem took place on the 2nd of Adar, 15/16 March, 597 BCE. Jehoiachin, together with his mother, members of the court and nobility, officers, craftsmen and artisans, priests and prophets (Jer. 29:1), was taken captive to Babylon. All in all, around 10,000 people were deported (2 Kgs 24:12, 14–16).[16] In addition, the temple and palace were

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[13] *Cf.* Malamat, '*The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah*', 291.

[14] Concerning the problem of Jehoiakim's death, see E. J. Smit, 'So How Did Jehoiakim Die?', *Journal for Semitics*, Vol. 6 (1994) 46–56; Alberto R. W. Green, 'The Fate of Jehoiakim', *AUSS*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1982) 103–109.

[15] Translation by Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 102.

[16] 2 Kgs 24:14 says, 'And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths…'; v. 16 gives 7,000 'men of might', plus 1,000 craftsmen and smiths; Jer. 52:28 reports 3,023 Judean exiles. Malamat, '*The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah*', 293, tries to link the given numbers in the following way. The number in Jeremiah includes only exiles from the provincial parts of Judea, captured during or soon after the siege of Jerusalem. These, together with the 7,000

stripped, and the loot sent to Babylon (v. 13). Nebuchadnezzar placed Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, on the throne (596–586 BCE), and his name changed to Zedekiah (v. 17).[17] However, Jehoiachin was still called 'king of Judah' by many (e.g. Jer. 28:4; 2 Kgs 25:27),[18] and even in Babylonian records he is referred to in this way. Jehoiachin never returned to his native land, and died in Babylon.[19]

Zedekiah had but eleven tragic years to reign before the end came upon him and his kingdom. He was a politically indecisive monarch, fearful of the pro-Babylonian faction in the community (Jer. 38:19), and wielding little authority over his pro-Egyptian nobles (Jer. 38:5). Not surprisingly, Judah was in a state of turmoil. This was partly encouraged by some prophets, who prophesied the downfall of the Babylonian Empire, and who were strongly denounced by the prophet Jeremiah.[20] Babylonia itself was in trouble. In 596/595, it was attacked from the east, possibly by Elam, and in 595/594, there was unrest and movements towards a revolt within its central region.[21] In the fourth year of his reign, a council for

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(Jerusalemite) 'men of might' (2 Kgs 24:16), form the 10,000 captives of v. 14, to which have to be added 1,000 craftsmen and smiths.

[17] *Jos. Ant.* 10.6–7 presents a divergent account of the events leading to the fall of Jerusalem. Josephus claims that Nebuchadnezzar himself came to Jerusalem, slew Jehoiakim and placed Jehoiachin on the throne. Then, fearing lest Jehoiachin should bear him a grudge for slaying his father, he took the young king captive and instituted his uncle Zedekiah as king instead. Apart from placing Nebuchadnezzar's campaign in Jerusalem some three to four months prior to the date given in both the biblical and the Babylonian records, this account seeks to exonerate the Judeans from any involvement in the assassination of their own monarch, instead placing the responsibility squarely upon Nebuchadnezzar's shoulders.

[18] Ezekiel, being a prophet in the exile, dates quite a few of his prophecies relative to the beginning of Jehoiachin's exile (e.g. 1:2). Zedekiah had to face several problems concerning his recognition as king within Judah: Jehoiachin was still alive, Zedekiah was enthroned by a foreign ruler, and he was not a natural successor of Jehoiachin but his uncle. *Cf.* Malamat, '*The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah*', 294, 296.

[19] Jehoiachin was released from prison under Nebuchadnezzar's son, Amel-Marduk (in the Bible: Evil-Merodach) (561–560 BCE), and given allowances. However, he apparently was not free to return to Israel (2 Kgs 25:27–30, *cf.* Jer. 52:31f).

[20] See Jer. 28 for the prophet's encounter with Hananiah ben Azzur in Judah.

[21] D. J. Wiseman, 'Babylonia 605–539 BC', *CAH Vol. III Part 2*, 2nd edn, eds John Boardman, I. E. S. Edwards, E. Sollberger and N. G. L. Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 233.

revolt took place in Jerusalem involving Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon (Jer. 27:3). However, the plot came to nothing. Zedekiah sent envoys to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 29:3), or may have even gone there himself to assure him of his loyalty (Jer. 51:59).

From the beginning, Jeremiah was strongly against the anti-Babylonian movement and its trust in Egypt's help, for he realised its futility. This movement continued to be active among the exiled Jews of the Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah, therefore, sent a letter (Jer. 29) to the captives, persuading them not to behave in a rebellious manner, but to settle down and prosper, for the time being, in their new country.

By 588, in Zedekiah's 9th year, the spirit of revolt was rife again. Zedekiah rebelled against Babylonia, and sent to the new Pharaoh, Hophra, thus breaking his oath (Ezek. 17:11–21; 2 Kgs 24:20). The rebellion may have been joined by Tyre (Ezek. 29:17–21) and Ammon (Ezek. 21:24f) as well.[22] Babylonian reaction was swift. Nebuchadnezzar marched to northern Syria, made his headquarters at Riblah, and directed his army towards the city of Jerusalem. The Babylonian forces surrounded the Judean capital, and destroyed military outposts around the state. The seriousness of the situation is reflected first hand through the letters that have come down to us from one such military outpost in Lachish. In them, we find that the last strongholds have fallen. The lights of Lachish are still to be seen, but those of Azeqah have now dimmed. Messengers are running back and forth to Egypt, but all to no avail.

> Because if in his turning he had inspected, he would know, that for the signal-stations of Lachish we are watching, according to all the signs which my Lord gives, because we do not see (the signals of) Azeqah… (Lachish Letter No. IV)

The siege of Jerusalem is vividly described in the book of Lamentations:

> They that are slain with the sword are better than they that are slain with hunger; for these pine away stricken through, for want of the fruit of the field. (Lam. 4:9)

Egypt's military aid to Judah (Jer. 37:5–11; Lam. 4:17), and campaigns against the Babylonian army, came to nothing.

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[22] For the discussion concerning the involvement of other nations in the revolt of 588 BCE, see Hayes and Kuan, 'Final Years of Samaria', 472.

By August 586, the city fell. Zedekiah's sons were slaughtered, and he was blinded and taken in chains to Babylon. A month later many more citizens were exiled, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the temple ruined. Only a small number of people were left in the land.[23]

[23] For a discussion and estimate of the number of exiles, see ch. 7 below.

CHAPTER 7

AN ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF EXILES

Many attempts have been made at estimating the number of exiles who left the country during these fateful years. If there was an exile in the days of Jehoiakim (601–598), it would not have been large, and could have been limited to a number of families of the nobility.

In the spring of 598, Nebuchadnezzar exiled Jehoiachin, king of Judah, to Babylon, after he had surrendered to the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem:

> And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers; and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. And he carried away *all Jerusalem*, and *all the princes*, and *all the mighty men of valour*, even *ten thousand captives,* and *all the craftsmen and the smiths*; none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away *Jehoiachin* to Babylon, and the *king's mother* and *the king's wives*, and *his officers*, and the *chief of men of the land*, carried he into the captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And *all the men of might*, even seven thousand, and the *craftsmen* and the *smiths a thousand*, all of them and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. (2 Kgs 24:12–16)

In Jeremiah, the priests and the prophets are also listed as having been sent along with this captivity.[1] No doubt, quite a number of the dwellers of the towns outside Jerusalem that fell at the hands of the Chaldeans were taken captive. It has been noted by the archaeologists that at Lachish, Beth-Shemesh and Tel-Beth-Mirsim (Devir), there are signs of damage caused to these settlements a short time before they were totally destroyed, along with the First Temple. The figures, 10,000 and 8,000, are probably rough estimates. On the other hand, the figure is given as a mere 3,023 in Jeremiah.

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[1] Jer. 29:1.

> This is the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year (i.e. Jehoiachin's exile) three thousand Jews and three and twenty. (Jer. 52:28)

Possibly, the number given in Jeremiah refers merely to adult males. It has been argued, also, that this represented quite a proportion of the population at the time, and was the cream of the country's leadership as well.[2] Thiele, on the other hand, argues that the numbers given are far too small, and that the actual number of captives must have been far greater.[3] He carries this argument into the next exile, in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, as we shall see below.

In July 587, just as the city's food supply was exhausted, the Babylonians breached the walls and poured in. Zedekiah tried to escape to Ammon,[4] but was overtaken in Jericho. It is possible that others had managed to escape. Possibly, these were the people that later came back to Judah, and may have been taken in the subsequent captivity. Kittel[5] calculates that in 586 BCE, some 15,000 men, or 30,000–40,000 when including women and children, went into exile with Zedekiah. If we add a total of 20,000–30,000 from the previous captivity, this would make a grand total of some 50,000–70,000 transported to Babylon. The population left behind may be reckoned at about 3,500 men, or 20,000 souls in all.[6] Thiele[7] argues that the '832 persons' mentioned in Jeremiah 52:29 as having been carried captive from Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year would hardly appear to include all 'the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude' (2 Kgs 25:11), who were carried away after Jerusalem's final fall in the 19th year. The number of 4,600 captives

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[2] William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, 2nd edn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957) 322, estimates that Judah's population had fallen from a high of about 250,000 in the 8th century to perhaps half that figure between 597 and 587. On the other hand, Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, 175, estimates the total population of Judah at between 50,00 and 100, 000, and the number of exiles at no more than 10,000.

[3] Edwin Richard Thiele, 'New Evidence on the Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah', *BASOR*, Vol. 143 (1956) 25.

[4] 2 Kgs 25:3, Jer. 52:7f. *Cf.* Bright, *A History of Israel*, 330, n. 1.

[5] Rudolf Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 3 vols, Vol. 3 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1927) 61ff.

[6] G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936) xxxvi.

[7] Thiele, 'New Evidence on the Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah', 143.

mentioned as the total for the three captivities of Jeremiah 52:28–30, would appear to be an inadequate and pitifully small figure for so large a city as Jerusalem. A nation as important as Judah would furnish figures easily comparable with that of 27,290 captives from Samaria (claimed by Sargon), and 20,150 from the forty-six walled cities and their environs in Judah (claimed by Sennacherib). Nor would Jeremiah's total of 4,600 be in accord with the 50,000 Jews who chose to return from their Babylonian exile half a century later.[8] Thiele, therefore, propounds the theory that the captivities of the 7th and 18th years of Nebuchadnezzar were minor captivities—preliminary to the major captivities of the 8th and 19th years. It has also been suggested that the 832 people mentioned in the 586 exile referred merely to people of special status or class, and that, in fact, the number of exiles was far greater.

A third exile is referred to in Jeremiah 52:30:

> In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred and forty five persons.

This may have been a reprisal for the murder of Gedaliah, who had been appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar. After his assassination, some of the people remaining in the land fled to Egypt, for fear of reprisals by the Babylonians. With them, they took Jeremiah, against his will. Josephus actually refers to a campaign by Nebuchadnezzar in Coele-Syria,[9] during which Nebuchadnezzar is supposed to have taken captive to Babylon some of the people who had settled in Egypt. We have no other evidence for such a campaign, and therefore have to be careful in accepting this information.

It has been argued by some scholars—especially G. A. Cooke and C. C. Torrey—that there was, in fact, no captivity. They argue that the population of Zion may have been decimated, but not depopulated, and that the books such as Ezekiel and Ezra are entirely apocryphal. Excavations in Judah since 1926 have shown, with increasing weight of evidence, that the Chaldean destruction of Jewish towns was thorough, and that few towns arose from their ruins. There is not a single known case where a town of Judah proper was continuously occupied through the exilic period. In contrast, Bethel, which lay just outside the northern

[8] Ezra 2:64–65.
[9] *Jos. Ant.* 10.9.

boundary of Judah in pre-exilic times, was not destroyed at the time of the exile, but was continuously occupied down into the latter part of the 6th century.[10] In other words, then, archaeological diggings have proved the facts stated in the books of Ezekiel, Kings and Ezra. Whereas a place like Bethel, which we know to have been part of the Assyro-Babylonian province, continued to be occupied and was not destroyed, all the Judean towns to the south show signs of terrible destruction and complete cessation of occupation. This would tend to confirm that most of their citizens were led into exile. It is also possible that a number of people succeeded in fleeing to neighbouring countries, thereby avoiding capture by the enemy.

At the end of Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns in Palestine, Judah was left desolate and in ruins. Unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians did not bring other people to settle in Judah in place of those they had led away. Apart from a few impoverished settlements, the country was left barren. The captivity was a physical, moral and spiritual calamity. The devastation and destruction was appalling. For fifty years, there is complete silence. Nothing is done to restore Jerusalem. There is not even any mention of pilgrimage. We must now try and piece together information regarding the people in exile: where they settled, what they did for a living and how they lived their lives, both in the material and the spiritual sense, for the next fifty years or so, when they were once more permitted to return to their land.

[10] Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* 322, and William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (London: Pelican Books, 1954) 140–142.

CHAPTER 8

THE JEWS IN THE MESOPOTAMIAN EXILE UP TO THE CYRUS DECLARATION

Information regarding the people of Israel in Babylon immediately after their exile is very limited, but the striking fact which emerges out of this calamity to the nation is not merely the survival of the people as a nation with its religion, but the actual strengthening and purification of the faith—indeed it has been said that in the exile and beyond it, Judaism was born.[1] If one does not agree with that, one may certainly say that is was there that Judaism reached its age of religious responsibility. The exile must have been very hard for many of the people to accept. The loss of their land and property, and the long trudge across the desert must have taken its toll. Yet, in spite of this, the condition of the captives in their new land of residence does not seem to have been unbearable, at least not under Nebuchadnezzar, nor his son Amel-Marduk (562–560).[2] Descriptions of life during the exile are derived from biblical, Babylonian and Persian records.[3] By and large, these depict the Jews as living in their own small communities, enjoying freedom of assembly (Ezek. 8:1), and entering various fields of occupation. Perhaps most importantly, they are depicted as able to exercise religious autonomy, without hindrance or persecution from their Babylonian captors (Ezek. 33:30–32). Certainly those parts of Scripture which were either edited or composed during the exile attest to the existence of a skilled and organised scribal group with sufficient insight, freedom and core texts to achieve such a task.[4] Their social and political status was probably similar to that of the *Katinu*, who were

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[1] Bright, *A History of Israel*, 343.

[2] The Evil-Merodach of 2 Kgs 25:27-30, who released the imprisoned Jehoiachin.

[3] The biblical corpus includes Jer. 29:5–7; Ezek. 1:1; 3:15; 8:1; 14:1; 20:1, 3; Ezra 2:59, 66f; Neh. 7:61, 68f; 8:17, 26f. The extra-biblical records include the tablets relating to Jehoiachin in exile, and the contracts from the archives of Murashu Sons found at Nippur (see below, pp. 110f).

[4] Peter R. Ackroyd, *Israel under Babylon and Persia*, The New Clarendon Bible: Old Testament, Vol. 4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) 22; Raymond Samuel Foster, *The Restoration of Israel: A Study in Exile and Return* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1970) 55.

foreigners who lacked the special privileges of the upper classes, but enjoyed freedom and could purchase property and even slaves.[5]

Most of the literature about the exile derives from a period either at its beginning, or its very end. There exists however, a corpus of biblical evidence which counters this agreeable picture of the exile.[6] Passages, the composition or re-application of which derives from the latter part of the exile, express great hostility towards Babylon, and contain many vivid descriptions of the suffering of the Jews in this period.[7] For example, Isaiah 47:6:

> I gave (Judah) into your hand, and you showed them no mercy. Even on the aged you laid a very heavy yolk.

Psalm 137:8–9:

> O daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us—he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.

In the presence of such literature, one might hypothesise that the Judeans' condition deteriorated in the latter part of the exile, giving rise to such writings. This would also explain the emergence of Babylon as the archetypal oppressor in later Jewish thought, a development not likely to have evolved without historical justification.[8]

Was there a period during the exile which accords with the vehement depiction of Babylon in biblical literature? There seems to have been, that being during the reign of Nabonidus, the last Babylonian monarch (556–539).[9] Nabonidus embraced a programme of religious reform involving

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[5] *EM* III, 505.

[6] John M. Wilkie, 'Nabonidus and the Later Jewish Exiles', *JTS*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1951) 34–44; Ackroyd, *Israel under Babylon and Persia*, 22–23, 57–59.

[7] Jer. 51; Isa. 13:2–22; 14:12–21. *Cf.* the list provided by Wilkie, 'Nabonidus and the Later Jewish Exiles', 37, n. 1–4.

[8] We see the beginning of this development in Zechariah's seventh vision (5:5–11), where wickedness is transferred from Israel to a more fitting place, that being Babylon. Later, the book of Daniel portrays a Babylonian *Sitz im Leben*, which includes religious intolerance as national policy. Later still, Rome appears in the guise of Babylon in Rev. 14:8.

[9] Born in Haran to an Aramean official, and a fervent devotee of the moon-god Sin, Nabonidus became a court functionary to Nebuchadnezzar, later possibly marrying one of the king's daughters. He usurped the Babylonian throne from Labash-

clarification of the diverse polytheistic worship systems established throughout his vast empire, and possibly including coercive measures to impose the recognition of the moon-god, Sin, of whom he was a devotee, as supreme head of the Babylonian pantheon.[10] In addition, his disregard for the priesthood of Marduk soon alienated him from his Babylonian subjects. The rise to domination by Cyrus the Persian was consequently welcomed by Babylonian and Jewish populations alike.[11]

Although the majority of the Judean population remained in Judah, it was in Babylon that the low flame of Yahwism was fanned and imbued with the kind of moral resilience and permanence which would carry it through the numerous trials to come. The people who had been deported to Babylon were the intellectual, spiritual and creative cream of the Judean population—which was the very reason they were chosen to be deported. In exile, their faith was tested to the utmost. It was on trial for its life. Some of the people must have succumbed to the attraction of their surroundings, which attraction must have been great. Here were the victors, with their more advanced material civilisation, and with their temples and conquering gods being worshipped by people of all nations, while their God had let them be vanquished, and their destiny seemed to have been thwarted. Still, Israel had been faced with the temptation of assimilation, syncretism, and apostasy variously throughout its history. A call to maintain her identity by virtue of her relationship with God had been voiced by prophets in every age. Much of the preparation to overcome these new difficulties had been done by the prophet Jeremiah in

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Marduk, the young nephew of Amel-Marduk, in 556 BCE (the mention of Nabonidus' son, Belshazzar, as a 'son' or descendant of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 5:2, may allude to Nabonidus' marriage into the Babylonian royalty, perhaps to the unnamed queen mentioned in Dan. 5:10). For an overview of Nabonidus' life, see Bright, *A History of Israel*, 353–354; Edwin M. Yamauchi, 'Nebonidus', *ISBE*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 4 vols, 468–470. For texts relating to Nabonidus, see *ANET*[3], 305f, 309–315, 562f.

[10] For the cuneiform texts attesting to religious conflict between Nabonidus and his people, see S. Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon* (London: Methuen, 1924). For Biblical texts attesting to the conflict between Nabonidus and the Jews over his religious programme, see Wilkie, 'Nabonidus and the Later Jewish Exiles', 40–41. The texts in question include the taunt-song of Isa. 14:4b–21, and the book of Daniel.

[11] For Biblical texts referring to Cyrus, see Isa. 41:2–4, 25; 44:28; 45:1–4; 46:11; 48:14f; 2 Chron. 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–3; 6:8. See also the account of Josephus (*Jos. Ant.* 11.1.1–3). For descriptions of the welcome afforded to Cyrus, see the 'Nabonidus Chronicle' (*ANET*[3], 306) and the Cyrus Cylinder (*ANET*[3], 315–316).

Judah, and in the exile by Second Isaiah, Ezekiel, as well as other priests and elders. Each of the prophets explained the reasons for the disaster, and gave foundation to a new faith.[12] The word of God replaced the temple worship, and outward signs were given prominence as the distinguishing marks of a Jew: the observance of the Sabbath, the adherence to strict dietary regulations, and the practice of circumcision.[13] It must have been very difficult to do this. Fifty years of exile was indeed a permanent exile for many. Many of those planted in Babylon must have scattered all over the ANE. They may have become less provincial and less insular in Babylon.

At the time, scholars such as Klamroth also argue that these exiles, the elite group of their nation, lived in enclosed communities and came into little contact with the outside, yet some of them must have done so by reasons of their occupations or trade.[14] A few names of places are mentioned in various sources. Many of the centres concentrated around the *River Kebar*, and can be identified with some probability.[15] On two contract tablets found at Nippur, dated from the years 443 and 424 BCE, occurs the Babylonian equivalent of Ezra's phrase, *Naru kabari* (the great river, the grand canal). This was probably the artificial watercourse which started from the Euphrates above Babylon, ran first in a south easterly direction, and passed through Nippur[16] after about sixty miles, where it still divided the site into almost equal parts. It can be traced more or less through the interior of the country, until it joins the Euphrates again below Ur.[17] In Ezra's time, it must have brought fertility into the wide, alluvial plain enclosed by the Euphrates and the Tigris. The Sumerians called it the Euphrates of Nippur (Pûrat Nippur); the Babylonians and the Jews referred to it as the great river (nâru kabari, nehar kebâr). Excavations at Nippur have disclosed abundant evidence of Jewish settlements in the neighbourhood from the 5th century BCE, and perhaps earlier, down to the 7th century CE.[18] We hear of the exiled group at Tel-Abib. In Ezekiel 1:1,

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[12] Ackroyd, *Israel under Babylon and Persia*.
[13] Foster, *The Restoration of Israel*, 57–63.
[14] Erich Klamroth, *Die Jüdischen Exulanten in Babylonien* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912).
[15] Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 4.
[16] Nopher in the Talmud.
[17] H. V. Hilprecht, *Explorations in Bible Lands during the 19th Century* (Philadelphia: H. J. Holman & Co., 1903) 411.
[18] Hilprecht, *Bible Lands*, 410–411. There can be no doubt that a considerable number of the Jewish prisoners carried away by Nebuchadnezzar were settled in

the prophet is among the exiles on the edge of the Kebar, and is later told (3:15) to go to Tel-Abib, which was apparently also beside the River Kebar.[19]

Similarly, we hear the names of places such as Ahava on the Kebar near Nippur, and at Casiphia or Ctesiphon,[20] and of Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, and Addan (Immer)—Ezra 2:59; Nehemiah 7:61.[21]

The early exiles, who came with Jehoiachin, cherished the same hopes as those remaining in Judah, that their sojourn might be very short, and that they would soon return to their own land. These hopes were fanned by the false prophets, who spoke to the people of the things they wanted to hear. Jeremiah, who saw the bad effect that these false hopes could have upon the people, sent them his famous letter warning them that they must build houses, plant gardens, take wives in Babylon, and make an effort to settle down comfortably there after the fashion of a people coming to settle permanently in a country, who must not live as mere temporary sojourners.[22] According to the prophet, the time in exile (which he foresaw

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Nippur and its neighbourhood, where many of their descendants continued to live as long as the city existed (about 900 CE), to judge from the many inscribed Hebrew bowls excavated everywhere in the upper strata of its ruins. The Talmudic tradition, which identifies Nippur with the biblical Calneh, gains new force in the light of these facts, strengthened by the argument that the earliest and most important Babylonian city, which occupies the first place in the Sumerian story of the creation, could not well have been omitted by the writer of Genesis 10:10.

[19] Hilprecht, *Bible Lands*, 411; Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 42: ' "House of green ears" is merely a Hebrew-sounding form of the Babylonian *til-abubi* "hill of the storm flood", a common name in Babylonia in all periods and given to the sand hills on the plain which are thrown up by the action of the wind and water… Within a radius of five and ten miles E. and N. of Nippur many such mounds exist, and have disclosed traces of Jewish settlements. A conspicuous mound, about a mile to the E. of the ancient bed of the canal may, in Hilprecht's opinion, be the site of Ezekiel's Tel-Abib.'

[20] Albert Ten Eyck Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria to the Macedonian Conquest* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931) 531.

[21] It is assumed that the places are in Babylonia, but not one of them occurs elsewhere and two are quite suspicious: Kerub and Immer. It could be that these were small places in Babylonia. Loring W. Batten, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, ICC (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1913) 92.

[22] Jer. 29. It is also interesting to read the apocryphal *Letter of Jeremiah*, where Jeremiah commences by telling the captives to make these arrangements for permanent settlement, and then goes on to warn them against worshipping foreign

as being a period of seventy years) was to be a crucible of affliction out of which the nation was to emerge refined and purified.

This, in general, was also the opinion of Ezekiel.[23] Ezekiel was in a true sense the prophet of the exile. He prophesied in Babylon for 22 years or more, from the 5th to the 27th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin.[24] He estimated that the time of the exile would be forty years.[25] Because he dwelt amongst them, Ezekiel possibly lacked the perspective to realise the change that was taking place amongst the captives in Babylon. The change in thought and behaviour which began in a certain part of the nation at the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah was completed in the time of Ezekiel. The prophet of the Exile with his strong ethical demands also made his impact.

Josephus, in *Against Apion*,[26] praises the agricultural skill of the Jews. Many of the captives must have worked on the land in Babylon. Both Herodotus and Strabo[27] stress the abundant fertility of the earth in Babylon. The farmers there were, therefore, in a better position than those in neighbouring countries, and often needed the help of hired labourers at harvest time. Many of these are likely to have been from amongst the exiles. Judging by Jeremiah's letter, it seems that the people were able to purchase their own land too, if they could afford to do so. Many of them,

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gods there. This letter is actually a demonstration of the helplessness of idols and the futility of their worship. It purports to have been written by Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon, telling them that they may have to remain there for anything up to seven generations, but must not succumb to foreign worship. It is probably written pseudonymously by a Babylonian Jew, who knew of Jeremiah's letter, and of his scornful attitude to idols (Jer. 10:1–6). L. H. Brockington, *A Critical Introduction to the Apocrypha*, Studies in Theology (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1961) 90–91.

[23] Joseph Gedaliah Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel from Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, trans. W. F. Stinespring (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956), ch. IX.

[24] Cooke, *Ezekiel*, xxiii, quotes arguments by such people as Herntrich that Ezekiel never went to Babylonia at all and did all his prophesying in Jerusalem. This has, however, been rejected by the majority of modern scholars (*cf.* ch. 7 above).

[25] Ezek. 4:6. In fact, the exile lasted 48 years: 586–538 BCE.

[26] *Jos. Apion* 1.12.

[27] Joseph Gedaliah Klausner, היסטוריה של הבית השני *[History of the Second Commonwealth]*, 5 vols, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Aḥi'asaf, 1953).

then, may have started off working for other masters, and later themselves become landlords.[28]

Agriculture, however, was not the only occupation of the Jews in Babylon. From the Murashu documents, which will be discussed below,[29] it is clear that there were very few professions in which the Jews did not engage. Many of the exiles must have been used as craftsmen and artisans, for after all Nebuchadnezzar had:

> Carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. (2 Kgs 24:14)

With all the building activity that was going on in Babylon at the time, there is no doubt that the skill of these people was both needed and used.

The economic activities of the Jews in their new places of residence were more varied than at home. In 1893, an American expedition, conducted by the University of Pennsylvania, undertook an excavation at the site of the ruins of Nippur, and discovered there some 730 clay tablets in Akkadian, which turned out to be documents and business contracts from the archives of a large firm of bankers and merchants, known as the

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[28] An interesting explanation of the rapid economic growth of the people is given by Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983 [1952]) 107–108. He states that it is possible that under Assyrian rule, places like Nippur and Babylon may have been less focal centres, and thus mass settlements may have been welcomed in these regions before the deportations of 597 and 586. With the rise of Chaldea, this district, because of its proximity to the new capital, became one of the central regions of the empire. Many of the Israelite exiles, as well as some voluntary immigrants who perhaps had joined them during the 7th century, may have spread through all Babylonia while it was still under Assyrian domination. Thus, later deportees could settle in established Israelite centres. This concatenation of circumstances would also explain, in part, the equally astonishing fact that as early as the first third of the 6th century, when Ezekiel prophesied, the Jews had achieved an advantageous economic position. Although in the general policy of Assyria and Babylonia towards deported nations was favourable, such a prodigious development in the course of a few decades would otherwise be an almost insoluble riddle.

[29] Guillaume Cardascia, *Les Archives des Murašû: Une Famille D'hommes Guillaume D'affaires Babyloniens A L' Epoque Perse (455–403 Av. J. C.)* (Paris: Impremerè Nationale, 1951).

House of Murashu. The oldest of the documents is dated 455 BCE, and the most recent, 403 BCE.[30] A scrupulous survey of these tablets by R. Zadok offers detailed information about the Jews of the Nippur region, and their socio-economic status.[31] Zadok found within the contracts some 70 Jewish names, deemed so by virtue of falling into one of the following three categories: (i) Yahwistic names; (ii) non-Yahwistic Jewish names; and (iii) other names borne by Jews, or people who, by reason of genealogy, are suspected to be Jews.[32]

The extant records of the house of Murashu show that at least a century after the exile, most Jews at Nippur were engaged in agriculture, as land owners or tenants, while a smaller number was engaged in fishing and stock tending.[33] For example, one reads of the five Jews who requested the Murashu Sons to equip them with five nets and a permit to fish in the firm's waters, promising to deliver, in return, five hundred good fish, within twenty days.[34] The contracts also show that some of the Jews were rent collectors and business agents to wealthy Babylonians and Persians, while others were clerks and officials of various grades. For example, there was Hananiah ben Menahem sana muhhi ussur sari', i.e. 'in charge of the king's birds'. One neighbourhood or estate is called 'the house of Hananiah', and a canal is referred to as 'naru sa Natuni'—the 'canal of Natun', probably because it went through the fields of this land owner or official. Yahunatan acted on behalf of a Babylonian businessman, Remut-Ninurta, overseeing loans to landholder. Yadahyama was possibly a tax

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[30] Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, 217–218. Cf. S. Daiches, *The Jews in Babylon in the Time of Ezra and Nehemiah According to Babylonian Inscriptions* (London: Jews' College Publication, 1910).

[31] R. Zadok, *The Jews in Babylon During the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods According to the Babylonian Sources* (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1979).

[32] E.g. Yahulamu, Daidya, Hananiah, Gedaliah, Pedaiah, Gadalyama, Ahiyama, Haggai, Benjamin, Natunu, Shabbata and Mordecai. Zadok, *The Jews in Babylon*, 7–34, 78. Daiches, *The Jews in Babylon*, estimated that about 100 Jews are mentioned in the contracts: 60 from the days of Artaxerxes and 40 from the times of Darius II. Zadok, *The Jews in Babylon*, 78, applied the principle that 'every individual is distinct from his namesake(s), unless there is decisive prosopographical proof that he is identical with one of them.' Using this principle, he arrived at a conservative total of 70 Jewish names. Having applied the same principle to all the names appearing in the contracts to arrive at a total of 2,500 names, Zadok calculated the percentage of individual Jews involved with the Murashu Firm as 2.8% of the Nippur individuals likewise dealing with the Firm.

[33] Zadok, *The Jews in Babylon*, 88.

[34] As quoted by Daiches, *The Jews in Babylon*.

collector for the same Babylonian.[35] Later, of course, Nehemiah was a high official in Artaxerxes' court, and Ezra was a government official.[36] Neither craftsmen nor merchants are recorded in the archives. One must note, however, that the picture presented in the Murashu archives is not necessarily indicative of the status of Jewry elsewhere in the exile. The Murashu contracts reflect narrowly the Firm's agricultural concerns in the rural Nippur region. There must have been craftsmen, at least, in Babylon, since they are numbered among the exiled of 597 BCE. Priests, cult functionaries, and prophets must also have continued serving the Jewish community in some way.

The story in the book of Daniel about Mishael and Azariah, though largely fictitious, is based on a historical situation in which the Babylonians took Jewish boys into their service to be trained as administrators.[37]

Admittedly, most of this information is later than the early years of the Babylonian captivity, but there is no reason to believe that in Babylon itself the state of the exiles was any worse than it was later in Persia, and it is well known that Babylon was a great trading centre, offering opportunities for advancement.

Thus, on the whole, there was hardly any important vocation, including public office, in which the Jews and other non-Chaldeans were not represented. Furthermore, although by the 6th century not many of the Jews could have amassed great fortunes, it is significant to read in Ezra that the Jews who returned with Zerubbabel and who were by no means the wealthiest among the community, still had 7,337 slaves, as well as thousands of heads of cattle.[38] Furthermore, they were given gifts by those remaining, and when they arrived in Jerusalem, they donated large sums, and much gold and silver, towards the rebuilding of the temple.

We can conclude, therefore, that while the economic status of one part of the exiles, who did compulsory labour, or tilled tiny lots of land which they leased from the king, was not very bright, yet on the other hand, another part of the Jewish population, which leased large estates, employing slaves, hand maids and hired labourers, and another segment

[35] Zadok, *The Jews in Babylon*, 73.
[36] The Persian period will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.
[37] Klausner, *History Vol. 1*, 78–81.
[38] Neh. 7:67–69; Ezra 2:65–67.

which dealt in commerce, enjoyed quite comfortable economic circumstances.

Generally, this would tend to be quite typical of life in a foreign land, where light and dark intermingle in the condition of the people. At the same time, their longing for their homeland did not cease, as their psalms so clearly portray, the most famous one being Psalm 137:

> By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. (Ps. 137:1)

The Psalm expresses yearning for a return to Zion, and for complete redemption, both political and spiritual. The appearance of such verses shows that the work of the prophets in the exile had not been in vain. The nation was gradually emerging strong and purified in its faith. If, according to some scholars, the book of Job was written at the time of the Babylonian captivity, the author is representative of men who retained their faith, even under trying circumstances.[39] It is widely agreed today that the synagogue as a religio-cultural institution emerged during the Babylonian exile.[40] This was the result of being allowed comparative freedom to examine, interpret, reapply and promulgate the native Israelite culture *vis-à-vis* the exile. The Jews gathered in small groups on the Sabbath to read the Scriptures.[41] Great stress was placed on circumcision, and individual responsibility for one's sons was emphasised against the communal attribution of responsibility pertaining to sin and punishment,

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[39] For a discussion of the dating of the book of Job, see J. Crenshaw, 'Job, Book Of', *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols, 863–864. See also Ackroyd, *Israel under Babylon and Persia*, 319; Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC*, The Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1968) 6, 28, 245.

[40] W. S. LaSor and T. C. Eskenazi, 'Synagogue', *ISBE*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 4 vols, 676–677. The concept of the synagogue may well be traced to the era of Josiah's reforms (621 BCE), which created the need within communities distant from Jerusalem, for regular, non-sacrificial, local worship. Allusions to some kind of a people's assembly appear in the language of Ps. 74:8 (*mo^{a}de-'el*, 'meeting-places of God'), Ps. 149:1 (*q^{e}hal hasidim*, 'congregation of the pious') and Jer. 39:8 (*bet ha`am*, 'the house of the people'). No doubt, a slowly emerging incipient concept preceded the development of the synagogue institution in the exile.

[41] For further discussion of the development of the synagogue see ch. 9 below.

to which some people appealed as an excuse for their misdeeds.[42] Contact with Jerusalem was also obviously maintained. People had always travelled in the east, and we see that Jeremiah sends letters to the captives. When the captives reached their new destinations, they met up with many of the descendants of the previous northern exiles, who had been taken by the Assyrians. The hope of the eventual redemption and reunion of the tribes of the north and south remained a living one all through the years, before the exile, during the captivity and after the return.

Hosea said:

> And the children of Judah, and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go out of the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel. (Hos. 2:2)

Jeremiah had spoken of it:

> In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. (Jer. 3:18)[43]

During the exile Ezekiel preached:

> Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them unto him together with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hand. (Ezek. 37:19)[44]

After the exile we read the prophet Zechariah maintained the hope:

> And it shall come to pass that, as ye were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing; fear not, but let your hands be strong. (Zech. 8:13)

The many legends regarding the lost ten tribes were a later development. In the Old Testament, the hope for a final merging of the twelve tribes once more into a unified nation, as in the days of David and

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[42] The Israelite concept of corporate responsibility is found in such texts as Exod. 20:5; 34:7; Josh. 7. The development towards the idea of individual accountability began before the exile, as is seen in Jer. 31:29, and reached great prominence in the exile. See, for example, the exhortation to individual responsibility in Ezek. 18.
[43] *Cf.* Jer. 33:7; 36:2; 50:4, 33.
[44] *Cf.* Ezek. 37:16–17; 47:13.

Solomon, was often expressed. Large communities in Arabia and Iran continued for many generations to identify themselves as descendants of the ten tribes, as, for example, in the evidence given by Benjamin of Todelah of the 12th century CE. In 1945, it was still claimed by the Jews of Isphahan that they kept some of the memories of the northern tribes.[45]

In the midst of economic and social ease, there developed a rich cultural and religious life. In the large settlements, which were called by the general name *Golah* (Exile), the Hebrew language was preserved in its purity. It has been shown that post-exilic Hebrew was largely influenced by the north Hebrew dialects, which must have been spoken by the earlier captives of the ten tribes.[46]

C. Gordon shows how the Ugaritic influences, which had penetrated Israelite Hebrew and were not to be found in the Judean Hebrew before the Babylonian exile, crept into the post-exilic Hebrew after the northern tribes mingled with the new arrivals from Judah. Even if they were permitted to, those of the northern tribes, who had been made to leave their land, would not have been able to return, because the Assyrians had placed foreign settlers there. However, Judah was left desolate, and so by joining the Judeans and completely mingling with them (a process which was probably completed by the Achaemenid period), the Israelites eventually returned to Palestine. This does not negate the Aramaization of the east, which was going on at the time, but obviously in the weekly assemblies at the synagogues, reading and preaching would have been conducted in Hebrew.

It is true that they were in the midst of a foreign people and so they needed to know Aramaic, which, in its various dialects, was the language of the state almost throughout the eastern countries, from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, and even to some extent in Egypt.[47] It did not take the place of Hebrew, though. With the destruction of Jerusalem, the Hebrew language must have also taken quite a buffeting, but with the spiritual revival, there is no doubt that the Hebrew language also gained a new lease of life. The very fact alone that the prophets of the diaspora

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[45] Itzhak Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 2nd Eng. edn (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961). *Cf.* ch. 11 below.

[46] Cyrus Herzl Gordon, 'North Israelite Influence on Postexilic Hebrew', *IEJ*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1955).

[47] Yehudah Matmon-Cohen, 'העברית אחרי גלות בבל [The Hebrew Language after the Babylonian Exile]', לשוננו *[Leshonenu]*, Vol. 6 (1934).

preached their sermons in Hebrew, shows that the language of the audience must have been more or less close to that of the preachers. Otherwise, what value would there have been to their words, which came first and foremost to guide the people in their way of life?

This spiritual purification of the nation, which took place during their sojourn in the foreign land, gave new hopes and dreams of a speedy redemption. In the crucible of affliction, the dross had been separated from the silver. The prophecies of consolation seemed to be coming true. This was a result of the news of Cyrus' victories, which shook the whole of Asia Minor and especially the captives of Judah. After many years of exile, when they may have almost stopped hoping for redemption, a new opening for hope was to be seen. Many of these hopes and prophecies for a happy future and a new exodus were expressed by the great prophet who dwelt among them—Second Isaiah. His heart was full of joy over the approaching redemption, and his imagination was aflame with the hope that soon all the glowing promises of the prophets who had preceded him would be fulfilled. Whilst Ezekiel's prophecies reflect the long night of the diaspora, in the words of Deutero-Isaiah shines the rising dawn, and a voice is heard announcing freedom and a new life. He in fact tells the people:

> Go ye forth from Babylon,
> flee ye from the Chaldeans;
> With a voice of singing
> Declare ye, tell this,
> Utter it even to the end of the earth;
> Say ye: 'The LORD hath redeemed
> His servant Jacob'.
>
> (Isa. 48:20)

Merchants travelled around and must have brought the news of Cyrus' victories in Lydia. An end to Babylon would have seemed imminent, given its condition following the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Emil Marduk, his son, ruled only two years (562–560), and was then killed by Nergal-Sharezer, his brother-in-law, who himself ruled for only four years (560–556). His son, Labashi-Marduk, lasted only a few months, and was followed by Nabonidus (556–539), the last king of Babylon. Nabonidus' apparent disregard for the Babylonian pantheon, and attempts at empire-wide religious uniformity, earned him the hostility of his subjects. Deutro-Isaiah saw, therefore, that the Babylonian kingdom was filled with disturbances, and could not hold out very long. So, when the sound of the

wheels of Cyrus' victory chariot was heard from afar, it was a foregone conclusion that he would bring Babylon to an end.

As far as the Jews were concerned, then, the developments on the political front heralded a new era, and they awaited developments with bated breath. They already saw the feet of the messenger of good tiding upon the mountain:

> How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger of good tidings, that announceth peace, the harbinger of good tidings, that announceth salvation; that saith unto Zion: 'Thy God reigneth!' (Isa. 52:7)

Section IV

The Persian Period

CHAPTER 9

RESTORATION: 'THE SONS OF THE CAPTIVITY' AND THE SMALL COMMUNITY IN PALESTINE

The personage of the messenger of good tidings that Isaiah had spoken about did indeed appear, in the form of the Persian king, Cyrus (559–529 BCE). With his declaration to the Jews, there began the era of the Second Temple, which lasted approximately six hundred years, from the restoration to Zion in the days of Cyrus up to the destruction by Vespasian and Titus. Information regarding the Persian period, however, is very scarce, and it is only for the period following the Hasmonean revolt that we possess a rich historiography.[1]

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It was the Exiles who restored the community in Judah. Let us turn aside to study the B'nei HaGolah (בני הגולה) during the first century of their return. The Exile wrought certain changes in them, which were to produce a certain character in the community of those who returned.

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The empire of Nabonidus, the last of the Babylonian kings, was in a state of collapse. The story in the book of Daniel gives a true picture of the last days of Babylonian rule. After a decisive victory for the Persians at Opis on the Tigris, the army general, Gobryas, was able to take Babylon without a fight in October, 539.

In the Month of Tashritu, when Cyrus attacked the army

> of Akkad in Opis on the Tigris, the inhabitants of Akkad revolted, but he (Nabonidus) massacred the confused inhabitants…. In the month of

[1] For surveys of Jewish history during the Persian period, see H. Jagersma, *A History of Israel in the Old Testament Period* (London: SCM Press, 1982), and Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, 175–196.

> Arahshamnu, the 3rd day, Cyrus entered Babylon, green twigs were spread in front of him—the state of 'PEACE' (sulmu) was imposed upon the city. Cyrus sent greetings to all Babylon.[2]

The conquest of Babylon brought the Persians directly into the context of biblical history. To the Judean exiles in the colonies of Tel-Abib, Nippur and similar places, the conquests of Cyrus came as a liberation. He was hailed as the servant of Yahweh, the anointed of Israel.[3]

Hope of restoration did not die, especially while Jehoiachin lived, and this flared up after his release from prison (561 BCE).[4] There was probably a very short span of time between the death of Jehoiachin and the conquest of Cyrus in 539.

Jehoiachin's son Sheshbazzar (*Sin-ub-usur*) was the head of the Davidic family, and the resurgence of Jewish nationalism was portrayed on a deeper religious basis. Both the people who were left in Jerusalem before the final collapse under Nebuchadnezzar, and the captives already in Babylon, saw the exile as being one of short duration. Jeremiah's letter to the Babylonian exiles (Jer. 29) reveals that they were impatiently awaiting their return home and, after the final catastrophe, this hope did not die out, as the people still prayed to return to their land from the rivers of Babylon.

Finally, the long awaited and prayed for event took place. In 538, the first year of his reign in Babylon, Cyrus issued a decree allowing the restoration of the Jewish community and cult in Palestine. This decree appears in two forms in our biblical texts in the book of Ezra; in Hebrew and in Aramaic. The Hebrew declaration in Ezra 1:2–4 reads as follows:

> Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of heaven, given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of

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[2] *ANET*[3], 306 (from the Nabonidus Chronicle).

[3] William Culican, *The Medes and Persians* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1965) 54, states: 'the praise heaped upon him by the Second Isaiah had led many to believe in the possibility of the existence in Babylon of a pro-Persian Jewish plot.' There is no evidence for this theory, but there is no doubt where the interests of the captives lay, and this is very clearly portrayed in the books of Isaiah and Ezra, as well as Daniel.

[4] William Foxwell Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 86–87.

> all His people—his God be with him—let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord, the God of Israel, he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

The Aramaic version in Ezra 6:3–5 is worded somewhat differently, and is referred to in the text as a *dikrona.*[5]

> In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king made a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be builded, the place where they offer sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber, and let the expenses be given out of the king's house; and also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought back unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to its place, and thou shalt put them in the house of God. (Ezra 6:3–5)

Although both these declarations have in the past been questioned by scholars, their authenticity today is no longer disputed. The Aramaic of the Cyrus decree falls well within the category of Aramaic which has become known as Official or Imperial Aramaic (*Reichsaramaisch*).[6] Examples of Imperial Aramaic documents are abundant throughout the Middle East, that language being the common administrative language in the time of the Persian Empire.[7] Aramaic was used even when one of the correspondents did not know the language—the letter was still dispatched in that tongue and the recipient would then have had to engage the help of an interpreter. As has been shown by P. de Vaux, the Aramaic source of the Chronicler is as ancient as other Aramaic papyri of the 5th century BCE, so that if the edicts which it contains are false, the fraud goes back a long way. Another point in favour of the authenticity of the Aramaic document is the very fact which, at one stage, scholars found embarrassing. The Bible states that

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[5] *Dikrona* (Ezra 6:2): a memorandum of an oral decision of the king, filed in the royal archives.

[6] John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (eds), *Israelite and Judaean History* (Philadelphia: Westminster SCM Press, 1978) 497.

[7] Examples of Imperial Aramaic include the Elephantine papyri of the 5th century BCE, a copy of the Behistun inscription of Darius I Hystaspes (521-486) found in Egypt. W. S. LaSor, 'Aramaic', *ISBE*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 4 vols, 230–231.

in Darius' day, in reply to the questioning by Tattenai, the governor of Trans-Euphrates, regarding the permit given to the Jews to build, the document was sought in the archives at *Babylon*, but was found elsewhere in *Ecbatana* (Ezra 6:2). This simply means that the search at Babylon was fruitless, while the later resort to Ecbatana was crowned with success. In any case, the mention of Ecbatana is a favourable indication. The name of this town does not appear elsewhere in the Bible. It is known now that the Persian rulers, who spent the winter in Babylon, went back in the summer to Susa or Ecbatana. It is also known that Cyrus left Babylon in the spring of 537. The decree, dated from his first regnal year, could therefore have been prepared at Susa or Ecbatana. A forger operating in Palestine, and without the information that we possess, would find it difficult to be so accurate.

The content of Cyrus' edict has also been thought to weaken its historicity. It was deemed odd that the Persian court would concern itself with the measurements of the Jewish temple. Yet such detail is natural enough, given that the expenses were to be met by the royal treasury. The decree also directs that the vessels looted by Nebuchadnezzar be replaced in the new structure. Such generosity accorded well with the general principles of Persian supremacy, as set out in the Cyrus Cylinder.[8] Archaeological finds have brought to light many such similar examples of the king's generosity and religious tolerance towards various nationalities and religions, so there is no reason to suspect that his treatment of the Jews should have been any different. Moreover, politically it suited Cyrus to have a loyal community dwelling between him and the yet unconquered Egypt.[9] A Jewish community in Palestine which owed its existence to Cyrus would also form an effective counterweight to the pro-Egyptian faction, which past history had shown might always be expected in Syria. There were, furthermore, Jewish communities in Egypt that would feel kindly towards the ruler who restored worship at their ancestral sanctuary.

It is well known the Cyrus did restore many temples, and this is borne out by some of the inscriptions found in excavations. Thus, for example, at

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[8] The cylinder describes Cyrus' policies: 'as far as Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the towns of Zamban, Me-Turnu, Der as well as the region of the Gutians, I returned to (these) sacred cities of the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been in ruins for a long time, the images which (used) to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries.' *ANET*[3], 316.

[9] Othniel Margalith, 'The Political Background of Zerubbabel's Mission and the Samaritan Schism', *VT*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1991) 312–323.

Uruk, the German excavations of E. Heinrich, H. Lentzen, and others, showed that the sanctuary of Ishtar was rebuilt by Cyrus, who left inscribed bricks on which the claims were made.[10] The verse text of the Nabonidus document shows his respect for other religions. These attitudes of the early Persian kings are sufficiently illustrated through the various documents everywhere in Asia Minor and Egypt, as well as Babylon. They respected and encouraged the local customs, when they were reconcilable with public order.[11] Thus, the authenticity of the Aramaic edict of Cyrus can no longer be disputed.

We now turn to the Hebrew document in Ezra 1:2–4. It is a proclamation to Judeans throughout Cyrus' kingdom, the historicity of which is less readily acceptable. It may be a paraphrase of the original document or it could be a separate declaration made to the Jews by their own leaders after the issue of the original one.[12] It is also possible that the return of the Jews could have taken place under a number of administrative acts of Persia. The wording of the document is not unlike some of the other declarations made by Cyrus, such as the cylinder of Rassam or the texts of Ur. With great tolerance, Cyrus allowed life to proceed without violent interference, in marked contrast to the Assyrian and Babylonian practice towards conquered peoples. At the same time, as a statesman, he did not forget that Palestine was a road that led to Egypt, as yet unconquered. It should also be remembered that, at this period, politics and religion were closely linked. Still, if Cyrus, and after him Darius, adopted a friendly attitude towards the Jews, this was not only because it served their own interests, but also because the religious ideal of the Jews, whose religion they certainly thought superior to many others, was far closer to their own than that of Chaldea or Egypt.[13] The Jews, for their part, were conscious of this attitude. Their gratitude to the Iranian people found expression in songs of joy, marking the end of the dark days of captivity.[14]

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[10] Could it be that an exact copy of the edict is in the foundations of the Second Temple?

[11] R. P. R. de Vaux, 'Les décrets de Cyrus et de Darius Sur la reconstruction du Temple', *RB*, Vol. 46 (1937) 29–57.

[12] The parallels between Ezra's decrees and Persian decrees are also similarly discussed by Henri Cazelles, 'La Mission d'Esdras', *VT*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1954) 125.

[13] For a closer comparison between Judaism and Zoroastrianism, see ch. 10 below.

[14] R. Ghirshman, *Iran: From the Earliest Times to the Islamic Conquest* (Suffolk: Penguin Books, 1961) 132.

Cyrus' religious beliefs were of Iranian nature—ethical and universalistic, rather than nationalistic and centred around particular shrines. He has been described as one of the 'truly enlightened rulers of ancient times', whose character formed the background to his many edicts, of which one, at least, permitted the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem.[15] Modern archaeology has unearthed evidence of his generosity towards other foreign groups within the empire, and the Aramaic papyri, which have come to hand, have disproved all concrete objections to the substantial (not verbal) authenticity of both the Hebrew and Aramaic edicts in Ezra.[16]

Josephus,[17] in his history, actually claims that Cyrus had read the words of the prophet Isaiah, and that it was this that influenced him in this benevolent deed:

> This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: 'My will is that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land and build my temple'.[18]

Isaiah had indeed hailed Cyrus as God's anointed, and had predicted that he would return the Jews to their ancestral homes and would re-establish the worship of their God.[19]

So it was that with the coming of one of the most benevolent emperors in history, especially in comparison with those immediately preceding him, that a page was turned in the history of the exiles, and that the door was opened for them to leave the foreign place of their compulsory sojourn and return to their promised land.

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[15] Bright, *A History of Israel*, 362. It is interesting to note that Cyrus is called God's shepherd by the Greek historian, Xenophon (430?–355? BCE), in his biography of Cyrus, as well as by Isaiah (Isa. 44:28).

[16] William Foxwell Albright, 'The Judicial Reform of Jehoshaphat', *Alexander Marx: Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Saul Lieberman (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950) 61–82.

[17] For criticism of the reliability of Josephus as a source for reconstruction of Jewish history in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, see Lester L. Grabbe, 'Josephus and the reconstruction of the Judean Restoration', *JBL*, Vol. 106, No. 2 (1987) 244–246.

[18] *Jos. Ant.* 11.1.2, para. 5.

[19] Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria*, 555–556.

This is how the idyllic picture appeared: the desert would become a flowering garden and the children of Israel would get up, one and all, and return to their homeland, there to restore the kingdom of old and the temple, as in the days of David and Solomon.

The true picture of what happened was sadly different from this. Only a small percentage of the people responded to the call. Many of them had established themselves in their new place of residence. As Jeremiah had instructed them to do, they had 'built houses and planted vineyards'. Materially they had much to lose by giving up their accumulated wealth and returning to a deserted land yielding very little in return for hard work, and facing insecurity as the surrounding neighbours did not eye the return favourably. There is no doubt about the fact that many of the Jews were by then well established in Babylon.[20] Jewish names appear more and more frequently in Babylonian business documents, as we shall examine more closely in chapter 10 below.[21] Josephus also states that, by this time, most Jews were comfortably off in Babylon and did not wish to leave their possessions—they had already dwelt there for fifty years.

The first return appears to have taken place under Sheshbazzar, reasonably soon after the fall of Babylon and after the decree of Cyrus in 538. We do not know how many people took part, but we read in Ezra 1:4–6 that the wealthy Jews granted financial aid to the expedition. Although the repatriates are numbered as 50,000 in the lists of Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, this figure is more likely to refer to a census taken in Nehemiah's time, almost a century later.[22] These lists will be discussed in more detail below (p. 129). In all probability, the first return under Sheshbazzar was small.[23] Among them were some priests and their

[20] One cannot but compare things some twenty four centuries ago with what obtains today, where only a small number of Jews are prepared to go and live in Israel.

[21] Bright, *A History of Israel*, points out that certainly this was so by the next century, when Jewish names appear frequently in business documents from Nippur (437 and after). Presumably, it was the case sooner, as the Elephantine texts (495 and after) show it to have been in Egypt.

[22] See Bright, *A History of Israel*, 362.

[23] The view of a relatively small initial return is supported by Bright, *A History of Israel*, 362, 376, and by Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 144–145. The latter presents as evidence that subsequent requests for returnees were made to Babylonian Jewry (Zech. 2:10ff; Ezra 7–8), and that the kinds of difficulties experienced by the returnees in Jerusalem were more indicative of a small community.

families (the Kohanim). Still, there were many who could not trace their lineage or even demonstrate that they were of Israel.[24]

Mary Ellen Chase, the American scholar and educationalist who lectured on the 'The Bible as Literature', went so far as to say that:

> The future of the world lay in this procession to Jerusalem; it rested with it whether we should have a Bible at all as we know it—the Bible, the Jewish faith, Christianity and many centuries of western culture. If there had been no return to Jerusalem, Judah would have shared by and large the fate of Israel, become intermingled with the east and eventually been lost as a united people.

The political rulers who were assigned to Israel in the 6th century were descendants of the Davidic throne, if Sheshbazzar is to be identified with Jehoiachin's son, Shenazzar, of 1 Chronicles 3:18.[25] According to Ezra 5:14–16, he was appointed governor (פחה) by Cyrus, in which capacity he laid the foundations of the second temple. From then on, his career was taken over by one Zerubbabel, whose identity *vis-à-vis* Sheshbazzar requires some textual extrapolation. Of Sheshbazzar we hear no more. He was probably recalled to Persia, like Nehemiah the governor after him.

The morale of the community was very low, and the fact that there was no glory and no triumph must have taken some countering. Cyrus was, apparently, a great disappointment. He did not become a believer. He gradually became associated in their mind with a domineering empire, and their sense of being a captive state grew rather than lessened. In 530, after long years of complete mastery of western Asia, Cyrus died, and was succeeded by his son Cambyses. Cambyses soon added Egypt to his long list of captive nations (525).

He seems to have succeeded there in a remarkable way. Very soon, the empire stretched from Libya in the west to Benghazi, from Sirenica to India, and from the north of Armenia into southern Russia and south to

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[24] Such people could well have been of the earlier northern captivity, who had attached themselves to the people of Judah. Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Schoken Books, 1961) 62, notes that individual families continued to trace their origin to the Exile, down to the beginning of the Christian era, or even after.

[25] Both names are arguably corruptions of the Babylonian name, *Sin-ab-usur*. For a dissenting view, see Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* 143 (and literature cited in n. 22).

Ethiopia—a vast empire indeed—yet we know of no instance where Cambyses went against his father's policies. His reign should have been a good one, in that he could promote freedom of movement. However, as far as the Jews were concerned, they were increasingly unhappy. The number in the new community seems to have been small. The new Judah was about twenty square miles, with Jerusalem in the middle. Albright estimates that there would have been approximately 20,000 people in the area from Beth-Zur to Hebron.

The governors of the surrounding satrapies were openly hostile from the beginning. This continued for a number of years. There were economic, as well as political tensions, which could have been due to greed in the acquisition of land and also to bad seasons. There was also a need to become accustomed to the method of agriculture in Palestine, which differed from that employed in Babylon. The returnees were ardent Yahwists. The community into which they came was syncretistic and pathetically weak. The people in Jerusalem desperately needed a focal force such as the temple, which they began to build under Shessbazzar. Nevertheless, between mockery, discouragement, lethargy and opposition from the Samaritans, there was little heart for the work in hand, and it soon ground to a halt. It needed someone with vision and drive to start again.

The account of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel is confused. Zerubbabel, who was Yehoiachin's grandson and Sheshbazzar's nephew, apparently took over from the latter, and may have arrived while Sheshbazzar was still trying to lay the foundations.[26] It is not possible to determine precisely the date of Zerubbabel's mission to Jerusalem. He is recorded as having arrived in 538 (Ezra 1–2), but such a date is not easily reconcilable with other details, such as the linking of the building of the temple with Darius, some twenty years later (Ezra 4:5). However the narratives about Zerubbabel agree that it was under his supervision that the temple was built and completed, in association with a Joshua who was in charge of spiritual affairs.

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[26] Some sources identify him as the son of Shealtiel (Ezra 3:2; Neh. 12:1; Hag. 1:1) while the Chronicler lists him as the son of Pedaiah, Yehoiachin's third son. He might have been the latter's literal son, but adopted into Shealtiel's line by some legal means such as levirate marriage. R. L. Pratt, Jr., 'Sheshbassar', *ISBE*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 4 vols, 475.

It is thought that much of what is taken by many scholars to be Third Isaiah (chs 56–66), was written in Israel in these days of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel. These chapters reflect the struggles and anxieties of the local citizens. It seems that there are pre-temple and post-temple chapters. A significant portion of the work was composed by a disciple or disciples of Second Isaiah. Whereas Second Isaiah bears the stamp of Babylon upon it, Third Isaiah bears the stamp of Jerusalem. The prophet stresses the great difference between those who have obeyed the LORD and those who have not:

> And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob,
> And out of Judah an inheritor of My mountains; And Mine elect shall inherit it,
> And My servants shall dwell there.
> And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks,
> And the valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down in,
> For my people that have sought Me;
> But ye that forsake the LORD,
> That forget My holy mountain,
> That prepare a table for Fortune,
> And that offer mingled wine in full measure unto Destiny,
> I will destine you to the sword,
> And ye shall all bow down to the slaughter;
> Because when I called, ye did not answer,
> When I spoke, ye did not hear;
> But ye did that which was evil in Mine eyes,
> And chose that wherein I delighted not.
>
> (Isa. 65:9–12)

Though it misses the sustained brilliance of Second Isaiah, the superb poetry in chapters 60–62 brings Isaiah to mind. These passages are both interesting and important, for they are one of the few sources for life in Jerusalem at the time.

In 522, Cambyses died. A revolt, which was started before his death, was subdued by his successor, Darius, who victoriously returned to his homeland and executed the pretender. Despite this show of strength, unrest fairly exploded at this time. Great bursts of nationalism and independence could not be contained, and Babylon also made its contribution. Pretenders set themselves up as kings of Babylon, but Darius survived all these.

Two years after the rise of Darius, two prophets came to urge the Jews to build the delayed temple, and roused Judah's hopes of a Messiah. Haggai's prophecies were preserved in five short passages in two chapters,

in the third person, all precisely dated. The other was the prophet Zechariah. Some scholars believe that only the first eight chapters belong to Zechariah, while the rest are later. This writer, however, goes along with Professor Klausner's argument that all the chapters in the book are indeed those of the one prophet. Klausner's example of Mendelei Mocher Sepharim's early work, under his real name of Shalom Jacob Abramovitz, is an excellent example. If we did not know for certain that it was one and the same man, we would never guess that the *Natural History* of his early days, and the later, *In the Vale of Weeping*, were by the same man. Similarly, one may point to the early works of Michelangelo in the style of the High Renaissance, and his last works in the Mannerist style. It is perhaps an error of biblical scholars to suppose that a prophet may not have lived for a long time. The content and even the style of his prophecies could have changed considerably.[27]

It is also thought by some scholars that the short book of the prophet Obadiah belongs to the period immediately following the fall of Jerusalem. The first part is vivid: the downfall of Edom through the hand of the Nabateans when they took Petra in 312 BCE. It is thought that the Arabs invaded Edom in about 460 BCE, but did not take Petra until some time later. The date usually given for Malachi is around 460 BCE, which is approximately the same time as Obadiah, according to this theory.

It has been argued by some earlier critics that there was no return of the Jews from Babylon until the time of Ezra. There is not sufficient evidence, nor are there strong enough arguments, to support this theory,[28] and, although the reasons put forward by the exponents of this theory seem to be convincing at first sight, it is not difficult to point to their flaws. Their major arguments rely on the facts that Haggai and Zechariah do not mention the stupendous event of the return, and that the building of the temple did not commence until the reign of Darius.[29]

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[27] This also tallies with the opinions of certain commentators regarding the authorship of the book of Isaiah.

[28] Such as the theory of the Dutch scholar, W. H. Kosters, discussed in Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 33–37. This is also supported by the French scholar, M. Vernes, and the American scholar, C. C. Torrey.

[29] We have seen above that this was not the case as stated in Ezra 5:16; however these people brush off the report of the foundation being laid by Sheshbazzar as a late tradition.

In spite of the fact that there was not a great response by the Jews of the Golah (diaspora) to the call of Zion, many Jews had undoubtedly returned. Josephus relates the episodes in the following manner:

> When Cyrus had said this to the Israelites, the rulers of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with the Levites and the priests, went in haste to Jerusalem, yet did many of them stay at Babylon, as not willing to leave their possessions… Now the number of those that came out of captivity to Jerusalem, were forty-two thousand four hundred and sixty two.[30]

In the book of Ezra, we are furnished with the following numbers:

> The whole congregation together were forty and two thousand three hundred and three score, beside their menservants, and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred seven and thirty; and they had two hundred singing men and singing women. (Ezra 2:64–65)

The numbers in Nehemiah vary regarding the 'singing men and singing women', which is given at two hundred and forty five (Neh. 7:66–67).

These lists mention the total figure of the returnees as being over 40,000 people. However, the lists are not necessarily restricted to the people who came up with Sheshbazzar. It is quite possible to argue that they enumerate also those people who came up with Zerubbabel, or even later at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Regardless of numbers, the prophets working in Judah were more concerned with the task of arousing the people to restore the temple, than with the birth-place of their audience. There are also traditions that claim that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah themselves came from Babylon.

The real need of Judah was not an increase of people, but competent and aggressive leadership. The best people had been carried into exile (witness, among other things, the prophecy of the good and the bad figs, Jer. 24). From the land of exile must come those who would arouse the sluggish spirits of the native Judeans. Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel and Jeshua, Nehemiah and Ezra and probably Haggai and Zechariah, were the products of Jewish blood and Babylonian enterprise, and their presence in Jerusalem counted for more than 40,000 ordinary men who may, indeed,

[30] *Jos. Ant.* 11.1.3, paras 8, 18.

have returned from exile, but in the course of the two centuries of Persian rule, not in one great company.[31]

These lists have been handed down to us with very little alteration.[32] We have yet to determine what types of lists they are. Do they portray the condition of Judah during the Babylonian Exile, or do they list the returning captives? Furthermore, do they enumerate the returnees on the eve of their departure to Palestine, or do we have before us a list of the immigrants after their arrival? Galling, for example, relates this list to Zerubbabel, but a date in the latter half of the 5th century is preferable.[33] Alt suggests that groups of people listed under one family name, rather than under the name of a settlement, belong to various districts, especially in the south of Jerusalem, of which specific names of villages were not mentioned.[34] At any rate, he too recognises that the districts listed in Nehemiah make up the true circumference of the area of Judah in the Persian period, and the incompleteness of the lists of immigrants is not binding.

In all likelihood, by 522, the total population of Judah, including those already resident there, can scarcely have been much above 20,000. To judge from the results of excavations, the resettlement of Judah was a slow process, and it was not until the 3rd century BCE that the country recovered anything like its old density of population.[35] Yet even had the total

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[31] Kosters, in Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 37.

[32] H. L. Ollrik, 'The Lists of Zerubbabel (Neh. 7 and Ezra 2) and the Hebrew Numerical Notation', *BASOR*, Vol. 136 (1954) 21–27, points out that many of the differences between the numbers given in the two lists may be due to scribal errors, which could have easily happened because of the similarity between the two figures when written in the contemporary form used for the numerals in question. He thus concludes that 'while at first glance these textual-numerical differences may seem detrimental, actually they greatly enhance the value of the lists, as they bring out much of their real nature and age—remains of ancient census lists made by the builders and supporters of the restoration and reform sometimes called 'The Second Temple', documents vested with reality and antiquity by the very blemishes and signs of use they exhibit.'

[33] Kurt Galling, 'The "Gōlā-List" according to Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7', *JBL*, Vol. 70, No. 20 (1951) 149–158.

[34] Alt, Albrecht, 'Bemerkungen zu Einigen Judäischen Ortslisten des Alten Testaments', *KS*, Vol. 2, München: C. H. Beck, 1953, 3 vols, 291–292 = Albrecht Alt, 'Bemerkungen zu Einigen Judäischen Ortslisten des Alten Testaments', *BBLAK*, Vol. 67 (1951).

[35] Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 142.

population been around 50,000, this would still be perhaps less than half the population of Judah before 587. Seventy five years later, Jerusalem was still thinly populated:

> Now the city was wide and large; but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded. (Neh. 7:4)

The years were years of deprivation and poor harvest. The conflict between the immigrants and the local residents grew. Work on the temple had stopped. The low morale of the community is betrayed in Haggai, Zechariah and Isaiah 56–66. As hope gave way to disappointment, syncretism doubtlessly increased. Still, supported both by prophetic sanction, and by the reaffirmation from Persian authorities of their permission for cultic restoration in the Judean satrapy, the work on the temple was resumed in 520 BCE. Four years later, and twenty two years after the first return, the work was completed. The words of Haggai and Zechariah were dangerous and inflammatory, but they served their purpose. The new temple provided the faith with a rallying place. The restoration experiment had been saved. We do not know what happened to Zerubbabel, except that he was followed by Jeshua and his successors until the time of Nehemiah.[36] It is possible that Zerubbabel was called back by the Persian authorities. The temple was completed seventy years after the Babylonian exile, and that is the reason why tradition reckons the Babylonian exile as having lasted for seventy years.

Palestine, at this time, formed part of the fifth of the twenty satrapies of the empire of the Achaemenides—that of the western provinces, with its administrative centre at Damascus. This extended from the Orontes to the borders of Egypt, comprising also Syria, Phoenicia and Cyprus. The Jewish colony itself was under the direct rule of a governor, the scope of whose authority remains unclear. There seems to have been a degree of subordination to the Samaritan governor. The seat of administration was Jerusalem,[37] where the governor resided in a fortress called the Birah, overlooking the temple.

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[36] The porters mentioned in Neh. 12:25–26, are said to have been 'in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest the scribe.'

[37] The province of Judah was one of the satrapies defined by Herodotus (Trans-Potamia). It seems to have been divided into a number of provinces, among them being Judah, Samaria, Ammon, Ashdod and Arabia (Herodotus iii.89ff).

Of all the cities excavated in Palestine, Samaria alone has revealed a fairly continuous occupation throughout that period from the fall of Jerusalem through into inter-testamental times. It is small wonder, then, that our archaeological knowledge of the post-exilic and inter-testamental ages is so fragmentary. At the same time, this very fact is eloquent testimony to the hardship and privations which the decimated population of the country had to undergo. The new Judean community, established in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, was limited to a small area around Jerusalem, and the population, by 440, was reckoned at less than 50,000[38] (Neh. 7:66ff).

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In 522 BCE, Darius ascended the throne after much rebellion and bloodshed throughout his empire, and, when he did, he decided to follow the policy of Cyrus and allow some more Jews to return to their homeland. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel of the royal blood, many returned. There, the work of the prophet Haggai was designed to make them hurry up and build the temple. Many of the visions of Haggai and Zechariah were clearly disloyal to the Persian rulers, for they visualized Zerubbabel as an independent king of his people. Such prophecies were nothing less than treason against the Persian king. Whether as a result of these whisperings, or due to the continued complaints by Judah's neighbours, Tattenai, the governor of Transpotamia, appeared and demanded to know who had issued the permit for the rebuilding of the temple. It was then that Darius issued the order for a search to be made in the archives, and that Cyrus' edict was found at Ecbatana.[39] In 520, Darius confirmed this decree allowing the rebuilding of Jerusalem. He further instructed Tattenai to furnish the people with whatever building materials were necessary, and to see that the Jews were not molested or hampered in their work.

Herodotus, *Herodotus, with an English Translation*, trans. A. D. Godley, 4 vols, Vol. 2 (London: W. Heinemann, 1921) 194–195.

[38] Supporting the opinion that this number of people actually left Babylon for Palestine in 537 are such scholars as Eduard Meyer, *Die Entstehung des Judentums: Eine Historische Untersuchung* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1896); S. Jampel, *Die Wiederharstellung Israels unter den Achaemeniden*, Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wisseschaft des Judentums (Breslau: W. Koebner, 1904); Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity.*

[39] See n. 29 above.

Meanwhile, representatives of the mixed population, who had been colonized by the Assyrians in Shechem, offered to take part in the rebuilding of the temple. The offer was made in good faith, for, since the deportation, the colonists had worshipped the Hebrew local god, though retaining their former divinities (Ezra 4: 1–2). This offer was rejected (v. 3), which deepened the division between the Judean and Samaritan populations. The Samaritan neighbours became enemies who were to be a constant thorn in the side of the small Judean community.

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Haggai, who prophesied some seventeen years after the first return, was adamant that the people's first task was to build the house of the LORD:

> Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying: This people say: The time is not come; the time that the LORD house should be build.' Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying: 'Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste? (Hag. 1:2–4)

When the work of the temple was completed, the prophet reproached the pessimists who wept at the sight of this new temple and who still bore the memory of Solomon's magnificent edifice. He spoke of the coming of a new Messiah, not in the distant future, but one whom they know today, their governor Zerubbabel, who was of the house of David:

> Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them: and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts. (Hag. 2:21–23)

Zechariah began prophesying two months after Haggai (518), who had initiated the building of the temple, and Zechariah encouraged the people to carry on the good work, in spite of the interference by Tattenai, the satrap of Transpotamia. Zechariah also spoke of complete redemption in all aspects: spiritual welfare and material prosperity, and again the need arose for a King-Messiah, whom he also saw as Zerubbabel.

While speaking of these two prophets, one must also remember another two of the same era: Joel and Malachi. There has been some

disagreement among scholars as to the date of Joel. He has been placed from as early as the reign of Manasseh, to the time of Nehemiah, however the date suggested by Klausner, as standing between Deutero-Isaiah and Ezra and Nehemiah, so that his prophecies fall near the time of the prophecies of Malachi, seems to be quite acceptable. The messianic expectations of Joel, with their portrayals of 'the birth pangs of the Messiah' and of 'the day of judgement', bore fruit in the Jewish apocalypticism of the Pseudepigrapha, as well as in Christology, and in the Talmud and Midrash to the highest degree.

The last of the prophets is one whose proper name is not known to us and who is referred to merely as 'My messenger'—Malachi.[40] Although the name of the prophet is not known certainly, the time and conditions reflected in the book are clearly portrayed. The 'day of small things' did not cease, even though the temple had been completed in 515 BCE. Zerubbabel did not become the new Messiah, as it had been hoped. Rather, he disappeared from the stage and the religious leader, Joshua, now governed his people. Spiritually also the community was at a low ebb. The poor were being oppressed by the rich, many of whom married into powerful families of the neighbouring people in order to build up their own strength and prosperity. Malachi's prophecies were designed to meet this dreadful situation and came in about 475 BCE after the completion of the temple, but before the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. He called for the moral purification of the people and demanded that man should treat his fellow man as fairly as he treated his God!

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The leaders of Babylonian Jewry had to march with tenacity towards their goal, which indeed they did through a century of uninterrupted effort. Circumstances were very trying. They had to overcome the unpredictable policies of the central and provincial governments in Persia, and the uninviting poverty of Palestine at the time, as well as the opposition of hostile neighbours.

The old social inequalities, with expropriation and the enslavement of the poor by the (relatively) rich, soon crept into the young society again while still in the progress of reconstruction. Relations between the

[40] (a) The Septuagint actually translates Mal. 1:1 as, 'by the hand of His messenger' (ἐν χειρὶ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ), instead of 'by the hand of My messenger.' (b) The Talmud states that 'Malachi is the same as Ezra' (*b. Megillah* 15a).

returning exiles and the Judeans who had been left in Palestine by the Babylonian conqueror, also represented a serious problem. It is quite natural that there would have been many properties to which two opposing people would have held equal legal claims. On the one hand, there would have been the descendant of an exile, who had been forced to forsake his field and vineyards, and on the other there would have been the descendant of a Judean who had been left behind, who had toiled in that land for over a generation, and who had to offer a large part of his income in taxes to the Persian government.

Religiously, also, the returning exiles who brought back with them a purified form of their religion and laws, were horrified by the syncretistic religion which was being practised by many of those who were left behind. Even though only a small minority of the Babylonian Jews returned to Palestine, they persisted and won. Those who went back were the zealots, whose chief interest was in religion, the space in and around Jerusalem which was surrounded by the Edomites, Philistines, Ammonites and, of course, their fellow Judeans and Israelites who had been left behind. The eighteen years which followed the return to Zion were years of complete disillusionment.

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To their homeland, the returning captives brought back with them their zealous enthusiasm. More than their numerical importance was the fact that they surpassed the Palestinian citizens in their esteem for Jewish culture as they perceived it.[41] Most of them were of the cream of Judean society and of the priesthood; people whose means and talents made it possible for them to be more independent. They no doubt strained with all their might to preserve the purity of their religion and tongue, and to pass it on to their sons. This was not the case with those of the people who had remained in the country after the destruction. These were the poorer classes, and their lives were quite difficult. Their time was not free to worry about the cultural inheritance, after the economic and political ones had been forcefully taken away from them. This is the state of the language which the returnees found in Palestine, as described in Nehemiah:

[41] Matmon-Cohen, 'The Hebrew Language', 175, feels that, notwithstanding their limited numbers, they were very influential in their ancient-new homeland.

> In those days also saw I the Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. (Neh. 13:23–24)

Coming back to the lists, it has even been suggested that if we take the lists in Ezra and Nehemiah as a true number of the people who left Babylon, then many must have perished on the long and tedious journey getting there, because the description of Judah during the next century or more, hardly accounts for that many people. The distance from Babylon to Jerusalem is 530 miles, as the crow flies, but 900 miles by caravan trail.[42]

There were many caravans of Jews returning to Jerusalem during the next century, until quite a substantial population had joined those who had not been exiled. The repatriates and their superior education and status soon made them the leaders of the Judean community. The purpose of those who returned was religious, but the restoration of religious life around Jerusalem developed slowly.

For three generations the priestly community in Judah exerted little influence. Jewish communities outside Judah grew, and during these sixty years or so, the population may have doubled.[43] Relations between the old and the new settlers improved, and the time was ripe for a new forward step in the resurrection of Zion.

From the biblical narrative, the picture which unfolds before us shows that after the early return of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the community in Judah was but a small religious group ruled by an elite, at whose head

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[42] Regarding the numbers of people mentioned in the Ezra-Nehemiah lists, there is an interesting footnote in Judah Rosenthal, מחקרים ומקורות *[Investigations and Sources]*, 2 vols, (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1967), Vol. 1. When dealing with the number of Jews in the world at the time, it is pointed out that the numbers mentioned in the Ezra-Nehemiah lists, in total, equals 49,897 people. However, one cannot clearly divine from the text whether these numbers include only men, or whether also women and children. S. Funk, *Die Juden in Babylonien 200–500* (Berlin: Verlag von M. Poppelauer, 1902) takes these numbers to be only those of the men, heads of families, in which case the number of those returning to Zion would be around 20,000 people, but one finds it difficult to agree with that argument. If we summarise the numbers detailed in Ezra 2 (and Neh. 7), it may be seen that the number of men was only about 30,000. It is then self-evident that the number, 42,000, includes also women and children.

[43] Albright, *The Biblical Period*, 87.

stood the high priest. According to Nehemiah 12:10, Jeshua's son, Jehoiachin was followed by his grandson Eliashib (460 BCE).

Economic conditions were very bad. The gap between the social classes increased, and the poor were forced to borrow and to mortgage their fields and vineyards and even their sons, in order to pay the 'king's tax' (מנת המלך) and the 'bread of the governor' (לחם הפחה). Little was left for donating to the temple, and thus the state of the priests and the Levites also deteriorated.

Furthermore, there arose a spiritual danger through intermarriage with the neighbouring people. In 475–450, Malachi spoke out against the mixed marriages, and especially against those who divorced their Jewish wives in order to wed foreign women. There was a need for a man of faith who could speak out to the people, but also a man who was, at the same time, practical and able to accomplish what he preached.

The Bible presents the following narrative about the answer to Judah's need. Ezra, the son of Seriah, was a priest who lived in Babylon, and became known there as one who knew the 'book'—a scribe (סופר). In order to be able to act in Palestine and change the public and spiritual life in the spirit of the 'the Law of Moses', Ezra had to have a permit—a sort of affidavit from the Persian government—and indeed he received this from Artaxerxes.[44] He had the right to appoint officials and judges in Judah, and to instruct them in the law and matters of rule, according to the laws of the Jewish people. Apart from that, he was also permitted to collect donations in Babylon to help the settlers in Judah, and to take with him those who wished to migrate there. Ezra arrived in Judah with some 1,500 people—heads of families and also some Levites. He congregated the people and instructed them to turn away from syncretism and divorce their foreign wives. The neighbouring people consistently attacked Judah, and especially Jerusalem, wrecked the old walls and burnt the gates. To Ezra's aid came Nehemiah, son of Hacaliah, the Persian king's cup-bearer. He came in the capacity of governor (פחה), bearing a permit from Artaxerxes to rebuild the walls and the city itself. He was given building materials, and came from Susa to Jerusalem in 445/44. As soon as the work started, Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem, the Arab, rose to stop this work, but the walls were put up, as were also the gates.

[44] See below for discussion as to which king it was who gave Ezra permission to go: Artaxerxes I (465–424) or Artaxerxes II (404–358).

Ezra and Nehemiah worked continuously for the good of the community. The number of citizens in Jerusalem grew. The books of genealogy were checked. It is probable that the lists of Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 were compiled at this time. Nehemiah saw also to the economic division and the social classes in Judah, which disturbed the national unity. Ezra threw himself into spreading 'the Law of Moses' among the people, and Nehemiah made these rules into law that shall not be broken. The people swore to keep the pact and undertook:

i. Not to intermarry with the pagan neighbours;
ii. To keep the Sabbath and refrain from trading on that day;
iii. To keep the laws of the Sabbatical year, both agrarian and fiscal;
iv. To donate one third of a shekel per head per year for the temple;
v. To give the priests and the Levites the tithes as required.

After some twelve or thirteen years in Jerusalem, Nehemiah returned to Susa, in 433. His influence immediately waned. The practice of mixed marriages resumed and market day was fixed on a Saturday. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem with Artaxerxes' blessing. He reinforced the rules. The process of separating the people of Judah from the peoples around was completed, and the assimilationists were removed from Jerusalem.

Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, built a temple on Mount Gerizim near Shechem. His son-in-law, Manasseh, son of Joiachin, son of Eliashib the high priest, was appointed the chief priest of this temple. The Samaritan ritual was made up of Israelite and Judean elements. They recognised the Pentateuch and later added a certain form of the book of Joshua. At a later date they changed and altered much of the texts.

Thus is the straightforward story as we obtain it from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Problems, however, have been raised regarding the chronology of these very important people. There seems to be no doubt regarding the date of Nehemiah's mission, which many scholars agree belongs to the reign of Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464–424). The question is whether Ezra came before Nehemiah, as was recorded by the Chronicler, or during Nehemiah's ministry, or even after it, as most scholars think today.[45]

[45] For an excellent summary of the issue, see Hayes and Miller (eds), *Israelite and Judaean History*, 503–509. See also Bright, *A History of Israel*, 391–402; Frank

From the quite exact references to the regnal years of Artaxerxes which Nehemiah gives, his activity would have been approximately during the years 445–425 BCE.[46] Our problem, then, is the placing of Ezra. Did he precede, follow, or was he contemporary with Nehemiah? The fact that Ezra and Nehemiah do not mention one another has led to the speculation that they were not there at the same time.

In Ezra 7:7, we find the date as the 7th year of Artaxerxes. If the reference is to Artaxerxes I, then the date is in the year 459, which places Ezra some thirteen years before Nehemiah. Most scholars, though, take the 7th year to be that of Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–358), namely 398 BCE. Still others see the 7th year as a scribal error for the 37th year of the reign of Artaxerxes I, so that Ezra comes after the beginning of Nehemiah's ministry, but before the latter had finished.[47]

The biblical narrative conveys the impression that Ezra came first. Against this, we have to take into account other arguments:

(a) Nehemiah had a specific task, which was primarily was to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. This is borne out in the book, as for example in Nehemiah 2:5:

> And I said unto the king: 'If it please the king, and if thy servant has found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may *build* it'.[48]

On the other hand, we read in Ezra 9:9:

> For we are bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the ruins thereof, and to give us a fence (גדר) in Judah and Jerusalem.

Moore Cross, 'Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration', *JBL*, Vol. 94, No. 1 (1975) 4–18; Ackroyd, *Israel under Babylon and Persia*, 191–196.

[46] The date, 404–358, in the reign of Artaxerxes II, suggested by a few, is to be excluded.

[47] Albright, *The Biblical Period*, 111, 113. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 391–402.

[48] *Cf.* Neh. 4:1: 'But it came to pass that, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth', and passim.

It has been deduced from this that, in Ezra's day, there was a wall there. One could well argue about the exact meaning of the word, גדר, which is not a common one used for a city wall, that being generally referred to as חומה (as used in Nehemiah). However, one can argue that the exact word does not matter.[49] The point is that protection is implied and there could hardly have been protection for the people before Nehemiah's time.

(b) Ezra 10:1 implies that Jerusalem was populous and belonged to a later, more settled time than Nehemiah:

> Now while Ezra prayed, and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there was gathered together unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children; for the people wept very sore.

Nehemiah 7:4, on the other hand, tells differently:

> Now the city was wide and large; but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded.

One may again, of course, argue against this that Ezra might have called the congregation together not from Jerusalem alone but from the whole country. It is also to be noticed that 'there were gathered together unto him out of *Israel*…', which could imply this.

(c) Ezra's measures against mixed marriages are very extreme and are therefore likely to be later rather than earlier.[50]

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[49] But see Cross, 'Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration', 14, n. 60. He argues that the word, *gader*, means 'temple enclosure' rather than 'city wall'.

[50] Compare Ezra 10:2ff ('And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra: "We have broken faith with our God, and have married foreign women of the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of the LORD…" ') with Neh. 13:23–24, where Ezra deals with the problem as though he has struck it for the first time, and is not speaking as though some violent action such as this had already taken place ('In those days also saw I the Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.').

(d) The section attributed to Nehemiah's memoirs does not refer to Ezra at all. Nehemiah is mentioned in association with Ezra, but this is not part of the memoirs. This is part of the book:

> And Nehemiah who was the Tirshata, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people: 'This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep.' For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. (Neh. 8:9)[51]

It is important to point out that the governor, when writing about his work in Jerusalem, mentioned a man like Ezra. It has been suggested that the two may have quarrelled, but if this were the case, reflections of this would have been most likely to remain.

On the other hand, if Ezra was in Jerusalem some thirty years after Nehemiah, it would be possible to explain why in his records (which have suffered through editing and alteration), he did not mention Nehemiah's work: because there had been other governors since.

(e) In Nehemiah's time, the high priest was Eliashib (Neh. 3:1), but Ezra appears to have been a contemporary of Jochanan, Eliashib's son or grandson (Ezra 10:6). The Elephantine papyri show that Jochanan was high priest in Jerusalem in 410 BCE.[52]

The last two arguments carry some weight, and the case for the later dating of Ezra has gained support from many scholars.[53]

Batten, in his (*ICC*) commentary on the books, strongly supports the arguments in favour of placing Ezra after Nehemiah, and their ministries not coinciding at all. He further presents the argument that Artaxerxes could scarcely have sent two men to Judah at the same time, both clothed in similar powers. There is also the evidence of 1 Esdras, he claims, which

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[51] M. Z. Segal, *Introduction to the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah [in Hebrew]* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1953), explains that chs 8–10, which tell the great deeds of reading the Law in public, the fast and the pact with the people, do not belong either to the memoirs of Ezra or of Nehemiah, but are by the author-editor of the book Nehemiah, according to some other source.

[52] *ANET*[3], 491–492.

[53] This has been especially so since van Hoonacker expounded this theory and arguments in its favour: Albin van Hoonacker, 'La Succession chronologique Nehemie–Esdras', *RB*, Vol. 22–23 (1923–1924) 481–494, 33–64. See also, Cazelles, 'La Mission d'Esdras', 11–140, as referenced above.

connects Nehemiah 7:72 – 8:12 directly with Ezra 10, thus bringing the Ezra story together. Josephus has a section dealing with Nehemiah's administration (*Jos. Ant.* 11.5.6–8). Before he takes up the story of Nehemiah, he describes the death of Ezra at an advanced age, which favours this argument that they did not work at the same time.

It cannot, however, be claimed that the case has been established. One might argue that the Chronicler lived too close in time to Ezra and Nehemiah to be guilty of such an error and that too many changes would have to be made. Textual confusion might plausibly occur centuries after the events, whilst the Chronicler compiled his work one or, at the latest, two centuries later. Also, it is hardly conceivable that Nehemiah's disciples would allow his overshadowing by Ezra, had Nehemiah in fact preceded him. The biblical texts date Ezra's commission to 458 BCE, attributing this to Artaxerxes' benevolence. Yet it is unlikely that the Persian monarch would allow the re-establishment of the Jewish homeland at his expense, unless he stood to gain by it decidedly. It is argued by Margalith that a political motive, supplied by the Greek invasion of Persian territory, was the factor prompting Artaxerxes' sudden interest in Judah.[54] In 460, the Attic-Deltic League defeated the Persian army in Egypt, capturing Memphis in 459. This heightened Judah's significance as a potential obstacle to Greek advance, which depended on the degree of Judah's loyalty to Persia. Ezra was sent to Judah immediately after the fall of Memphis, with guaranteed royal support for the strengthening of a pro-Persian province headed by a Persian-Judean courtier. The war between Persia and Greece ended in 448. By 445, Hanani reported to Nehemiah in Persia that the walls of Jerusalem were in a state of severe disrepair. Obviously the king withdrew his support soon after the end of the war, once Judah ceased to be of any political or military significance.

Such arguments serve to caution that the traditional position should certainly not be rejected out of hand in favour of others which are equally beset with uncertainty. The Aramaic in the Elephantine letters is characteristic of the 5th century BCE, as is also that which is found in Ezra. Some royal names are spelt differently, but that may be a rendering of the Persian.

Moreover, the complete severing of the careers of Ezra and Nehemiah has been found to create difficulties for some scholars. Hence a third

[54] Othniel Margalith, 'The Political Role of Ezra as Persian Governor', *ZAW*, Vol. 98, No. 1 (1986) 110–112.

solution has been put forward. This third hypothesis solves the problem of separating Ezra and Nehemiah entirely. It attempts to do justice to the Nehemiah-Ezra sequence and to the biblical tradition, by postulating that their ministries overlapped. Thus Ezra did follow Nehemiah, but they were also there together. Nehemiah came back to Judah a second time in the 37th year of Artaxerxes I, which was the start of Ezra's ministry. This requires taking 'seven' in the Masoretic text of Ezra 7:7 as an error for 'thirty-seven'. This date does fit all the evidence best—but there is no textual warrant for this. It could still be that Artaxerxes II is the Persian king referred to in Ezra when he speaks of the 7th year.

The problems associated with dating the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah cannot be solved in the light of our current knowledge of Judah in the 5th century. One ought to conclude with a reminder that the arrangement of the books, both internally and within the wider Chronicler corpus, cannot be called upon to shed much light on matters of chronology, given the compiler's focus on theological direction, rather than on historical validity. Within either book, chronology is of secondary importance, and is repeatedly overlooked in order to articulate the author's particular slant on Israel's emergence. Thus, Ezra focuses predominantly on the priesthood, on rebuilding the temple, and on purifying Judean cultic practice. Nehemiah's ideology centres on the nation and its lay community, and places heavier emphasis on knowledge of the Torah, than on sacrificial purity. The overriding objective of the books is succinctly summarised by D. Kraemer: 'The question that these authors are debating is that of the locus of the sacred. Is religious power in Israel to be found in the priesthood and the cult, or in the Book and those who disseminate it?'[55] It is of small wonder then, that scholars have had such tremendous difficulties pinning the narratives to a chronological framework.

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Ezra, the new Moses of this exodus from Babylon, was a religious teacher and administrator of genius. He had three objectives:

(a) Make the whole people renew the covenant of obedience to the will of God that their ancestors had accepted at Sinai.

[55] David Charles Kraemer, 'On the Relationship of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah', *JSOT*, No. 59 (1993) 92.

(b) Purification of the nation from the sins for which he believed that their exile had been a just and merited punishment.

i Purification of the cult.
ii Purification of the nation.

(c) Make the whole nation practice their religion in their daily lives. The machinery for implementing the above was also threefold:

i The Synagogue.
ii Editing the Bible.
iii Religion made a matter for continuous education for ordinary people. The scribes regularly read out and interpreted the scriptures to the people.

This new pattern of living was able to take secure root in Jewish life by Judah's enjoyment of nearly two hundred years of tranquillity and obscurity, before it became entangled again in world affairs. The one consistent enemy during this period was its northern enemy—the Samaritans.

What materially aided the process we have been describing was the fact that the Persian king naturally preferred the rule of priests to a secular satrapy, and that thus the sacerdotal caste could build up its power, quietly but determinedly, under imperial protection.

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Nehemiah became cup-bearer to Artaxerxes I Longimanus (465–424). It appears that in December 445, he learned how bad things were in Jerusalem. (According to Josephus, who relies on the original Alexandrian translation of the 2nd century BCE, Nehemiah did not arrive in Palestine with a bodyguard until 440 BCE.)

Early in August 439, the task of rebuilding the great city wall began. According to the Bible, it was finished in fifty-two days; it is more likely that it would not have been finished until December 437. If Nehemiah arrived in 444, and immediately started on the work of rebuilding the walls, then our dates for the completion of this work would have been earlier. We read that three days after his arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah arose in the night. He told no man what his God had put into his heart to

do for Jerusalem, but with a few personal followers he viewed the walls, which were so ruinous in places that 'he must proceed on foot.'

As the work progressed, Sanballat and other hostile neighbours tried all means to halt the work, but they did not succeed. When the walls were completed, Nehemiah brought one out of ten of the population dwelling outside the walls to live within them, and thus strengthened the population in the city.

The British archaeologist, J. Garrow Duncan,[56] dug up parts of the wall on the little hill to the south east of the Gihon Spring. In his report he says:

> The stones are small, rough, irregular and unequal. Some of them are unusually small and seem to be merely chips broken off from bigger stones, just as if they were using any kind of material that came to hand. The large holes and hollow spaces are filled up with haphazard mixture of clay plaster mixed with tiny chips of stone.[57]

Josephus also states:

> And this trouble he underwent for two years and four months; for in so long a time was the wall built, in the twenty eighth year of the reign of Xerxes, in the ninth month.[58]

As a result of Nehemiah's efforts, the official practice of the temple in Jerusalem, embodied in the Priestly Code,[59] was made standard for Judaism throughout the Persian Empire,[60] as we know particularly from

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[56] As quoted by Werner Keller, *The Bible as History: Archaeology Confirms the Book of Books* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965) 307–308.
[57] During the time that Nehemiah was governor in Jerusalem, we are also told of how the holy fire of the temple was rediscovered (2 Macc. 1–2).
[58] *Jos. Ant.* 11.5.8, para. 179.
[59] Before the exile, a scribe had been a mere secretary. Now, he was a man 'skilled in the law of Moses which Yahweh had given'. The Code of the Priests had grown. In it were side-by-side presentations of the older legendary history, with special attention to chronology and genealogy, but here again the chief interest was in the cult, which, according to these priestly writers, had been given by God to Moses in its full post-exilic form. It was in the knowledge of this Code that Ezra was skilled—in fact late tradition made him its editor (*b. Sukkah* 1.11).
[60] Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 324.

the Passover letter of the year 419 BCE discovered at Elephantine in Upper Egypt.[61]

Nehemiah thus sums up his twelve years of rule (444–432). In all that time, he and his brothers never ate the governor's bread, one of the rights that came with his office. Former governors had been a burden to the people, taking from them forty shekels daily for bread and wine, and allowing their servants to oppress them.

In 432, Nehemiah went back to his royal patron, only to return to Jerusalem in 424 and find much of his work undone. He found fault with the Priests and Levites. People were not keeping the Sabbath, and he again dealt with intermarriage and actually drove out Manasseh, of the family of the High Priest, who subsequently became priest in the temple of Sanballat. As a result of Nehemiah's efforts, the people came together to make a covenant accepting his reforms.

The actual problem of dating the books is one which is difficult to deal with satisfactorily, for Ezra-Nehemiah is a composite work and contains sources from different periods. If the decree of Cyrus, in Ezra, is original, then this is the earliest portion and belongs to 538 BCE. Ezra 4:7–24 is made up chiefly of two letters which belong to the reign of Artaxerxes I and before his twentieth year, and therefore is dated somewhere in the period 464–454 BCE. Still, the letters are imbedded in a narrative, and it is impossible to say when the compilation of the letters was made, except that it was before the Chronicler's time. The memoirs of Nehemiah were apparently written soon after his second administration, certainly not later than the end of the reign of Artaxerxes I, 424 BCE.[62]

The Jews shared the interior with Samaritans, Ammonites and others, and exercised control only over some twenty square miles in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. Theirs was but a tiny segment of the vast Persian Empire. The relative position of all Palestine within the empire may, perhaps, best be gauged from its contribution to the imperial Treasury. The figures given by Herodotus show that Palestine (Jewish, Samaritan and Gentile), together with Cyprus and the rich Phoenician

[61] *ANET*[3], 491.
[62] Segal, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 2, says that the Aramaic of Ezra is earlier than that of the book of Daniel.

cities, was assessed 350 silver talents, an amount representing only some two per cent of the Treasury's total revenue in specie.[63]

Unlike the First Commonwealth, which owed its origins to military conquest, the Second was built principally by the combined forces of Jewish statesmanship and priestly learning. This was possible, because the new form of religion corresponded so well to the new situation. A most remarkable thing happened. Just as in the days of the Judges, the people in Palestine now had to live by a law formulated outside their own country. It is immaterial whether it was the whole Pentateuch in its then-known form, or only the so-called Priestly Code that Ezra submitted to the people gathered in Jerusalem. It was apparently brought with him from Babylonia. To be sure, it drew on the rich, centuries-old mines of Palestinian judicial and priestly lore. It was also, in many ways, a child of the spirit of the Hebrew prophets. Nevertheless, the emphasis, the lights and shadows, the whole tone, as well as many detailed extensions, were Babylonian. The elevation of the Law to a supreme position in the Jewish religion, the extreme accentuations of the ritual, the laws of purity and those concerning food, and even the exalted appreciation of the priesthood and sacrifices reflected mainly exilic conditions and ideals. Ideal holiness of the people through segregation found its counterpart in both Ezra's and Nehemiah's insistence upon ethnic purity and their prohibition of intermarriage. This principle of ethnic exclusiveness was, for centuries to come, a necessity for the preservation of the Jewish people even in Palestine.

When the rule of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel of the Davidic line ended, the Palestinian province of Judah was largely ruled internally by the High Priest, though political affairs were kept in order by a governor appointed by the Persian court. Beginning in the time of Nehemiah, the most famous of these governors (during the third quarter of the 5th century and continuing through the 4th century), the province was given the status of a semi-autonomous priestly commonwealth, similar to that of the city of Hierapolis, in northern Syria, with the right to levy its own taxes and issue its own coinage.[64] Some of the coins display the names of the Jewish

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[63] Baron, *History of the Jews*, 162.

[64] George Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1962) 205–206. Four groups of seal impressions have come to hand:

i. *Yehud*: Judah with the ancient Hebrew script;
ii. Jerusalem;
iii. Aramaic *Yehud*;

governors in office. From them, we now know of four additional governors of the Persian period: Elnathan, Yeho`ezer, Ahzai and Yehezqiyah. The first three belong to the period between Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, while the last belongs to a later day of the Persian Empire.[65]

The neighbours continued to harass the newcomers and even the remaining Judeans (Ezra 4:4–5). One of Sanballat's residences may have been at Lachish, which had been rebuilt by the 5th century; a villa was erected on the ruins of the Judean governor's palace. There is additional evidence bearing the names of Geshem, Sanballat and Tobiah.

Evidence in Palestine is abundant that there was trade with Greece and Arabia at this time, which would indicate traffic passing to and fro.[66]/[67]

Thus, Ezra's authority ushered in the period of the autonomous theocratic state of Judah, which in the 4th century BCE struck its own silver coinage and controlled the administration of the temple treasury for the benefit of the ecclesiastical authorities. Silver coins, minted in imitation of Attic drachmas, but with the Hebrew or Aramaic inscription, *Yehud*, are being found in increasing number. With the increase of Greek influence, the Attic currency became the standard medium of exchange, more than a century and a quarter before the Macedonian conquest.[68]

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iv. *msh*, found at Tell-el-Nasbeh, which suggest a flourishing wine industry. See also Nahman Avigad, 'New Light on the MSH Seal Impressions', *IEJ*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1958) 113–119.

[65] Hayes and Miller (eds), *Israelite and Judaean History*, 502–503.

[66] Among the small objects found in Palestinian excavations at this time are vessels imported from Greece, for example: the Greek Amphora found at Samaria; small limestone altars of incense brought from south Arabia, trade from which found an outlet along the southern coastline of Palestine. Commerce of south Arabia with Palestine, Egypt and Syria was at its height, Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, 206–207.

[67] It is said that Artaxerxes III Ochus led a campaign against Judah around 350 BCE, and took some into captivity. This theory was first stated by Josephus (*Jos. Apion* 1.22, para. 194). However, there is no evidence, literary or archaeological, to substantiate this claim. Such evidence as is presented in support of a third Jewish exile is plausibly attributable to other periods in Jewish history. Hayes and Miller (eds), *Israelite and Judaean History*, 500–502.

[68] This employment of the *darkemah* standard imitating, as E.L. Sukenik has shown, the contemporary Attic drachmas, and which is asserted in the work of the Chronicler, answers those of the critics who claim that the mention of 'drachma' is an anachronism. See also Albright, '*The Judicial Reform of Jehoshaphat*', 61–82.

The book of Nehemiah is important for 5th century information not only about the history of the Jewish community but also of the topography and geography of the region.[69] Many of Nehemiah's enemies were Yahwists, such as Sanballat and Tobiah, but their Yahwism was not that of the returning exiles and even less so of the Golah. Apart from the archaeological evidence (of the coins, etc.), the 4th century is almost wholly without dated Jewish documents. Egypt and Babylonia cease to yield any information about the further fortunes of their Jewish colonies, about which we were so well informed in the latter part of the 5th century. In Judah, we lack even the names of the High Priests after Jaddua (420).[70]

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Right from the start, it was quite obvious that there was a difference between the First and the Second Temples. The First Temple held a certain place in the life of the people, but did not encompass the entire areas of spiritual and practical life in Israel. There were a number of authorities during the First Commonwealth: the throne, the prophets, the temple and the priesthood. This was not the case in the Second Commonwealth. The beginnings of the community during the restoration were embroidered around the temple and the altar. As the days of the Second Temple progressed, and perhaps right from the start, the worship of the LORD was no longer solely in the form of sacrifice. It was no longer the only region in the social and religious life of the nation. The stress had been shifted, to a large extent, to the life of the Law, the synagogue and the rabbinic school (Beth Midrash). The resources of the people were directed towards finding ways and forms of life that imply righteousness and doing good. Already in the saying of Shimon Hatzadik, one finds: 'The world exists upon three things; upon the Law, upon labour and upon doing good deeds.' (*m. Aboth* 81.42).

Leadership and judgement were also eventually not merely in the hands of the priesthood. Nevertheless, all the institutions and basic

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[69] Alt, Albrecht, 'Judas Nachbarn zur Zeit Nehemias', *KS*, Vol. 2, München: C. H. Beck, 1953, 3 vols, 338–345 = Albrecht Alt, 'Judas Nachbarn zur Zeit Nehemias', *Palästinajahrbuch*, Vol. 27 (1931) 66–74.

[70] For a reconstruction of the Judean High Priestly line from Jozadak (587) to Simon (320), see Cross, 'Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration', 14, n. 54. For criticisms of it, see Hayes and Miller (eds), *Israelite and Judaean History*, 507–509; Bright, *A History of Israel*, 401.

concepts in religious, social and national thought were tied to the life of the temple, and by its means they spread and became part of the nation.

The beginning of the synagogue is pinned, it seems, to the public assemblies and the reading of the Law before the people in the court-yards of the temple, which are first mentioned in Ezra and Nehemiah.[71]

The language of Ezra and the Chronicler have been closely studied and found to be very similar. The last king mentioned is Darius II (423–405). The latest High Priest in Nehemiah is Jaddua. The tractate of *m. Baba Batra* (15a) actually states that Ezra wrote Chronicles. Ezra came from at least four generations of Babylonian Jews, and his Hebrew shows it—it is Aramaized. Nehemiah wrote in Aramaic, and it was translated into Hebrew.[72]

The religious-nationalistic current—the reading of the Law in public and the assemblies—caused the Hebrew language to become once more the living language of the nation in Palestine, and it remained so for a long time. However, for all their zeal to establish the Hebrew language among the people, the leaders realised that there was also a great need to know the Aramaic tongue fluently. They were opposed to a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, but they could not oppose the official language of the rulers and, what is more, the border dwellers, especially in the north, had to know the language in order to be able to deal with their neighbours. It is no wonder, therefore, that among the sages in Israel, there were those who, in order to help the people master Aramaic properly, wrote many legends of a moral and religious character in Aramaic, or translated some sections of the Holy Scriptures into that language.[73] Aramaic was also needed by many of the

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[71] This theory is brought forward by Shmuel Safrai, העליה לרגל בימי הבית השני *[Pilgrimage at the Time of the Second Temple]* (Tel-Aviv: Am HaSepher Publishers, 1965) 8. In this, he follows the opinions of Moses Rosenmann, *Der Ursprung der Synagoge und ihre allmähliche Entwicklung: eine historische-kritische Studie zur Erforschung beider* (Berlin: Meyer and Müller 1907) 17, and Ernst Herzfeld, *Geschichte der Stadt Samarra (Die Ausgrabungen von Samarra, Band vi)*Vol. 2 (Hamburg: Verlag von Eckardt and Messtorff, 1948), 131, and against the opinion of most scholars of the last century, and also some to this day, who date the establishment of the synagogue earlier, to the days of the Babylonian captivity. See also ch. 8 above.

[72] *Cf.* n. 59 above; Albright, '*The Judicial Reform of Jehoshaphat*', 73.

[73] Matmon-Cohen, 'The Hebrew Language', 175–180, claims that the Aramaic found in the Bible is western, and not the eastern dialect which was spoken in

people who came back to Zion and who did not speak Hebrew on their arrival. The Hebrew spoken then was obviously not of the classic style as found in the Bible, but a language enriched by many words borrowed from other languages and used in every-day life. The popular movement, which started with Ezra, Nehemiah and their followers, stressed the importance of the unwritten customs of the people and their traditions, and raised them to the level of importance of those written in the Law. The ambition was to make the religious, literary and spiritual values the possession of the entire nation, while taking away from the monopoly of the priests who had always held control over these values—a sort of democratization. These changes brought about the authors' and sages' consideration of the popular Hebrew dialect, and in this way lifted it up to the standard of a well developed tongue, which would be suited to the demands of education and life, upon which the nation stood during that period.

With the victory of Judaism over the heresies of Ezekiel's and Nehemiah's day, the long conflict between the faithful followers of Yahweh and the paganising world around them was substantially won. The history of Israel's religious evolution can be understood only in the light of this bitter century-old struggle. Every conflict with paganism brought with it new spiritual insight and new ethical rigour. The religion of orthodox Jewry had travelled a long distance since the earliest days of Yahwism. In essentials, however, orthodox Yahwism remained the same from Moses to Ezra. From first to last, ethical monotheism remained the heart of Israelite religion, though there were many crises though which it had to pass during the slow change from the primitive simplicity of the days of the Judges to the high cultural level of the 5th century BCE.

Hurgin's point of view is that the Second Temple was not a return to conditions in the time of the First Temple, nor was it a continuation of it. The period of the Second Temple did not solve the main problem that the events of the 7th and 6th centuries BCE brought with them—the diaspora.[74]

The return from Babylon, the building of the Second Temple, and the crystallization of the Torah book all served to express the yearning to heal the breach between God and people opened by the fall of Jerusalem. By

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Babylon, and therefore it is taken as proof by him that Aramaic was not brought back from Babylon by the returning captives.

[74] Rosenthal, *Investigations*, Vol. 2, 718, reviewing P. Hurgin, *Research Studies in the Period of the Second Commonwealth* (New York: Horeb, 1953).

this, a way was opened to overcome the ethnic, territorial limitations of the old religion.

In building the Second Jewish Commonwealth, the exilic and post-exilic leadership embarked upon an ambitious venture. They were determined to use their spiritual and material resources to create a homeland and ultimately a state. Building upon the foundations of their historic heritage, their faith reinforced by their belief in the imminence of a messianic future, they reconstructed the communal life of their people and formulated its basic ideologies, with the view toward a perplexing present and an unpredictable future. In order to achieve this end, they often had to tone down some of the traditional emphases, and, more frequently, stress certain elements with unprecedented vehemence.

The leaders of the age were not blind to the dangers threatening such an artificial structure. They also must have seen that large sections of the people were, as yet, unprepared to live without territorial anchorage. Hence their attempt to reconquer that minimum of territory and political independence which they felt was indispensable even for the life of such a nation. It was a minimum of territory, and only a surrogate for a state, but sufficient to give a foothold to a colossal body which might otherwise have tumbled over. In fact, however, Palestine soon turned out to be much more that merely a foothold for the Jewish people.

Although the Yahwistic zealots may have been grooming Zerubbabel for the royal crown, he was, in fact, only a governor of the third rank. His immediate superior was Tattenai, governor of Transpotamia, who, in turn, was under the authority of Hystanes, satrap of Babylon and Across the River.[75] In a condition of inferiority and humiliation like this, there was no place for a great undertaking like the building of the Second Temple. The people became more and more immersed in secular life, and despaired of the hope for political power and spiritual greatness.

The change came after the death of Cyrus (559–529), when his son, Cambyses, came to the throne for a short and tempestuous reign (529–522), to be followed by the famous Darius I (522–485).

A time of rebellion against ruling authority is always a time of the awakening of hope in subject states. So even Judah laid plans for

[75] Albert Ten Eyck Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire (Achaemenid Period)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948) 138–139.

becoming an independent kingdom as of old. A king was ready to hand: Zerubbabel was of the house of David, and even at that time he already stood at the head of the people as governor of Judah:

> And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, in the four and twentieth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. (Hag. 1:14–15)

With Joshua as the high priest, there was lacking only the religious centre. This had to take precedence over the political centre in a state like the new Judah, which had been created by a religio-national, priestly-prophetic awakening. It was necessary, therefore, to make use of the opportunity to arouse the people to build the temple, without which the prophetic promises could not be fulfilled, and also to strengthen the Messianic hope for a king of the house of David and direct it towards Zerubbabel. These things were done by the first two prophets of the Second Temple, Haggai and Zechariah.

CHAPTER 10

THOSE WHO WERE LEFT BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

Although a considerable body of literature, including the last portions of the Old Testament and the earliest non canonical Hebrew writings, falls within the period of the late 5th and 4th centuries BCE, it yields little direct historical information, even though it does present a fair picture of religious developments. Thus, in spite of the fact that the general history of the ancient Orient is quite adequately known, of the Jewish history in the 4th century there is great dearth. In order to build up a picture of the Jewish community and settlements in the Mesopotamian and Persian diaspora at this time, one must collate any available evidence, such as archaeological finds and extra biblical documentary evidence, and attempt to present as nearly as possible a complete picture of the community. Exercising care, one can also possibly glean information from later periods of about the 1st century BCE, when more material becomes available and we thus possess more information regarding the nation in these places. One might then deduce certain modes of life which would have been similar in the 4th century and of which we have no direct information.

The Chronicler's narrative actually ends with Ezra, even though we do have the names of the High Priests mentioned down to approximately the end of the 5th century, and also the descendants of David down to about the same time.

> And the sons of Jeconiah—the same is Assir—Shealtiel his son; and Malchiram, and Pedaiah, and Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. And the sons of Pedaiah: Zerubbabel, and Shimei. And the sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam, and Hananaih; and Shelomith was their sister; and Hashubah, and Ohel, and Berechiah, and Hasadiah, Jushabhesed, five. And the sons of Hananiah: Pelatiah, and Jeshaiah; the sons of [Jeshaiah]: Rephaiah; the sons of [Rephaiah]: Arnan; the sons of [Arnan]: Obadiah; the sons of [Obadiah]: Shecaniah. And the sons of Shecaniah: Shemaiah; and the sons of Shemaiah: Hattush, and Igal, and Bariah, and Neariah, and Shaphat, six. And the sons of Neariah: Elioenai, and Hizkiah, and Azrikam, three. And the sons of Elioenai: Hodaviah, and Eliashib, and

> Pelaiah, and Akkub, and Johanan, and Delaiah, and Anani, seven. (1 Chron. 3:17–24)

The last quarter of the 5th century is slightly illuminated by the Elephantine texts, but as we enter the 4th century, there is almost no information at all. Meanwhile, although no one could have predicted it at the time, Persia had entered the last century of its rule. In 424, Artaxerxes I died, and was succeeded by Darius II Nothus (423–404),[1] after Artaxerxes II, the legitimate successor, had been assassinated. Under the next king, Artaxerxes II (Mnemon, 404–358), Egypt declared herself free, and remained so for sixty years. Later, his brother, Cyrus (the younger) rebelled, and Artaxerxes dealt with this rebellion successfully, as he did also with the Greeks. Later again, the western part of the empire was shaken by the 'revolt of the satraps'. Artaxerxes weathered all this, and when he died, the empire remained intact, apart from Egypt, which was still independent, but whose inner weakness was evident. Under Artaxerxes III Ochus (358–338), Egypt was recaptured (in 342), and the empire seemed momentarily to have recovered strength. He was succeeded by his son, Arses (338–336), and the next king was Darius III Codomannus (336–331), a grandson of a brother of Artaxerxes II. While Artaxerxes III ruled in Persia, Philip II of Macedon (359–336) had gradually been consolidating his power over the exhausted Greek states. In 338, the year in which Artaxerxes III was poisoned, Philip's victory at Chaironeia brought all Hellas under his rule. In 336, as Darius III took the throne, Philip, who had been murdered, was succeeded by his son Alexander.[2] For Persia, the writing was on the wall.

During all these world events, as the small community in Judah continued to struggle for survival, the Jewish communities outside Palestine continued to develop and increase in number. This diaspora continued to grow, due to the many reasons which had brought it about in the first place: foreign rule in their own country, revolts which had rent the nation, the desire which seized many of the people to seek their fortune on a different soil, and the lure of trade. When, in 537 BCE, the Persian monarch permitted the rebuilding of the holy city, many of those who had been deported in 587 did not return. They remained and built up a large and affluent colony.

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[1] During his reign, the Peloponnesian wars ended and left Persia with a stronger hold on Asia Minor than before.

[2] Bright, *A History of Israel*, 393.

So much is well known. However, even before this colony arose, a substantial number of Jewish groups had already settled around the eastern Mediterranean, and it has been suspected, not without some reason, that these had on several occasions established connections with their brothers and neighbours, the Phoenicians. Difficult as it may be to assess today the full importance of these migrations, they prove at least that the Jewish habit of leaving the mother-country had already existed for some time before they were compelled to do so.[3]

In general, the forces making for migration before the fall of Jerusalem operated with increased vigour now. The widening of the boundaries in the Chaldean Empire, and the still greater extension of the Persian Empire, gave a new impetus to migratory movements among all the subject races, whether Babylonian, Greek or Jewish.[4] The whole habitable world known to the Palestinian prophets opened its gates to Jewish settlers. So many and so specific are the references by the later prophets to a really world-wide diaspora, that they cannot be explained away as lavish interpolations. Even the impetus to go back to Palestine and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, which began with the downfall of Chaldea, could not check this steady, inevitable growth of the diaspora.

Whereas with the exile of Israel in the 7th century BCE began the dispersion of Israel among the nations, with the destruction of Judah's kingdom the diaspora was created in the sense of a broader Judah and in the form of a number of Jewish settlements, which were attracted towards a spiritual centre in Jerusalem and which influenced it at times. An influential centre such as this outside Judah was Babylon. Apart from Babylon itself, large Jewish communities were also growing and beginning to flourish elsewhere.

It has already been shown that the community in Judah was overcoming difficulties of various natures. A few of the buildings from this period have been excavated (Iron II c. 550–530 BCE); the only one which merits special mention is the Persian villa on the summit of the mound of Lachish (c. 400 BCE), strongly reminiscent in plan and detail of such early Parthian buildings as the small palace at Nippur in Babylonia.[5]

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[3] Charles H. Guignebert, *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke, The History of Civilization (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1939) 212.
[4] Baron, *History of the Jews*, 106–107.
[5] Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 145.

Among the many other things to be learnt from the study of the Elephantine and other documents of the period, there is one technical matter of the first importance. This is the increased knowledge of the Aramaic language of the 5th century that this material has made possible. That language was the official tongue of the Persian Empire, and the one which most people between Babylon and Egypt then spoke. There was a great deal of contact with Greece, too, and its influence grew, well before the time of Alexander.

We do not possess actual information regarding the Jewish captivity in the rest of the Asiatic states of the Persian Empire—Syria and Asia Minor—but we have the document given by Artaxerxes to Ezra, in which he was permitted to appoint judges, not only in Judah, but also in Transpotamia, i.e. in Syria, thus proving that in the 5th century there were Jewish communities in Syria.[6]

A special inquiry would need to be made as to whether there existed a Jewish community in Asia Minor, and in that lies folded also the general question regarding the first meeting of the Greeks and the Jews. It is interesting to note that the prophets of the generation mention 'the children of Ionia' beside the 'children of Judah'. The prophet of the Babylonian captivity speaks of the Greeks who trade with the Sidonians (Ezek. 27:13). A later prophet of the restoration complains of the Sidonians, who had sold the children of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks (Joel 4:6). Furthermore, a prophet from the later days of the Persian rule sees, in his vision, the people of Zion rising against the Greeks (Zech. 9:13). All of this, one might claim, points to the fact that between the 6th and 4th centuries, there were settlements of Jews, whether slaves or free, to be found in Asia Minor and in the Islands. This too, could have been the introduction to the meeting of the Jewish and Greek world in the time of Alexander the Great, from which began the large Jewish dispersion in the lands of the Greeks. The spread of the Persian Empire throughout the

[6] This is the opinion of Simon Markovich Dubnow, דברי ימי עם עולם *[History of Israel]* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1952) 64. However, 'Beyond the River', as we have already shown in ch. 9 above, was the name of the entire satrapy into which Judah also fell, and it could be said that Artaxerxes here (i.e. in Ezra 7:25) refers only to the district which is around Jerusalem and which fell under Ezra's jurisdiction. According to Josephus, the dispersion in Syria was the largest of all (*Jos. Wars* 7.3.3). It was considered by some almost as part of Palestine, and people were permitted to bring בכורים (first fruits) from there. There was a very large Jewish settlement at Apamiah.

ANE, from Persia to Egypt, contributed much towards the development of trade between the various countries, while the economic life of Palestine was also influenced by it. Due to the continuing spread of the dispersion, the people of Judah entered into trade with their brethren in Babylon, in Persia and in Egypt.

Where did the Jews live in Babylon, and what was their manner of life and occupation? By the time the Parthians reached Babylonia, Jews had lived there, under Babylonian, Achaemenic and Seleucid rule, for more than four and a half centuries.[7] There were large numbers of Jews settled in ancient Bit Adini the satrapy of Adiabene of Seleucid and Arsacid times. There, the 'ten tribes'[8] of northern Israel had been deposited by the Assyrians, and, while they were few in number, constituting mainly the Israelite upper classes, they doubtlessly continued to survive. The centre of their settlements was probably *Nisibis,* in western Adiabene, on the Mygdonius River, an effluent of the Khabur, itself a tributary to the Euphrates. Nisibis was at the centre of the localities mentioned earlier in 2 Kings 17:6 and 18:11, where the northern tribes had been brought, and we know that in the 1st century CE, the town was a centre for the collection and transmission of temple offerings, along with *Nehardea*, to the south in Babylonia.[9]

As to Jewish settlements in Babylonia itself, the evidence in the Tanaitic sources touches only the following: *Nehardea*, *Nehar Pekod*, *Kifri* and *Huzal,* though we have reason to believe that many other localities were occupied by the Jews. From other sources, we know the Jews were in *Seleucia*, *Charax Spasinu* and the Mesopotamian, Adiabenian and Armenian satrapies, as well as Dura Europos. We cannot, however, date the beginnings of these centres. All we know is that by the 1st century, northern Mesopotamia, as well as Babylonia, contained considerable numbers of Jews. Thus, we read in Acts 2:9 that there were Jews who were:

> Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia… (KJV)

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[7] Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylon: The Parthian Period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965) 11.
[8] The 'ten tribes' are often spoken of as such, but naturally not the entire number of the northern kingdom was exiled, and only a certain number of them had been taken captive and resettled by the Assyrians.
[9] Neusner, *The Jews in Babylon*, 13.

In other words, pilgrims came to Jerusalem, both Jews and proselytes, from all these places. The fact that there were Jews throughout the region does not mean that they were a dominant group, nor a majority, although in certain cases this could have been the Pekod, who were mainly Jewish. Generally, however, the Jews were probably fewer in number than Iranians, and most certainly fewer than ethnic groups ('Syrians') viewed as a whole, but they were settled over a far greater geographic area than any other group. The Jews must have formed minority communities in almost every city of the Euphrates valley, throughout the western satrapies of Parthia, and even further east. Thus, although they were nowhere a majority of a region, they were everywhere a significant group.[10]

All this information, however, is later than the period with which we are dealing, and can only throw some extra light, mostly by deduction, of what occurred some three to four centuries earlier, when these settlements were in their infancy.

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Since the days of the Babylonian exile and the establishment of Judah some sixty years later, Judah was merely the centre for a circumference which included large Jewish settlements in Babylon, Persia, Syria, Asia Minor and in Egypt. The destruction of Judah, and its rebirth within the Persian Empire, created the diaspora, in the sense of a broadened Judah in the form of a number of Jewish settlements that were drawn towards the spiritual centre in Jerusalem, and could actually exert influence upon that centre. Such a place of influence outside Judah was Babylon.

In the days of the Babylonian diaspora, after the destruction of Judah, a cultural Jewish centre was formed in Babylon, and served for approximately fifty years in place of Judah. However, it did not cease to develop even after the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

After Babylon had sent to Judah some thousands of exiles in the first return, many Jews lived on in the land, so that, eighty years later, it was able to send to the impoverished Judah a new group of active and able men with Ezra at their head.

[10] Neusner, *The Jews in Babylon*, 15.

From the many lists and documents which have been dug up in Babylon,[11] it is to be seen that also in Babylon the Judeans recognised the name of the LORD in their names (Berechyahu, Matanyah, Gedalyah, Yehonatan, etc.). These manifest the strength of nationalism and religion amongst them.

On the other hand, there are also Jews with Babylonian names to be found (Ardi-Niniv, Tevat-Ashtar, etc., derived from names of Babylonian deities), which show also that there was an extreme form of assimilation by emulation. Still, it is most probable that this form of assimilation did not enter the province of religion. There is no doubt that the settlement produced such religious zealots as Ezra, who were completely loyal to the elements and bases of Judaism. The strong cultural link between Judah and Babylon did not cease after the death of Ezra. The relations with the religious centre of the nation, the temple in Jerusalem, continued no doubt, for the Jews in Babylon had no special temple or altar of their own such as the Jews of Egypt had built themselves. If we assume that things were the same earlier as a little later, when we do have some evidence of what went on, then we may presume that in the days of the Persian rule also the Babylonian community used to send the holy shekel for the temple, and those who were God-fearing would go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to worship in the temple. Of this, however, we cannot be quite certain. In the biblical books of the early days of the second temple, we hear nothing of pilgrimages from the diaspora: not in the books of the prophets Haggai, Malachi and Zechariah, nor in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Neither is the donation of half a shekel mentioned in later books, such as 2 Maccabees. The first reports of the customs of the Jews to bring half a shekel and donations to the temple are only one or two generations prior to the Roman period in Palestine.[12] Neither in the books of the Maccabees nor in the Letter of Aristeas do we find mention of pilgrimage to Palestine. In the days of Herod, when he placed Bathyra under the leadership of the Jewish family from Babylon, the settlement was also established in order to protect the pilgrims from Babylon.[13]

Apart from the spiritual relations, there were, most probably, also commercial links between the diaspora and the Judean community. From the documents which have been found at Nippur,[14] it is clear that there

[11] For a detailed discussion of these documents, see below in this chapter.
[12] Safrai, *Pilgrimage*, 55.
[13] *Jos. Ant.* 17.2.2.
[14] See below.

were great merchants among the Jews in Babylon. Among them were some who were their own masters, and also officers to some Babylonian and Persian business houses. Some of them dealt with the collection of dues and with the ministers of finance in the court of the Persian king.[15]

We also know, from the status of men like Ezra and Nehemiah, that they attained positions through which they could reach the ear of the king. The good economic conditions were the reasons which held back many of the Babylonian Jews from going back during the two returns. Nevertheless, since some out of almost every family went to Judah in the days of Zerubbabel and Ezra, much selling and buying must have been established between the centre and the diaspora. The ties of the Jewry of Babylon and Mesopotamia to Palestine are mentioned throughout the period of the Second Temple, and in every source which tells of this Jewry, beginning from the early days of the temple and up to the days of the war with the Romans. These ties come up in various forms: in the sending of presents and donations to the temple, in the pilgrimage of the people of Babylon to Jerusalem and Palestine, and in the place which the people of Babylon hold in the public and religious leadership in Jerusalem.[16]

We have already mentioned the remarkable find in 1889 by the American expedition from the University of Pennsylvania, which

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[15] An interesting argument in favour of the fact that there were many Jewish communities already in the time of Ezra, is brought forward by John Gray, *Archaeology and the Old Testament World* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962) 189, where he says: 'the fact that Ezra spent four months in his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:7–9) indicates that the Jewish communities which he visited to stir up enthusiasm for a return to Zion must have been both numerous and widely distributed.' Against this, one may argue that the journey was long and tedious, and could have taken as long without stopping to rouse other communities on the way. However, it is an interesting point, well worth considering.

[16] Evidence from a later date again shows the very large amount of contact with Palestine. Such, for example, is the evidence shown by the excavations at Dura Europos, where we learn of the large extent of this community's relations with Palestine. There are Jewish coins beginning with those of John Hyracanus and up to the time of the Great Revolt. M. I. Rostovtzeff and C. B. Wells, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: Final Reports VI, VIII* (New Haven: Yale University, 1936, 1939), Final Report VI, the list of coins on p. 11. *Cf.* p. 199 and Vol. VIII, p. 199.

excavated at the ancient site of Nippur,[17] to the south of old Babylon. In the ruins, the excavators discovered a remarkable collection of baked clay tablets in a room some eighteen feet by nine feet. There were some seven hundred and thirty of these tablets, dating to the reigns of Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE) and Darius II (423–404 BCE), and there was also one tablet dating from the reign of Artaxerxes II. The cache turned out to be the archives of a family of Babylonian business men, the Murashu family.[18]

When these documents were first published (by Hilprecht and Clay), Assyriologists were astonished to find that, whereas in the four thousand business documents which we have from the time of Nebuchadnezzar II and his successors up until the days of Darius I (604–585), i.e. from that period which we know as the period of 'the Babylonian exile' and also 'the first return' (of Zerubbabel and Joshua), there are only a few Hebrew names, yet in the Murashu documents, i.e. in the days of 'the second return' (of Ezra and Nehemiah approximately), there are very many Hebrew names. It seems that the more the Jews settled into Babylon, after a part of them— and most probably not the most wealthy section at that— had returned to Judah with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the more their business prospered in their land of exile.[19] They who could not, or would not, return to the land of their fathers, listened to Jeremiah's words (Jer. 29), who advised the exiles to build houses and plant gardens in Babylon and become citizens there for the time being. However, it is also possible that there were more Jews in Nippur than there were in Babylon and its environs, from which our documents of the days of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian and Persian kings following him came. Be the reasons as they may, we receive an interesting picture of the life of the diaspora from the Murashu documents. Much can be learned from the names of the Jews in these documents.[20] They point to the spiritual state of the exiled Jews, and their occupations, which are marked in these documents, and show us their political and economic status. Admittedly, there are only hints at these conditions in the archives, but, after all, it is from evidence such as this that the historian can draw information and attempt at reconstructing a more complete

[17] According to *b. Yoma* 10.71, Nippur is the ancient Calneh (כלנה).
[18] Cardascia, *Les Archives des Murašû*.
[19] J. D. Klausner, 'הגולה בבבל בימי עזרא ונחמיה [The Diaspora in Babylon in the Days of Ezra and Nehemiah]', השילוח *[Ha'Shiloah]*, Vol. 24 (1911), 408–415.
[20] Zadok, *The Jews in Babylon*.

picture. A great deal of this type of work, based on this information, was done by Daiches[21] and Zadok.[22]

First, an analysis of the names proves to be very interesting. There are more names of Jews than there are Jewish names. In other words, there are many Jews listed in them bearing Babylonian and Persian names. This conclusion is reached by finding that many of these people have forebears bearing Hebrew names. It could thus be that amongst the many Babylonian and Persian names in the documents, there are more Jews whom we cannot identify as such. A further interesting point, which Klausner has presented, but which Daiches did not consider, is the possibility of proselytes. Thus for example, Ardi-Niniv[23] (the servant of the god Niniv) is the father of Niniv-Mubalit (the god Niniv resurrects), and the grand-father of Hanani. Daiches then takes as Jews both Hanani's father and grand-father, whose names are both Babylonian and pagan. It is, however, possible that Hanani had become Jewish and called himself by a Hebrew name, while his father and grand-father had remained Babylonian pagans. There is plenty of evidence in the prophets to show that people of other faiths did join the LORD's flock, and we hear the words of the prophet:

> Neither let the alien, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying: 'The LORD will surely separate me from His people'. (Isa. 56:3)

> Also the aliens, that join themselves to the LORD, to minister unto Him, And to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and holdeth fast by My covenant: Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer; Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon Mine alter; For My house shall be called A house of prayer for all peoples. Saith the LORD God who gathereth the dispersed of Israel: Yet I will gather others to him, beside those of him that are gathered. (Isa. 56:6–8)

Even in Ezra and Nehemiah, we find that some families which came from Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsa and Kerub Eden could not tell their genealogy

[21] Daiches, *The Jews in Babylon*.
[22] Zadok, *The Jews in Babylon*.
[23] See p. 160 above, where he is taken to be a Jew. However, following Klausner's argument, it could be that he was not.

and did not even know if they were of Israel.[24] Even if not all of them were proselytes, some of them certainly must have been. The fathers and the brothers of these people who are stated by their Babylonian names in the Murashu documents simply did not change their religion.

There is no doubt, however, that Jews from birth were also called by Babylonian, Persian and Aramaic names. We find quite a number of foreign names in the list of the exiles, both remaining and returning, in Ezra and Nehemiah, and in the book of Esther. However, and this is interesting with regard to life in exile, the number of Hebrew names exceeds the number of foreign names, and points to the national feeling of the exiles. From those Murashu documents published at the time of his article, Klausner lists 64 names of Jews, and, of these, 38 are Hebrew names and only 26 are foreign names. Moreover, some 70 people were mentioned by the Hebrew names. That is to say, there were many Jews called by the same Hebrew names, whereas only about 25 or 26 Jews were called by foreign names. In other words, only one Jew was called by each of the foreign names, which also seems to indicate that not many Jews were named by foreign names. The detailed survey conducted by Zadok led him to conclude that there are no more than 70 identifiable Jews listed in the archives, of whom 36 bore Yahwistic names.[25] It is quite likely that the children of foreign marriages were the ones who were most likely to be called by a foreign name. The Jews in Babylon probably intermarried even more than did their brethren in Judah, who were so strongly rebuked by Ezra and Nehemiah. There is actually a document[26] in Babylonian from the time of Cyrus, in which we find that Hala was the Babylonian wife of a Jew, Isaiah, and their daughter was called Tabbat-Issar, a name linked with that of the goddess Ishtar. Obviously, one would expect to find a certain amount of assimilation between the Jews and their Babylonian environment, as is to be found in every diaspora. In some of the foreign names belonging to Jews, one actually finds names of deities unwittingly incorporated within. Even the names of Mordecai and Esther are of this type.[27]

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[24] Ezra 2:59–63 and Neh. 7:61–62. This could refer to descendants of proselytes, or it could imply that the people did not know whether they were of the northern or Judean exiles.
[25] Zadok, *The Jews in Babylon*, 78–79.
[26] Daiches, *The Jews in Babylon*, 32, n. 1; 34, n. 2.
[27] For a more detailed discussion, see this chapter below.

The abundance of Jewish names in the Murashu documents point to the strong national feelings of the exiles. Of the 38 names, 11 are not to be found in the form that they appear in the documents, but most of them are to be found in the Bible in a different form.[28] Thirteen names are to be found only in the literature which follows the Babylonian exile.[29] Six names are to be found only once in the pre-exilic literature,[30] and one name,[31] only twice in this literature. Only seven names[32] are to be found equally both before and after the exile. On the basis of this, Daiches concludes that most of the Hebrew names in the Murashu documents were constructed by the Jews during their exile, and the meaning of these names proves how attached the Babylonian exiles were both to their nation and their religion.

Most of these Hebrew names end or begin with 'Yah': Ahia, Benaia, Ba'alia, Berechia, Gedalia and Yigdalyah, Zevadia, Tovia, Yedaia, Yeshravia, Matania and Pelaia. All show the strong link between the God of Israel and those bearing the names. Yehonatan and Yeholachem, as well as Yeholanu, begin with 'Yah'. Only a few of the names of the exiles contain the 'el' element (e.g. Benael and Yediael).[33] Most of the Jewish exiles used the names containing the 'Yah' element as against 'el', which was the word used by the Babylonians also for their gods (Illu). Even in the documents from the days of Cyrus and Darius I, we find six Hebrew names with the *Yah* element: Yeshaia, Neria, Gamaria, Netania, Shevania and Akavia.

The names also point to the commandments which the exiles now rigidly followed. The frequency of the names, Shabtai (which comes from the word, Shabat) and Haggai (as in the name of the prophet, and means, 'festival'), points to the fact that the people now observed the Sabbath and the festivals as they had been commanded to do.

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[28] Benael, Halamuth, Hani, Yeholachem, Yeholanu, Yeshravia, Minyami, Natin, Pada, Pani, Petach.
[29] Ba'alia, Berechia, Zevaida, Haggai, Hanun, Tobiah, Yediael, Yedaia, Minyamin, Pelaia, Peniel, Shabtai, Tiria.
[30] Hana, Hanani, Yigdalyah, Menahem, Matanian, Sattur.
[31] Shilem.
[32] Ahiah, Benaiah, Gedaliah, Hananiah, Yehonatan, Shimon, Shamua.
[33] In the opinion of Professor Klausner, these could be the descendants of the ten tribes, who attached themselves to their southern brethren in the diaspora.

In addition, they all hoped to return to Judah. Many of the names indicate this. For example, names like Hanani or Hanan, from the root to be gracious, reminds one of the Psalms of Ascent, hoping that the LORD will be gracious to His people and return them to their land:

> Be gracious unto us, O LORD, be gracious unto us; For we are full sated with contempt. Our soul is full sated with the scorning of those that are at ease, And with the contempt of the proud oppressors. (Ps. 123:3–4)

Similarly, there are names with the element, *tov*—the LORD will be king and do good to us—and *pada*, implying that the LORD will redeem us. What the Psalmists expressed in their psalms, the people expressed by the names they gave to their children.

The following question arises however. If the national and religious feelings were so strong, why did the Jews remain in their exile and not return, one and all, with their brethren who had gone to Judea?

This question leads us to the material status of the exiles in Babylon, and, here again, we learn much from the Murashu documents. Most of the Jewish settlements were on the shores of the Naharu Kibaru: the canal by which Ezekiel prophesied. The shores of this waterway were fertile, and the Jews working their land beside it must have flourished. The exiled Jews owned land. Some of them were quite wealthy and took part in the trade of the country. Many of them were business agents to wealthy Persians and Babylonians. Some of them were tax-collectors and held other offices for the king. For example, Hanania, the son of Menahem, was in charge of the king's birds (the king referred to was Darius II). Nehemiah, as we know, was a high official of Artaxerxes I. Daiches uses these facts to show that there was no difference between the rights of the Jews and those of the Babylonians or Persians amongst whom they lived. However, it could well be that the Jews did suffer a certain amount of persecution at times, but not on the scale of the Jews at Elephantine, whose temple was destroyed by the priests of the god, Khnub. Around Nippur, there were suburbs and estates which were named after their Jewish masters. Thus, for example, one estate was called 'Beth Hanania', while a canal mentioned in the Murashu documents is referred to as 'Naru sa Natunu'—the river of Natun. This latter was probably a canal which flowed through the fields of a Jew named Natun. Daiches claims that the exiled Jews in Babylon were 'free citizens in a free country'. Both their political and material status was strong in the land. Therein lies the reason for their remaining in the land of their captivity. It was difficult for them to

leave their properties and positions in that country. It is also possible that some of the very wealthy classes had become assimilated to such an extent that they did not wish to go back. This may be reflected in the words of the prophet:

> I gave access to them that asked not for Me, I was at hand to them that sought Me not; I said: 'Behold Me, behold Me', unto a nation that was not called by My name. I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoke Me to My face continually, that sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense upon bricks; that sit among the graves, and lodge in the vaults; that eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels. (Isa. 65:1–4)

In spite of this, however, there is no doubt that the Babylonian diaspora generally clung to Judaism, and was devoted to the land of its forefathers. People, such as Ezra and Nehemiah, came from Babylon and made the existence of the state and the spread of the Law possible. Compared to the Egyptian diaspora, there is no doubt that the belief of the Babylonian Jews was more deep and pure. The diaspora in Babylon, in the days of Artaxerxes I and Darius II, clung to its belief, was loyal to its nation and longed for redemption.

The tendency towards segregation was promoted by the Babylonian exilic community, and under its influence by the organisers of the community of those who had returned to Palestine. The Babylonian community was Judaic and strictly Yahwist in origin. The thousand-year-long, dominant influence of the Babylonian exiles is most clearly shown in the fact that their principles, cherished from the beginning, won out. This was more important than the economic pre-eminence of the Babylonian exiles, which was later at least equalled by that of the Alexandrian community.

The Babylonian Jews, on the basis of common Aramaic speech, remained in full community with the motherland. The Jews in Hellenistic territories did not. For the first time, sacrifice took on the character of a community sacrifice. This was important, because it established the monopoly of sacrifice in Jerusalem in connection with the diaspora of Jewry. The individual paid a fixed tax to Jerusalem, instead of sacrificing himself. According to principle, the Babylonian diaspora rejected any temple outside Jerusalem as illegal.

One must not, however, gain the impression that all the Jews within a short span of time became wealthy and prosperous merchants. There is no doubt that some prospered, and the Murashu documents do show that there were very few occupations in which they were not involved. Most of them, however, still worked in agriculture, as is indicated by Berosus.[34] As time went on, they probably did go more and more into commerce, and their ties with Jews in other countries must have aided this process.

Thus, while some were trying to rebuild Judah, others prospered in Babylon. Indeed, many of the inscribed Hebrew bowls that have been found in the area suggest that a colony of Jews lived in Nippur for centuries.[35]

From the Elephantine letters, much may be inferred regarding the general effect which the re-establishment of Judah was having on the Jews of the Persian Empire. From the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we infer that during the second half of the 5th century, certain Jews in Babylon had been able to attain enough influence with the Persian king to be able to make plans for the reformation of Jewish life. Thus, Ezra was appointed high commissioner, with full power to reform Jewish religious affairs according to 'the law of your God, which is in your hand', and to set up an independent judiciary to settle Jewish legal affairs (Ezra 7:11–26).[36] With such a movement under way, we can understand the decree to the Elephantine Jews about the keeping of the Passover, and also the failure of the Elephantine colony to obtain the right to make burnt offerings.[37]

Apart from the Murashu Brothers, there are records of an earlier loan firm, which show how large-scale private banking replaced temple credit in the Assyrian Empire in the latter part of the 7th century, some three generations after the arrival of the first deportees from Samaria.[38] This was one of the most notable transformations in economic history. Long ago, it was suggested that Babylon's most prominent banking family, the Egibi, was Jewish in origin, and that the founder's name was Jacob (in his own

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[34] *Jos. Apion* 1.19.
[35] Hilprecht, *Bible Lands*, 289ff (esp. 408–410).
[36] Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, 210; Margalith, 'Ezra as Persian Governor', 111; Kenneth G. Hoglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).
[37] *ANET*[3], 491.
[38] Baron, *History of the Jews*, 108–109.

language).[39] That the descendants of Egibi bear second names which involve Marduk is no proof that the interpretation is incorrect; rather, it indicates that they had apostatized. Most of the early loans recorded seem to have been granted without interest.

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The Jews of Nippur generally worshipped Yahweh, as has been shown by names with the elements *Iahu* (or *Yahu*) and *Iama* (or *Yama*). However, names compounded with other gods prove that syncretism was taking place. The name, *Bali Iama*, tells us that *Bal* or *Bel* is the same as Yahweh. *Mannu danni Iama* insists, 'Who is mighty like Yahweh?' but his father is *Shulum Babili*. *Bel-aba-usur* invokes the 'Lord' Marduk to protect the father, but his daughter, *Bii Iahu*, and his grandson, *Gadal Iama* or Gedaliah, invoke Yahweh. *Tiri Iama* worships Yahweh, but names his son, *Shamashuballit*, begging the sun god to grant life. The good Hebrew, Rahimiel, gives his son the Persian name, *Udarna*, but Udarna's son is *Hanani-Iama*, or Hananiah. *Nana-iddina* is the gift of the mother goddess of Uruk, but his son is *Igdal Iama*.[40] There is another influential family whose ancestor was *Bel-iau*, yet several of his descendants bear names which revere Nabu!

Not all the Babylonian Jews had prospered. Hanana, Menahem and Berechia are slaves. Kimni-anni, son of Bel-aba-usur, his sister Bii Iahu, Ishia, Natina, Tab-Shalam, and Zabad Iama, son of Hinni Bel, must pay five hundred fish for five nets bought from the slave Ribat. Mannu-danni-Iama, despite his boastful name, is only a tender of sheep and goats, who must promise to make proper return.[41] Hanani, son of Menahem, is in

[39] *Louvre* 13, no. 193, as quoted by Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, 192, n. 24.
[40] Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria*, 576.
[41] The offices of Murashu and sons were a hive of activity. For 150 years, they enjoyed the confidence of their clients, whether it was a matter of conveyance of large estates and sections of canals or of slaves. An exiled Jew, Mannu-danni-iama, came to Murashu and sons because he wanted to arrange a deed of conveyance with a Babylonian, concerning an important herd of cattle: '13 old rams, 27 two year old rams, 152 lambing ewes, 40 year old rams, 40 year old ewe lambs, an old he-goat, a two year old he-goat…a total of 276 white and black, large and small goats…cash on delivery…Mannudanni iama…Nippur, the 25th of Ulul…Signed: Fingernail of Mannudanniiama'.

charge of the king's birds.[42]

Naturally the question arises as to how many of these men with Aramaic names were in reality Jews of the exile. Was Zer-Babili (a relative of the contemporary Jewish prince of the same name, Zerubbabel, as he is called in our Hebrew records)?[43]

From all this evidence, it is obvious that the Jews in Babylon must have constituted a considerable number. It is not at all unlikely that they should have been reinforced in numbers by the previously deported Israelites—a remnant of whom must have survived into that age.[44] In the writings of the Chronicler and in Ezra and Nehemiah, there is no mention of the disappearance of these tribes. On the contrary, under Zerubbabel, we find returnees recorded as 'the men of the people of Israel', many of whom were probably descendants of exiles from localities which formerly belonged to the northern kingdom.

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Apart from the Babylonian community, there were Jewish congregations also in the far flung districts of Persia. There is reason to believe that in the areas of Iran that had previously been under Assyrian domination, there were remnants of the children of Israel and Ephraim who had been exiled to 'the cities of Media'. Still, the descendants of Judah were also there. Nehemiah came both times not from Babylon but from Susa, the capital of Persia. Regarding the fate of the communities in Persia, we have nothing but a historical tradition from an uncertain date—the story of the book of Esther in the Bible, which tells of the danger that hung over the Jews in Persia, and how they were delivered from it. In memory of this great deliverance, the festival of Purim was fixed, which the Jews celebrate to this day, on the 14th day of the month of Adar.

The authenticity of the story has often been doubted by scholars. Some have said that the events are so similar to those that took place at the time of the Maccabees, that the story must have been written then, and not in the Persian era as claimed. Some modern authors move the chronology of the story down into the later Persian period. Others place it in the Greek

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[42] Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria*, 576.
[43] Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, 191–192.
[44] For a more detailed discussion and summing up of theories regarding these remnants, see ch. 11 below.

and Roman period, and say it was set in the Persian period for reasons of political expediency. The presence of some Old Persian terminology that was no longer employed in the Hellenistic period, nor found in Hebrew literature of that period, has persuaded some scholars that the story was penned sometime in the Persian period, prior to Alexander the Great's conquest of 331 BCE.[45] It has also been argued that the book is wholly fictitious. However, one may find many arguments against this thesis, and it is a very difficult thing to accept that the whole nation would celebrate a holiday on the basis of a fictitious story and not an actual event. It is very likely that a similar event did take place, and that the Jews were saved through the influence of people who were close to the throne. In time the story was probably embellished with the superstructure of a fairy-tale.[46]

Another interesting opinion regarding the book of Esther is that it was a mythological novel depicting the persecution of the 'Mardukians' in Babylon.[47] Lewy traces the names of the main characters back to the original deities after which they were named. Thus, Esther is Ishtar, Mordecai's name comes from Marduk and Esther's other name, Hadassah, is none other than the Babylonian Hadasatu, which means a bride. Queen Vashti, Haman and his wife Zeresh, he equates with the Elamite gods, Masti (to whom the Babylonian goddess Ishtar was opposed), Humman and Zarisha.[48] He concludes that Purim was a perpetuation of the old Persian festival of Farvardigan and was transmitted to the Jews by the Babylonians. He also says that to the Jews of Palestine the festival was originally known as the 'Day of the Marduk Worshippers'.

The controversy as to the identity of King Ahasuerus has been brought to a close by the decipherment of the Persian monuments, in which the name Xerxes appears in such a form as to leave no doubt that he is the

[45] Michael Heltzer, 'The Book of Esther—Where Does Fiction Start and History End', *BR*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1992) 27; William W. Hallo, 'The First Purim', *BA*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (1983) 19–26.
[46] David J. A. Clines, 'In Quest of the Historical Mordecai', *VT*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (1991) 136.
[47] Julius Lewy, 'The Feast of the 14th Day of Adar', *HUCA*, Vol. 14 (1939) 129–150.
[48] Lewy, '14th Day of Adar', *cf.* D. F. Payne, 'Esther, Book Of', *ISBE*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 4 vols, 159; Heltzer, 'Esther', 29. However, see the latter's interpretation of Esther's name as Old Persian, *Stara* ('star'), p. 28.

king who is meant by 'Ahasuerus'.[49] In the Persian column of the trilingual inscriptions of this king from Persepolis, he is called Khshayarsha, in the Babylonian equivalent. With the identification of Ahasuerus with Xerxes, all the statements of the book of Esther agree. He was a Persian king who also ruled over Media. His empire extended from India to Ethiopia, and contained 127 satrapies. It also included the islands of the Mediterranean, and his capital was at Susa in Elam. This is all true of Xerxes I (486–465), but of no other Persian monarch. Furthermore, certain details within the book make sense in light of Xerxes' military campaigns. For example, Ahasuerus dismissed his wife Vashti in his third regnal year, but married Esther four years later. Xerxes was engaged in a battle against Greece between his forth and sixth regnal years. The setting of the Monarch's banquet in his third regnal year may also be based upon events relating to Xerxes' accession to the throne. This occurred in his third year because he had first to attend to rebellion in Babylon and Egypt.[50] The character of Ahasuerus, as portrayed in the book of Esther, also agrees well with the account of Xerxes given by Herodotus and other Greek historians. For this reason, there is general agreement among modern scholars, Jewish, Catholic and Protestant, that by Ahasuerus the author of the book of Esther means Xerxes.

The book also displays a thorough knowledge of the Persian palace grounds and administration. Mordecai is described as sitting in the gate area of the palace (2:19, 21, 5:9, 13, 6:10). An open square in front of the gate is also described (4:6). A monumental gate complex and square were unearthed in the 1970s. The book's description of the palace interior also accords well with archaeological evidence.[51] The gate complex included all the offices pertaining to palace supplies and management. That Mordecai 'sat' at the gate means that he was stationed there in an official capacity.[52]

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[49] Lewis Bayles Paton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther*, ICC (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1908) 53–54.
[50] Heltzer, 'Esther', 158.
[51] Edwin M. Yamauchi, 'Mordechai, the Persopolis Tablets, and the Susa Excavations', *VT*, Vol. 42 (1992) 274.
[52] The Hebrew verb, 'to sit', means (in biblical as well as in modern Hebrew) to be stationed, or to hold office. Heltzer, 'Esther', 29. Heltzer goes on to suggest that Mordecai was perhaps in charge of the palatial secret service, an interpretation aided by 4:1, that Mordecai knew everything that went on at the court.

Cyrus Gordon finds that there is no doubt of the source of the book of Esther.[53] He claims that it was written in the circles of Iranian Jewry after the time of Xerxes.

The book of Esther does not appear to be a conglomeration, and most critics agree that it is the work of one author. This is excepting 9:20–30, which may be an addition or a repetition, but even this text does not principially contradict anything that had been said before.

There have been many theories regarding the historical authenticity of the story. Some have said that the contents of the book are historically correct (Jample, Haschander) and that only a few of the details have been embellished by the author. Others hold that the book contains only a weak historical nucleus and that the author has woven around it a historical romance (Gunkel). Another view is that it is a rewriting of a Babylonian myth of the victory of the gods of Babylon over the gods of Elam (Jensen, and in his footsteps Meissner, Winckler, Zimrin, Lewy). Graetz and still others see it as the story of what actually happened at a later date, for example at the time of the Maccabees, or in Egypt in the 1st century BCE (Weilrich and others).

Those who support the historicity of the story propose the following arguments:[54]

a. What is told of Ahasuerus and his court fits in with other information we have of the time.
b. Remnants of the palace found at Persepolis confirm many details presented in the scroll.
c. The author uses great detail in numbers, dates, personal names, and even of people who do not have an important part in the story.
d. The names of the Persian officials can be explained in the ancient Persian tongue and therefore do not appear to be invented.[55]

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[53] Cyrus Herzl Gordon, 'Northern Israelite Influence on Post Biblical Hebrew [in Hebrew]', *EI*, Vol. III (1954), 104–105.
[54] *EM* I, 486–493.
[55] Many such names were found in Elamite tablets in the Persopolis Treasury and fortification walls. For example, the Eunuch Mehuman (Esth. 1:10) has the Elamite parallel, Mihimana (*PF* 455), the princely advisor Marsena (Esth. 1:14) and the Elamite Marsena (*PF* 522). Yamauchi, 'Mordechai', 273.

Against this, the arguments have been put forward that it is very difficult to identify Ahasuerus with Xerxes, that the only queen recorded by the contemporary Greek historian Herodotus was named Amestris, that the king was obliged to marry a Persian woman of the highest possible rank, following careful investigation of her background and family, and that it is difficult to accept that the king would have allowed out of hand the destruction of a whole nation in his domain without his knowing the name of this nation. There is no mention of the book or its heroes in other sources. The condition of the Jews and their relationship to the other nations around them, as described in the scroll, do not fit in with what is known to us about the Persian period and the condition of the people of Israel at that time. Some of the motifs in the story are typical of a fairy tale, and seem to have come straight out of *One Thousand and One Nights*, as, for example, the poor girl's rise to fame and riches, or the wicked one falling into his own net.[56] There is also the difficulty of explaining the name Purim. There is no word in the Old Persian for 'lot', which, etymologically, fits 'Pur' (פור), except the Old Assyrian, *pur*, a device for casting lots.

It could be that there was an echo in stories which were in front of the author of this book (who probably wrote the story some time after the event) of some persecution of which the Jews were in danger and from which they were delivered through the intervention of people close to the king.

There is a link between the names of the people and the Babylonian gods, but that is as far as it goes. There is no sign of mythology in the story.

Although it may be argued that the book was written after the given date of the events, the profusion of exact details regarding Persia and the

[56] With regard to that respect of the story, Brevard Springs Childs, 'Birth of Moses', *JBL*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (1965) 109–122, makes the following interesting point: 'It is furthermore characteristic of wisdom literature that Pharaoh represents the type of "wicked fool". His diabolic nature is at first cloaked by the subtlety of his plan, but once this is frustrated the complete brutality of the tyrant emerges. "Every son which is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile." Pharaoh thinks to act wisely but is duped by the clever midwives. One of the closest parallels is the role of Haman in the Esther story, whose cleverness misfires and reveals him as incredibly stupid.'

lack of Greek influence seems to show that the book was most probably written before the Greek era, probably towards the end of the Persian rule.

The fact the Purim is not mentioned along with Nicanor's Day in 1 Maccabees 7:46 does not prove, as some critics have tried to show, that Purim was not known then. The author of Maccabees was under no obligation to mention Purim when he was taking about the Day of Nicanor. Also, the fact that Ben Sira does not mention it merely shows that it had not yet been included in the Holy Scriptures, and we know, from Talmudic sources,[57] that even at the beginning of the Amoraitic period there were those who opposed the inclusion of the Scroll among the Holy Scriptures.

Another problem which has been raised regarding this book is the fact that the name of God is not mentioned in it, although the divine presence is acknowledged, as is the importance of the fast, etc. Perhaps the story started off as a folk tale, and later acquired religious significance. That may explain much of the opposition to it being included in the Holy Scriptures.

Many of the Greek versions of the book include episodes which are not to be found in the Hebrew edition. In the Vulgate, these come as appendices. All these seem to have used the one original form, which was possibly Hebrew or Aramaic, and which has been lost. The Hebrew form, however, seems to be the closest to the original.

Tradition, no doubt, intended the book of Esther to be accepted as an accurate and reliable account of events which befell the Jewish exiles in the Persian Empire under the reign of King Ahasuerus/Xerxes.[58] The purported historiographical nature of the book is underlined by its concluding passage (Esth. 10:1–3). Here, the author deliberately employs technical terminology that is widely used in biblical historiography, especially in the books of Kings and Chronicles.

Scholarly attempts to uphold the historicity of the book of Esther go back to Josephus (*Jos. Ant.* 11.6), who retrojected the whole account into the reign of Cyrus the Great (559–530). Under that king, Mordecai, son of Ya'ir, son of Shim'i, son of Kish, who had been exiled in 597 BCE (Esth. 2:6), could have been active, without stretching his lifespan to an

[57] *B. Megillah* 7.1.
[58] R. Stiehl, *Das Buch Esther*, WZKM 53 (Wien: Universität Wien, 1956) 1ff.

incredible length, as would be necessary if he were a contemporary of Xerxes I, some 120 years later. This is not necessary however, as Mordecai's great-grandfather, Kish, may be the antecedent of the relative pronoun, 'who', in 2:6.

It seems possible that a non-Israelite forerunner of the Purim festival was celebrated in complete separation from the events recorded in the Esther story.[59]

The disinterest in Jewish history is matched by the absence from the book of Esther of any sign of affiliation with, or even a reference to, contemporaneous Jewry outside Persia. The Jewish community in Susa is depicted as self-contained, observing its own fast (Esth. 4:16–17), although the king's decree constituted a threat to all Jews in the Persian Empire (Esth. 3:13). The Susan Jews do not appeal for help or sympathy to their brethren in other parts of the Persian realm, including Palestine. How different is their attitude from that which manifests itself in the post-exilic books of Ezra and Nehemiah, in Second Isaiah and in some of the Psalms (e.g. Pss 126, 137). The Elephantine Papyri prove that approximately at the same time in which the Esther period is set, Jews living in Egypt called upon the Palestinian community to intervene on their behalf with the Persian authorities.[60]

The leaders in Jerusalem, for their part, strove to maintain contact with Egyptian Jewry. They endeavoured to exercise their authority over them, at least in cultic matters, as may be learned from Darius II's Passover edict,[61] or in a later period, from the report on the Greek translation of the Pentateuch, embedded in the Aristeas letter.

Nothing of the kind applies to the Esther narrative. The exiled Mordecai institutes new cultic laws binding on all Jews in the Persian realms (Esth. 9:20–23; 9:30–31), without consulting with Jewish legal authorities in Palestine. In fact, he acts like an exilarch of a later period. Thus, the book of Esther stands out among the biblical narratives in the lack of even a vestige of common bonds with the land of Israel and its sacral institutions. In this respect, it also has no equal in apocryphal literature. A plausible way to explain this representation is from the

[59] Shemaryahu Talmon, '"Wisdom" in the Book of Esther', *VT*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1963) 419ff.
[60] *ANET*[3], 491.
[61] *ANET*[3], 491.

literary premises of the book, that is, from the dependence upon non-historical and non-national wisdom ideology.

It is the wisdom atmosphere that gives to the Esther-Mordecai-Haman narrative its individual slant.[62] In essence, it depicts the timeless theme of intriguing courtiers, whose battle is viewed against the background of the Persian court at the beginning of Ahasuerus' rule. Nothing is told about the organisation of the Susan Jewish community and the occupation of its members. Both Mordecai and Haman fit the role of the king's advisor. In all his doings, Mordecai is ably seconded by Esther, in whose very name the Midrash discovers an indication of her secretiveness (*b. Megillah* 13a).

Scholars have tried to show that the books of Esther and Judith depend on the development of the Greek romance, but there is no need to look further than biblical literature for prototypes of the wise and beautiful Esther, a woman who is the main character of the story. On the other hand, the portrayal of Esther as a resolute and active queen may well be influenced by Persian motifs.

Accordingly, we may discern in the Esther narrative:

> An ancient Near Eastern wisdom nucleus in a specific biblical variation, imbued with Persian literary motifs. This conflux constitutes a strong argument in favour of the composition of the Esther-story in the beginning of the Persian era. The traditional setting of the book in the days of Xerxes I cannot be wide off the mark.[63]/[64]

The significance of the Esther story in the perspective of Jewish history is, I think, further shown at the Dura synagogue, where a panel

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[62] Talmon, 'Esther', 419ff.
[63] Talmon, 'Esther', 453.
[64] The inactivity during the reign of Xerxes must be due, in part, to the exhaustion of the people, and, in part, due to his unfriendliness toward the Jews. The fact that at the beginning of his reign, Bishalm, Mithradates and Tabeel, apparently Persian officials, lodged an accusation with this king against 'the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem' (Ezra 4:6), would tend to prevent Xerxes from doing anything in their favour. It may be that the completion of the temple and the re-establishment of the cult in Jerusalem had provoked the hostility of the foreign peoples in the province, and the enmity would be a decided check upon any further achievements. Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*.

concerning the Esther story[65] occupies a central place in the synagogue. The figures are identified by Aramaic tituli.[66]

The immediate relevance of the book of Esther is quite obvious. At every point, it stood as a testimony toward the new age, in which the fate of Jewry hung in the balance.[67]

While earlier, the Scroll of Esther had not been easily admitted to the canon, nor was it cited by the community of Qumran, the Babylonian rabbis maintained that it was written under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, at the request of Esther herself to the sages (*b. Megillah* 7b). Ridiculing the anti-semitic Ahasuerus, they repeatedly compared him to the 'king of Babylonia' of Isaiah 14, who arrogantly threatens to climb to the heavens, and in the end is brought down to Sheol:

> And thou saidst in thy heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, Above the stars of God Will I exalt my throne; And I will sit upon the mount of meeting, In the uttermost parts of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.' Yet thou shalt be brought down to the nether-world, To the uttermost parts of the pit. (Isa. 14:13–15)

In general, it may be concluded from the Talmud that, just as the pagans knew little Judaism, other than a few obvious features, thus the Jews knew only Iranian holidays which impinged upon their lives.

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It was not until the time of Cyrus, probably a little earlier, that the Jews, coming into contact with the Persians, had an opportunity of learning about their religion.

The question as to how far the religion of the Jews was influenced by that of Persia is a very controversial one. Some scholars deny any Persian

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[65] Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1979) 151–164, panel WC2.

[66] Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 13 vols, Vol. IX–XI, Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue, Bollingen Series XXXVII (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953–1968), colour plate VI, The Purim Triumph (IX, 177); Vol. IX, ch. 8, 177–187. *Cf.* Kraeling, *The Synagogue* 151–164.

[67] Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylon, Part II: The Early Sassanian Period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966) 60–64, 228ff.

influence, while others see a good deal of it. Both extreme positions are probably exaggerated.

There are some striking parallels between Zoroastrianism and Judaism. Even assuming that there was *no* influence, it is impossible not to recognise that the Jewish religious leaders must have felt considerable sympathy with much of what they saw in Zoroastrian belief and practice.[68]

Nobody, of course, would for a moment suppose that the monotheistic belief of the Jews owed anything to Persian belief, but the parallel is worth mentioning if for no other reason than that it must have commended Zoroastrianism to them. This would make it easier to understand Persian influence in other directions.

On closer examination of the two religions, however, our main conclusion is that, while there was much in Persian religion which would have been regarded with sympathy by the Jews, they were influenced but little directly thereby. The great exception to this was in the domain of eschatology.

There is much in prophetical books, and elsewhere, which makes it clear that the circle of ideas connected with the eschatological outlook goes back to far more ancient times. Nevertheless, Jewish eschatological and apocalyptic ideas, as we find them during and after the Persian period, have been *added to* by elements taken from the eschatology of Persia.[69] Cosmological and universal expectations now run parallel with the traditional beliefs.

There is no clear trace of Iranian influence on Judaism before the 2nd century BCE, though the beginnings of this influence may well go back a century or two earlier. These common features may be identified in Judaism with ease: a tendency towards dualism and to the creation of a personal antagonist to God; a tendency to the formation of an organised angelic hierarchy; developing beliefs in the last judgement and in rewards and punishment after death.[70]

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[68] For background to Zoroastrianism, see Robert Charles Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1961).
[69] W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development* (London: SPCK, 1949) 386–396.
[70] Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 361–363.

Charles Francis Potter, in his work, *The Story of Religions*,[71] describes the debt of Judaism to Zoroaster in no uncertain terms:

> A careful Bible student with any historical sense is forced to recognise how very plainly the fact stands out that the Hebrews borrowed the devil from the Zoroastrians. Before their captivity in 586 the Jews had no devil in their theology, fifty years later Cyrus the Zoroastrian conquered the Babylonians and restored the Jews to their homeland. Until the coming of Alexander the Great, for two centuries they were ruled by Zoroastrian kings, the theology of post-exilic Judaism had a devil. It is interesting to compare two relatings of a biblical story for this purpose. For example in 2 Samuel 24, which was written before the exile, one finds the singular statement that Jehovah moved David to number the people and then punished the poor people for David's sin by killing seventy thousand of them with pestilence. In 1 Chronicles 21, which is the later account of the same event written after the exile, it is Satan who suggests the census. Evidently the Jews had been somewhat troubled by the very obvious inconsistency of having Jehovah function as both the author of evil and its punisher, and welcomed the dualism of Zoroastrian theology which relieved Jehovah of such an embarrassing inconsistency.[72]

The apocalyptic eschatology betrays some traces of Persian influence, but, nevertheless, the doctrine of the last things and the conception of immortality in the two systems proceed from very different theological premises. The Jews never reached the position where the destiny of the individual was independent on that of the nation as a whole, and, if Persian eschatological beliefs were current in Palestine prior to the Greek period, as seems probable, the attitude to the hereafter was by no means identical in the two cultures.[73]

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[71] Charles Francis Potter, *The Story of Religions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958) 76. *Cf.* Archie J. Bahm, *The World's Living Religions* (New York: Laurel Books, 1964) 249.

[72] Albright would not agree with the uncompromising statement that all the kings in that era were of the Zoroastrian religion. The statement, in general, is too unbending, but contains an interesting and probably largely true argument. For a good discussion regarding which of the Achaemenide kings were actually Zoroastrians, see V. V. Strouve, 'The Religion of the Achaemenides and Zoroastrianism', *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale [Journal of World History]*, Vol. 5 (1959–1960) 529–545.

[73] E. O. James, *Comparative Religion: An Introductory and Historical Study*, rev. edn, University Paperbacks (London: Methuen, 1961) 293–294.

The prevalence of demonic beliefs in Judaism needs no explanation, but it may be worth mentioning that the demonic figure, Asmodeus, in the book of Tobit (a didactic short story drawing upon various biblical and non-biblical stories), is the demon, Aesma, Wrath with deva added. He is one of the helpers of Angramainyu (though the Tobit tale is Median rather than Persian).[74] Furthermore, the old Semitic idea of some kind of survival after death was developed by the Persians into a belief in immortality. It penetrated into Jewish doctrines, and, through this filter, Zoroastrianism influenced Christian theology.[75]

In conclusion, it may be said that in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we find much evidence of contact with the Achaemenid court. Some scholars have dated the rise of modern Judaism from this period when observance of the law was instituted with imperial approval. The question of the Persian religious influence on Judaism and Christianity has many ramifications, but one may postulate a mutual sympathy, if not a direct influence, in many aspects of religious thought. Such concepts as 'the holy spirit' and 'the angel of wisdom' appear in post-exilic Judaism, and may be influenced by Iranian angelology or the attributes of Ahura Mazda. This is perhaps most striking in the dualism of the Achaemenid period. Some books of the Apocrypha[76] appear to be more influenced by Iran than parts of the Old Testament, and the concept of Satan himself could well be borrowed from Iran. Further speculation on influence in eschatology, time speculation and other similar topics is interesting, but not very fruitful in proving historical borrowing.[77]

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An interesting argument is presented in favour of dating the apocryphal book of Tobit in the pre-Macedonian, i.e. the Persian, period.[78] One of the merits of Tobit is the fact that, in spite of the emperor's prohibition to bury the dead, he nevertheless engaged in this godly work at the risk of his own life. For this reason, some scholars (e.g. Graetz) have supposed that the

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[74] E. E. Kellett, *A Short History of Religions* (Suffolk: Penguin Books, 1962) 375.
[75] Ghirshman, *Iran*, 205.
[76] Especially in the book of Tobit, as will be shown in further details in this chapter.
[77] Richard Nelson Frye, *The Heritage of Persia*, The World Histories of Civilization (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1962) 127–128.
[78] J. L. Katzenelson, 'Вавилонское Пленение [The Babylonian Exile]', *Восход [Sunrise]* (March 1902) 128–139.

book was written at about the time of the Bar Kochba revolt, when dead soldiers lay about unburied for a long time. Katzenelson, however, thought that it is highly probable that the book of Tobit appeared originally in Assyria, in the Persian period. He argued that, as is well known, Mazdaism instructs its followers to expose the bodies of their dead to the beasts and the birds of prey outside the city. The burying of the dead was strictly forbidden, because it was considered to be an act of defiling the earth, which, like fire and water, was not to come into contact with unclean objects. It is said in the Talmud that when Shapur I restored the religion of Zarathustra in the 3rd century CE, the Babylonian Jews underwent much suffering, because of the prohibition to bury their dead. It was only due to the human weakness towards bribery, from which the Persian officials were also not free, that the Jews were allowed to bury their dead in the earth. It is quite possible that the ancient Israelites had to suffer a great deal under the rule of the Achaemenides, because of this prohibition to bury their dead, and that these very sufferings were recorded in the book of Tobit and served as its main plot.

Another proof of the eastern origin of this story is contained not only in the whole host of superstitions which were obviously borrowed from the ancient Persians, but particularly in the role that was given to the wicked spirit, Ashamadia, who is none other than Ahriman's chief assistant, Ashma-devi, often mentioned in the Avesta. It is interesting that Kogut, in quite a different context, says in his 'Aruch Completum', that the name of this devil spirit was completely unknown to the Jews from Palestine and is never mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud. The following point also seems to be of some importance, because it also points to the Persian influence on the author of the book in question. A dog, as is well known, was never much liked by the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine. In the Bible, a dog is the synonym for all that is lowly and despised,[79] and, in later times, in the Mishna a Jew was explicitly forbidden to keep a dog (*m. Baba Kama* 80). However, the author of the book of Tobit talks with great love of the cleverness of his hero's dog, which resembles the attitude of the ancient Persians to it. This animal enjoyed particular favour, so much so that to kill a dog was as much a crime, and was punishable by the same punishment, as the killing of a man.

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[79] See for example 1 Sam. 17:43; 24:14; 2 Sam. 9:8. This attitude can also be found in some NT literature: Mt. 7:6; Phil. 3:2; Rev. 22:15.

In conclusion, then, a fairly broad picture can be assembled from the information available of the life of the Jews in the Persian realm in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. Although we commenced by drawing analogies from the literature of a later date in these areas, there is also much to be drawn from the various primary and secondary sources that we have examined. Although evidence seems to point to the fact that regular pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a little later, there was obviously a continuous, strong contact between the Mesopotamian exile and Judah, and it was not long before Babylon became important as a cultural and religious centre for the Jews, capable of producing scholars and leaders. Of their religious and national feelings, much can be deduced from such documents as the ones of the House of Murashu. These also yield information regarding occupations and economic and social status within the general community, and go far towards explaining the reason for the small proportions of returnees to Judah. After a critical study of the book of Esther, further evidence can be exacted from that story, too.

A brief survey of Persian influences and infiltrations into Jewish belief and eschatology also shows the influence of the environment which crept in, even though the exiles did seem to stay within their own closed communities.

Finally, the argument that the book of Tobit belongs to the Persian era sheds some further light on life for the exiles, and stresses again the fact that many of the ten northern tribes joined with Judah, and eventually mingled with it completely. It probably shows also that most of the northern tribes remained faithful to the customs and the legacy of their fathers.

The diaspora was spreading rapidly and, to this day, there are tribes in the areas of Persia and Media whose tradition traces them back to the northern exile, as well as to that of the tribe of Judah.

Section V

On the Threshold of the Hellenistic Period

CHAPTER 11

EPILOGUE

As the biblical period of the Old Testament closes, and we stand on the threshold of the Hellenistic era, we still have very little information regarding the life of the Jews in Babylon and elsewhere in the Persian Empire. Although we have no detailed information of events which took place during that time, we know of the great strength of the community of Babylon, whose spiritual revival was to save the mother country from decline and to elevate a corner of the Persian Empire to a position of growing influence in the life of the Jewish people and of the entire human story. The Babylonian Jews had always been gripped by a sense of fraternal solidarity towards their brethren in Judah. In Judah itself, meanwhile, relations between Jews and Samaritans continued to worsen, and eventually the breach between the two became final.

Judah itself, at that time, was not completely insulated from the world around. Hebrew was gradually being exchanged for Aramaic as the language of daily discourse, a process that was already far advanced in the 4th century. Although Hebrew, as the sacred tongue, was learned by all educated persons, it gradually ceased to be the language of the streets. The Hebrew script of pre-exilic times was replaced by a form of the 'square' characters with which we are familiar, and which was adapted from the Aramaic.[1]

The impact of Greek culture also made itself felt. There were contacts in all periods of Jewish history with the Aegean Islands, but these contacts multiplied in the 5th and 4th centuries, during which Persia and Greece had relationships, whether friendly or hostile. All in all, one might say that, although the late Persian Period is shrouded in darkness as far as the fortunes of the Jews are concerned, it was a darkness in which important things were going on. The process of Hellenization, as we have mentioned

[1] *Cf.* Bright, *A History of Israel*, 395. Jewish tradition relates this development to Ezra, and this is fully credited by some, e.g. H. H. Schaeder, *Esra der Schreiber* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1930) 55ff. At any rate, it took place about his time.

above, commenced before Alexander the Great,[2] but certainly gained momentum after his conquests. Palestine, of course, including Judah and Samaria, came under Alexander's control, and there are many interesting stories and legends that have come down to us about Alexander's arrival in Judah and his welcome there by the people. It seems appropriate to say that the Jews surrendered peaceably, and that Judah came under Hellenistic control quite readily.

Many sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish, indicate that communities of Jews had grown and spread throughout the Near East and Mediterranean. After the Macedonian conquest, the succession of wars waged in Palestine caused many of its inhabitants to be transplanted onto Egyptian soil. From there, they spread far and wide.

There was never any physical impossibility of commercial relations between China and Palestine, for example. The only question was who might control the trade. One people after another might seek to monopolise it or divert it to new routes. Some sort of intercommunication was always possible, and some was maintained perhaps in every century.[3] Godbey, in his book *The Lost Tribes—A Myth,* argues that we must recognise several origins of Judaism in China, and we must begin by recognising Israelite trade with China as early as the 8th century BCE.

The Old Testament gives ample justification for a host of reminiscences of ancient Israelite activity in Central Asia, and there are many, he goes on to say. The Cochin Jews of India compiled a historical roll. Their colony began long before the Christian era,[4] and had accessions at various periods. Of western Jews they had no history, but they recorded that eastern Jews went through Media and Persia into Chinese Tartary. One may disagree with Godbey here, especially when we find that the records of the Cochin Jews are not as detailed as we should like. Godbey himself is conscious of this difficulty, although he tries to explain it away by claiming that the Jewish community does not keep careful records of

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[2] Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 337–339, reiterates that 'the idea that Greece and Hellenic culture were little known in western Asia before Alexander the Great is difficult to eradicate.' He adds that there was not a century of the Iron Age during which there were not contacts of all kinds, commercial, military (through mercenaries, etc.) and travel.

[3] Excerpts from ch. XIII of Allen H. Godbey, *The Lost Tribes: A Myth* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1930).

[4] This has more recently been doubted by some scholars.

events, and therefore a mere claim, for example, that Judaism once swayed a region that it has since lost, should always be entitled to respectful consideration, because there is often no other extant record. Godbey then goes on to consider by what roads and agencies Judaism entered Mongolia and China, and what evidence remains of the extent of its spread. He says that at any time after Israelite colonies had been placed 'in the Cities of the Medes', south of the Caspian in 720 BCE, Israelite traders might also have settled in the ancient emporia of Merv, Bukhara, Samarkand, Balkh and Bactria. We have seen later colonies sent to these districts, he says, and any such colonies meant trade expeditions further east. At any time along this whole northern and western frontier of China, Jewish trader colonies could have been entering, after once planted on the great caravan routes to the east. Judaism could have come into China from India, for we have seen, he adds, the Aramaic script planted in north-western India by 550 BCE and its development into Kharoshthi script was begun there; yet this modification was completed long afterwards in Chinese Turkestan.[5]

Godbey brings further evidence of an immense eastward extension of Judaism, which comes to us from the 1st century of our era. In Agrippa's appeal to Caligula, on behalf of the Jews in Jerusalem, he says:

> I say nothing of the countries beyond the Euphrates, for all of them, except a very small portion, and Babylon, and all the satrapies around, which have any advantages of soil or climate, have Jews settled in them. So that if my native land is, as it reasonably may be, looked upon as entitled to a share in your favour, it is not one city only that would then be benefited by you, but ten thousand of them in every region of the habitable world: in Europe, in Asia and in Africa: On the continent, in the islands, on the coasts, and in the inland ports. And it corresponds well to the greatness of your fortune that by conferring benefits on one city you should also benefit ten thousand others, so that your renown may be celebrated in every part of the habitable world, and may praises of you be combined with thanksgiving.

[5] Godbey, *The Lost Tribes*, 137–138. On p. 146, Godbey brings forward his argument for the fact that the Jews had come to China at a very early time. He says, 'There was also a solemn seven days' fast at the beginning of each of the four seasons which is neither Chinese nor Rabbinic, at the end of autumn there was the great annual fast and Sabbath for one day. Every activity was suspended: no fires lit, no food cooked. While Leviticus 23 has seasonal feasts, the Kai-Feng community clung to what seems an older worship of seasonal fasts. The forms of worship seem to be as of pre-Pentateuch times. The great annual fast is not in the Babylonian Yom Kippur form. The lack of the Chanukah and Purim festivals also point to a pre-Maccabean age.'

The actual eastward spread of Judaism is further evidenced by the Babylonian Talmud, which recognises the necessity of the Scriptures in the cuneiform Assyrian, Elamite, Median and Persian languages, as well as Aramaic, that is, over the whole of what is now Persia and Bactria.

Many criticisms have been levelled at Godbey's arguments, just as there have been at many of the other books and articles written about the Exile, and, especially, about that of the northern tribes. However, a certain amount of truth may be found in many of these arguments.

Another interesting and quite different approach to the explanation and tracing of these exiles is given from a medical point of view, in an interesting article by Philip Gillon.[6] Gillon starts his article with the tantalising statement that the latest discoveries of modern medicine about the nature of genes and chromosomes may contribute to solving a baffling mystery that has puzzled philosophers and historians for centuries: the fate of the ten 'lost' tribes. He goes on to say that it seems that at least some of them have come back to their traditional homeland, Israel, in fulfilment of biblical prophecies, and that they have brought with them certain hereditary diseases as proof of their *bona fides*. He bases a lot of his argument on the scientific groups of Jews from seventy lands who have returned to and united into the State of Israel, and it seems to indicate that the fate of the twelve tribes of Israel can be traced, according to the hypothesis—which has been suggested by Professor J. J. Groen.

It has been found in Israel that certain hereditary diseases are confined almost exclusively to the so-called Ashkenazi Jews, that is, the Jews from Europe and the western countries, while other hereditary diseases occur only among the so-called Sephardim and Oriental Jews.[7] All these diseases

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[6] Philip Gillon, 'Genetics and the Lost Tribes', *Jerusalem Post – Weekly Overseas Edition* (May 13th, 1966).

[7] Amongst the Ashkenazies, he lists, for example, the two metabolic diseases, Gaucher and Tay-Sachs diseases, which are both at least 30 or 40 times more common among Ashkenazi Jews than among all other populations of the world. Sephardi Jews, he goes on to say, and some groups of Oriental Jews, suffer from familial Mediterranean Fever and Glucose-6-Phosphate Dehydrogenase Deficiency. The first is found almost exclusively in certain Sephardi Jews, but it has also been described among Armenians and the Arab population found around the Mediterranean. It is extremely rare among all other races and among Ashkenazi Jews. The latter condition is present among certain Oriental Jews: especially in those returning to Israel after having lived for centuries in Kurdistan; among certain non-Jewish groups in the Middle East and Persia; in small Christian

occur in families, and are inherited along well-defined genetic mechanisms. They have all been known for some time, but the study of their unequal distribution within the Jewish people became possible in a more systematic way only since Jews from so many parts of the world returned to the present State of Israel. The discovery that the Ashkenazi, Sephardim and Oriental Jews distinguish themselves, among others, by differences of frequencies of hereditary disorders, proves that the differences between these ethnic groups are only partly cultural, that is, acquired (like some of their food habits) from the populations among whom they lived in the diaspora.

Gillon goes on to say that it might be argued that these genetic differences could be the result of the import of different non-Jewish genes into the various ethnic groups, through inter-marriage, rape or conversion in the different localities of their exile. This is often assumed to be the case with regard to blood groups. If this were so, he says, we would expect their frequency to approximate that which exists among the non-Jewish Germans, Poles or Russians, among whom the Ashkenazi lived during their exile. This, however, is not the case. On the contrary, these diseases are extremely rare among these people. That they occur in higher frequency among Ashkenazi Jews must mean, therefore, that the latter, even if they had received some admixture of genes from outside in the course of the ages, are predominantly not only an ethnic but a genetic unity.[8]

A similar reasoning applies to the preferential occurrence of Familial Mediterranean Fever and Glucose-6-Phosphate Dehydrogenase Deficiency among certain Sephardi and Oriental Jews. Mixture with other genes therefore cannot be excluded, but we have to await further research to elucidate whether the Jews received these diseases from the others, or vice versa.

Stimulated by his findings in respect of genetic disease among Ashkenazi Jews, Professor Groen has done considerable research on Gaucher's disease, and made a special study of the Bible and other historical sources dealing with the twelve tribes of Israel. The separation

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communities in Italy, most of whom trace their ancestry to Sardinia; and in certain groups of the Negro population of North America. It is extremely rare among all Ashkenazi Jews.

[8] Tinsley Randolph Harrison and Kurt J. Isselbacher, *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*, 9th edn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980) 525.

of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin from those of Israel, the other ten tribes, lasted for many centuries and, although there was contact between the two states, and we may assume that inter-marriage between Judah and Benjamin took place on the one hand, and between the ten other tribes of the other, a general genetic separation remained between the two groups. The assumption appears the more justified as it was a religious tradition in the Middle East to marry consanguineously.

Naturally, Professor Groen has to pursue his argument by saying that after the destruction of the two kingdoms (Israel in 720 BCE and Judah in 586 BCE), a large number of their inhabitants were deported to Assyria and Babylon respectively. They would have been separated in space, and the argument is that it was not likely that they would have mixed intensively. However, we have presented arguments in this book to the contrary, trying to show that there was a very great likelihood that the exiles would have mixed, being drawn together by their common fate and finding themselves within close proximity in the diaspora. However, perhaps in favour of Professor Groen's book, one might say that this mixing was not strong enough to erase the genetic differences between the two groups.

However, he does stress that, considering the tenacity with which Jews and monotheistic populations in general have maintained themselves within pagan communities in historical times, the assumption is warranted that at least groups of the ten tribes still existed. Furthermore, a certain number made use of Cyrus' permission to return. We know practically nothing about the exact tribal-cultic breakup of those who stayed (and partly preserved their Jewish identity until recent times). Neither do we know whether the return took place in organised groups.

The communities in Kurdistan, Iraq and Persia are generally considered as remnants of the biblical exiles. Indeed, Benjamin of Tudela (12th century) explains that he found Jews there who considered themselves to be descendants of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Manasseh, Dan, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali.

Above all, it should not be forgotten that, according to the Scriptures, a not inconsiderable number of members of the kingdom of Israel had never left the country. Therefore, a careful consideration of the facts does not sufficiently justify the common assumption that the ten tribes did not return and were therefore 'lost'. It seems more probable that they remained partly in the Land of Israel, partly returned from the exile and partly settled in foreign lands as part of the diaspora.

Gillon goes on to say that after the return, those who came back to Judah and Jerusalem took strong measures against intermarriage with all other groups around them, whether Jews, Samaritans or others. As a result, the separation between the populations of Judah and Israel was more or less continued after the Babylonian and Assyrian exiles, the former again settling mainly in Judea, the latter partly joining the descendants of those who had never left in Galilee and the coastal plain of 'Palestine'—partly remaining in the Valley of Tigris and Euphrates or moving into Persia.

During the following centuries, he adds, we may assume in the main the continued mixed Judah-Benjamin tribal composition, although some mixture with the Jews living in Galilee and the coastal plain probably took place.

In the last centuries of the pre-Christian era, the inhabitants of the country apparently lost all knowledge of what had happened to the tribes (a respected historian like Josephus does not give us any information on this point), but it is interesting that in the 1st century, Paul still designated himself as a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5).

During the period of the Second Temple, we have historical evidence about important groups of Jews who emigrated from the country to settle in the cultural centres around the Mediterranean, like Alexandria and Rome. There are many more vague stories about Jewish migration to Ethiopia, Yemen and Armenia. In neither case do we know when, or from where, these groups left, or who their tribal ancestors were.

Although Jews from Galilee and some from the coastal plain participated in the heroic revolts against the Romans during the first centuries CE, the inhabitants of Judea offered the most tenacious resistance, and when Jerusalem and the Second Temple were destroyed by Titus' soldiers, the fighters from Judea were the ones who were taken as slaves to Rome. The same happened after the revolt of Bar-Kosiba (132–135 CE).

Once in Rome, it can safely be assumed that these exiles received support from the Jews who already lived there, and who helped them to migrate further into the countries that were, during the first centuries of the Christian era, under Roman rule. The dispersion of their descendants continued right up to the early Middle Ages, encouraged further by the tolerance of Charlemagne. Thus, at the beginning of the Crusades, the descendants of these Jews were settled in communities all over western

and central Europe. According to this concept, therefore, the Judean Jews were the main ancestors of the Jews of western, eastern and central Europe, and thereby also of those who later migrated to North and South America, and Australia.[9]

After the Judean Jews had been deported, the inhabitants of the coastal plain and Galilee, and their descendants, maintained an intermittent contact with the Jews of Babylon. Gradually, they also left their country, but the main exodus took place much later, especially after Christianity had become the ruling power in Rome, and again during the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries, when the Roman Empire decayed and internal strife and the wars between Romans and Persians destroyed their prosperity and their possibility of practicing their religion peacefully. Gillon goes on to say that they spread to Babylon (now under Persian rule), to Asia Minor, Egypt and the north coast of Africa, where they could find refuge with the support of the Jews who had already settled there centuries before, and where, after the Arab invasion, they hoped to be safe. From Egypt and north Africa, an important part of their descendants moved with the Arabs into Spain.

Thus, during the whole of the Middle Ages, the descendants of the Jews who had stayed in their country after the Judeans had been deported remained in different regions under Islamic rule, separated by geographic and political boundaries from Europe, where the descendants of the Judean deportees lived in different Christian environments. The barriers between these two worlds did not prevent occasional contacts by travel and correspondence, but there was no mixing on a large scale.

It was during these times the European Jews began to be denominated as Ashkenazim and those around the Mediterranean as Sephardim, and this was continued when, in the 14th and 15th centuries, the Jews were driven out of Spain by the Inquisition and settled mainly in north Africa, the Balkans and Asia Minor—in other words, again in Moslem countries. Only a relatively small number of the Spanish refugees, says Gillon, went

[9] J. J. Groen, 'Historical and Genetic Studies on the Twelve Tribes of Israel and Their Relation to the Present Ethnic Composition of the Jewish People', *JQR*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (1967) 1–13, indicates that skull measurements carried out on a number of skeletons of the fighters under Bar-Kochba reveal them to be predominantly brachycephalic, like the Ashkenazi Jews of our day.

to Holland, and, from there, to England and South America, but the great masses of the Sephardim and Ashkenazim still remained separated.[10]

An interesting study was made by Itzhak Ben-Zvi, which was published in his book, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*. He has a number of chapters there on Jewish tribes and sects which trace their ancestry to the northern tribes. One of them refers to the members of a forlorn Jewish tribe in the isolated mountainous region of Kurdistan.[11] The biblical account of these people who were exiled to 'Halath, Habor the cities of the Medes', is further corroborated by verbal tradition current among both Jews and non-Jews in this territory. The Nestorian Assyrians and Armenians both preserve ancient traditions. The Aramaic vernacular still spoken by the Jews of this area is substantially the same language as that used by the compilers of the Talmud and the Geonim, and continued to be spoken by them under the Persian regime. This vernacular is evidence of the ancient character of the Jewish settlement in these territories. The traveller, Benjamin of Tudela, whom we have mentioned above and who visited the Jews of this area in the second half of the 12th century, states explicitly that:

> In the hills of Nisbur there are four tribes of Israel, namely the tribes of Zebulun, Dan, Asher and Naphtali, all descendants of the first exiles who

[10] Gillon sums up by saying, 'this short survey of their history may illustrate why the Sephardim of our time are the descendants of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Israel, partly deported to Assyria and remaining there (and in Persia) till their return to the modern State of Israel; partly returned to their country under Cyrus and mixed with those who had not left, until their descendants left again during the 6th century for Persia, Babylon and the countries around the Mediterranean, whence they also finally returned to the present new State of Israel. Those who went back from Iraq, Iran and further east are often designed as Oriental Jews.' He concludes by saying, 'thus, the Scriptures, the traditional writings and science all seem to warrant Professor Groen's hypothesis that the present Ashkenazim are mainly descendants of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah—the tribes of Judah and Benjamin—and that the Sephardim and Oriental Jews are mainly descendants of genetic mixtures of the other ten tribes and all twelve tribes are coming home to their promised land.'
It is not difficult to level criticism at this article, which seems to present such a clear cut and direct descent of the people of the various groups of Jews coming from different countries. However, it may reveal interesting points regarding the history of different tribes from the exile until this day.

[11] Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 30.

were carried to his country by Shalmaneser king of Assyria.[12]

Benjamin was the first explorer to give a first hand report on the life of these hardy mountaineers, whom he described as 'militant and independent warriors, subjected to no king or minister of the Gentiles, only to a single Jewish minister'. We have already mentioned the book of Tobit, which refers to several families belonging to the tribe of Naphtali, and who lived among the cities of the Medes.

Shortly before Benjamin's visit to Amadiyah, where the traveller found 2,000 Jewish families, the political leader, David Alroy, was organising his Messianic political campaign in Persia, to deliver all Jews from the yoke of Gentiles by force of arms. The Jewish revolt against the Persians was suppressed, and David Alroy was killed, but the armed insurrection of Jews against their oppressors left a deep impression throughout the Jewish dispersion, and, not least, in Persia and Kurdistan.

Little else comes down to us regarding the fate of these Jews throughout the centuries, although, from time to time, chroniclers and travellers preserved some pieces of information, as, for example, the letters and reports of the poet Al-Harizi (in the 12th century), the petitions on behalf of European Jewry of Hisdai Ibn Shaprut (in 12th century Spain), Yahyah-al-Dahiry (in the 16th) and the later Palestinian emissaries who often risked their lives to penetrate the mountain-fastness of savage tribes in order to carry to their brethren the message of comfort and messianic hope. In the Rabbinic literature of the post-Spanish period, too, there are occasional references to these scattered tribes.

Ben-Zvi speaks of another tribe, amongst the Jews scattered in the mountainous region of Caucasia, whose current tradition is that they all descended from the ten tribes exiled by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria.[13] The social pattern of the various communities in that extensive area is not uniform. There are pronounced differences between the Jews of Georgia, Daghestan, Azerbaijan and Armenia. For all the disparities of speech, physique and in their general way of life, though, all the Jews adhere to the above tradition as to their common descent.

Explorers and ethnographers are inclined to the belief that there is a core of historical truth in the tradition. It is believed that the exiles from

[12] Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 31.
[13] Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 48.

Samaria, carried to Assyria and 'the cities of the Medes', spread from there to the Ararat region, and from there penetrated into the most remote passes of Caucasia, reaching as far as Daghestan and Azerbaijan. These first exiles were later joined and reinforced by the exiles of Judea, and, still later, in the days of the Second Commonwealth, by large groups of immigrants from Persia and Media as well as from Kurdistan and the Jewish kingdom of Adiabene. Confirmation of that tradition can be found in several references in post-biblical literature. One passage in the Talmud actually mentions a 'Rabbi Jacob of Armenia', in whose name a ruling is quoted by Rabbi Nahman.[14]

Later historians, such as Josephus, and later still the traveller, Benjamin of Tudela, also speak of the Jews of Georgia. Furthermore, there are references to the spread of Jews to this area from Persia. In many ways, it is interesting to note that the Georgian Jews seem to have assimilated more than their Jewish brethren in Daghestan. For example, the Georgian Jews speak the same language as that spoken by their Christian neighbours,[15] and they also adopted the Georgian script in communication amongst themselves, namely a script from left to right, wherein they differed from all other Jews in Europe as well as Asia, who used the Hebraic script in communication amongst themselves, even when writing in the languages of their respective countries. All this, however, did not detract from their loyalty to their Jewish religion and tradition, while the knowledge of Hebrew among them at no time ceased. Since ancient times they have been visited by emissaries from Jewish congregations in other oriental lands, particularly from Persia. Upon the annexation of the area to the Russian Empire, Ashkenazi emissaries from Poland and Lithuania paid occasional visits of short duration. Some of them were urged to remain, and received appointments as Rabbis, ritual slaughterers and circumcisers. These religious instructors spread the knowledge of Hebrew and laid the foundations of a traditional Jewish education among Georgian Jews. They have no literature or written traditions, but, according to their oral tradition, passed from father to son, they were descended from Israelite or Judean stock.

Another group of Jews, which includes the Jews of Persia (Iran), also has a tradition that goes back a long way. These are the Jews of Bukhara. There is a tradition current among Bukharan Jews that they are direct descendants of the ten tribes. While the veracity of this belief still awaits

[14] *J. Gittin* 5:7.
[15] Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 50.

historical confirmation, it cannot be said that it lacks all historical basis, since the Jewry of the land of the Persians and Medes, from whom Bukharan Jewry certainly descends, has undoubtedly absorbed the 'Assyrian dispersion'.[16] Mention must be made of a closely related tradition regarding their Persian-Babylonian origin. Their vernacular, the Judeo-Persian, or Tadjiki, as it is known in Bukhara, is common to them and the Jews of Persia. Their prayers, although influenced in course of time by the Sephardic ritual, were originally derived from the Persian-Babylonian version of the Prayer Book. Neither Bukharan nor Persian Jews have ever used the Arabic script, which is still in general use throughout Iran. They use either the square Hebrew or the Rashi script. When did the Jews first arrive in Central Asia? While we have no definite historical data on their first appearance in this area, there is sufficient evidence to enable us to deduce that the exiles from Judea and Israel settled in all parts of the kingdoms of the Persians and the Medes. This is borne out by the fact that both the exiles of Israel who were carried away by the Assyrians, and the exiles of Judah who were carried away by the Babylonians, eventually came under Persian rule. Undoubtedly, the Jews subsequently spread throughout the Persian Empire, which extended to Bactria, as well as to Bukhara and Afghanistan.[17]

According to Bukharan tradition, their ancestors, that is, the descendants of the ten tribes, came partly through Merv and partly through Khiva.[18] Some of these migrants pushed further east, and there is reason to

[16] Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 54.

[17] Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 55–56. We have an account of these migrations in the biblical account of the book of Esther (see ch. 10 above), composed in the Achaemenid period (559–331 BCE), which clearly speaks of the dispatch of letters, on behalf of Esther and Mordecai, to the Jews of Persia scattered throughout the Persian dominions, far and near (*cf.* Esth. 8:9 and 9:20). The reference to Ahasuerus' 127 dominions or provinces is repeated elsewhere. The recurrent emphasis on the large number of the Persian king's dominions obviously suggests the widest possible dispersion of the Jews over an extensive territory, as far east as Bukhara. From the above quoted passages, moreover, the inference can be drawn that the Persian Jews, like the other citizens of that great empire, used their own language. Hebrew or Aramaic were the languages used by the Jews in Assyria and Babylonia, and later in Persia, until well into the 9th century, the period of the Geonim. Aramaic is still used, to this day, as the common vernacular of certain Jewish communities in Kurdistan.

[18] Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 57.

believe that the Jews of Kai-Feng-Fu, in China, too, are direct descendants of the Jews of Bukhara, who had commercial relations with the Far East.[19]

All these facts taken together lend credence to the Bukharan Jewish tradition as to their descent from the ten tribes. They were not alone in adhering to this belief, which was shared by several Moslem Turkoman tribes. The Jews of the land of the Medes and the Persians professed themselves descendants not only of the exiles of Judah and Benjamin, but also of the exiles of Samaria who had been carried off by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to his own country. There is little doubt that the Jews of Media descend from both Judean and Samarian exiles, and so do the Jews of Bukhara. Ben-Zvi continues to list other tribes that trace their lineage to Israel and Judah. For example, he speaks of the settlement of Demavend, which claims to have been settled by the Jews from Gilead.

There is also a group of Benjamites. Among the Jews of Persia, the tradition is current to this day that they, or some of them, are direct descendants of the tribe of Benjamin and the rest of 'the ten tribes'. Others among them prefer to trace their descent to the tribe of Judah and the exiles in Babylon. As far back as the book of Esther, the genealogy of 'Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite' is traced in such detail, that it suggests that at least some of the Jews of Persia are descended from the tribe of Benjamin. That a similar tradition should prevail to this day is perhaps more surprising, but, none-the-less, true. Thus, the Jews of Demavend trace their descent to the exiles from Gilead (of the tribe of Manasseh, the son of Joseph), who were carried off by Tiglath-Pileser in the reign of Pekah, son of Remaliah, long before the exile of Samaria. The Jews of Urmia, Azerbaijan, on the border between Turkey and Iran, consider themselves direct descendants of the exiles from Samaria.

To these may be added several Kurdish tribes professing the Sunni version of Islam, who claim descent from the Jews. It is reported of them that they still recite the 'Jewish Benediction on Fruit'.

Quite apart from these tribal traditions, there are non-Jewish tribes in that region who specifically trace their descent to the tribe of Benjamin, and no other.[20]

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[19] See above in this chapter.
[20] Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 197.

The tradition of descent from the tribe of Benjamin is particularly strong amongst tribes of Persia, Afghanistan and Kurdistan, universally regarded as Moslems. Several travellers and explorers, Jewish and non-Jewish, report that they themselves heard from some of the natives that such a tradition had been current in their families.[21] One of these was Sir William Jones, who lived in Calcutta at the end of the 18th century. He stated emphatically that all the more important Persian historians express their belief that the Afghans were of Jewish descent. Benjamin of Tudela also reports the existence of Israelite tribes in the area.

That Jews settled among Afghan tribes in very ancient times is beyond doubt. This is confirmed not only by the traditions of the native population, but also by a wide range of customs and practices of obvious Israelite origin, as well as by several place names that closely approximate names of Israelite origin. The tradition of Benjamite descent is especially strong among Kurdish tribes, though some Persian tribes, too, adhere to it.

Over the centuries, communities which claim religio-racial affinity with the ancient Israelites have been found in almost every region of the world. A summary provided by D. M. Friedman,[22] lists the following communities. In the mountains of the Chinese province of Szechan, near the Tibetan border, lives a community identified as Jews on the basis of: (1) monotheism; (2) flat roofed houses; (3) marriage of a widow to the brother of her deceased husband; (4) certain sacrificial practices; and (5) some linguistic similarities. In southern and eastern Burma, dwell the Karen racial group, identified with Jews on the basis of: (1) Jewish appearance; (2) the use of the divine appellation 'Yahweh'; and (3) the use of fowls' bones for divination purposes. The Japanese sect of the Shindai were identified as descendants of the Samaritans, because: (1) the last king of the northern tribes was named Hosea, who died in 722 BCE, and the first king known in Japan was Osee, in 730 BCE; (2) the Shinto Temple has two divisions, holy place and a most holy place; (3) the priests of the Shindai wear ceremonial garments similar to those worn by the Levite priests; and (4) the Shindai have a 'Jewish appearance'.[23]

The Karites of Russia claim to be descendants of the northern tribes, who settled in the Crimea since the time of Shalmaneser in the 7th century

[21] Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 198.
[22] O. Michael Friedman, *Origins of the British Israelites: The Lost Tribes* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993).
[23] Friedman, *British Israelites*, 12–13.

BCE. Similar claims have been advanced regarding the Falashas of Abyssinia, the Armenians, North American Indians, and the Nestorians of Mesopotamia. Regarding the latter, an American physician by the name of Asahel Grant, working amidst the Nestorians in 1835, observed that: (1) their language was related to Aramaic; (2) they offered sacrifices and first fruits, including a Pascal lamb on the 24th of Nisan (April); (3) they practised the rite of circumcision; (4) they abstained from certain foods; and (5) they prepared for the Sabbath on Friday evenings.[24]

An attempt was made by A. E. Mourant to categorise the genetic makeup of modern communities who identify themselves as Jews, in order to retrace the fate of the diaspora, and isolate the genetic composition of the biblical Israelites and Judeans.[25] Mourant systematically surveyed the blood phenotypes, that is, the blood groupings and other inherited blood factors, of Jews in various communities throughout the world.[26] In the Indo-Asian region, he listed the Jews of Kurdistan, Babylon, Persia, Bukhara Armenia, Georgia, Daghestan, the Mountain Jews of the Caucasus, the Jews of Afghanistan, India, and China. He went on to survey the Yemenite Jews, the Karites from Egypt and Iraq, the Jews of Ethiopia, Rhodesia, and northern Africa. He then moved north to Spain, and to the Jews of Rome. Finally, he analysed the Khazars, the Jews of France and Britain, Poland and Lithuania.

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[24] Friedman, *British Israelites*, 11.

[25] A. E. Mourant, Ada C. Kopec and Kazimiera Domaniewska-Sobczak, *The Genetics of the Jews* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

[26] Mourant, Kopec and Domaniewska-Sobczak, *The Genetics of the Jews*, 23–52. Mourant lists some of the more common diseases affecting predominantly Ashkenazi Jewish populations. These include:

1. Dystonia Musculorum Deformans. See also William Alwyn Lishman, *Organic Psychiatry: The Psychological Consequences of Cerebral Disorder*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell Scientific, 1987) 569; N. Risch and D. Leon, 'Genetic Analysis of Idiopathic Torsion Dystonia in Ashkenazi Jews and Their Recent Descent from a Small Founder Population', *National Genetics*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1995) 152–159.
2. Familial Autonomic Dysfunction (Riley-Day Syndrome). See also A. Blumenfeld, S. Slaugenhaupt and F. Axelrod, 'Localisation of the Gene of Familial Dysautonomia on Chromosome 9 and Definition of DNA Markers for Genetic Diagnosis', *National Genetics*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1993) 160–164.
3. Gaucher Disease.
4. Infantile Amaurotic Idiocy (Tay-Sachs disease).
5. Lipid Histiocytosis (Niemann-Pick disease).
6. Pemphigus Vulgaris.

Mourant acknowledged the difficulty of ascertaining the original genetic fabric of biblical Jews from the analysis of modern Jewish communities.[27] He was, however, able to provide some general conclusions. He concluded that today's Sephardic Jews were descended from the Jews who arrived in Spain in the 8th century CE, who in turn, are probably genetically linked to the ancient Jewish communities of Palestine, Egypt and Babylon.[28] The Ashkenazi Jews consistently resembled the Sephardic populations, but carried some distinct differences in the area of blood grouping. This, in Mourant's opinion, accords with what one would expect to find within two populations of common origin who have been separate for around a thousand years. The Ashkenazi Jews, then, similarly to their Sephardic brethren, comprised a single genetic population, largely of Palestinian Jewish descent.[29] The Karaite Jews of Lithuania and Crimea seemed to be largely descended from the Khazars, a Turkish tribal federation settled near the Caspian Sea, which converted to Judaism about 740 CE. However, other Jewish communities, including those in the very areas where Jews had been exiled by the Assyrians and Babylonians, presented a genetic composition not dissimilar to that of their non-Jewish neighbours.[30] Firm conclusions regarding the genetic fabric of the ancient Israelites and Judeans could not be reached. In general, Mourant's findings supported history's tale, namely that the main Jewish communities segregated themselves from their non-Jewish environment.

Mourant's conclusions are incidentally corroborated by a study of genetic disorders among the Jewish people conducted by R. M. Goodman[31]. Goodman has presented a comprehensive survey of disorders affecting Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Oriental Jewish communities. His conclusions are that evidence gleaned from genetic disorders shows a Middle Eastern ancestry common to all three major groups of Jews, and a marked genetic differentiation between some Jewish communities and their non-Jewish neighbours.[32]

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[27] Mourant, Kopec and Domaniewska-Sobczak, *The Genetics of the Jews*, 57.
[28] Mourant, Kopec and Domaniewska-Sobczak, *The Genetics of the Jews*, 44.
[29] Mourant, Kopec and Domaniewska-Sobczak, *The Genetics of the Jews*, 52.
[30] Mourant, Kopec and Domaniewska-Sobczak, *The Genetics of the Jews*, 56.
[31] Richard M. Goodman, *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1979).
[32] Goodman, *Genetic Disorders*, 31. Interestingly, Goodman presents a study conducted by Sachs and Bat-Miriam in 1957 of fingerprint patterns, which are polygenically inherited and remain significantly resistant to adaptation. The

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There is no doubt that to claim that the ten tribes disappeared off the face of the earth is an unhistorical and impractical approach to this historic problem. We find that by the time of the conquest of Judah, Israel still existed as a separate unity. This can be seen from the speeches full of love and spiritual warmth which Jeremiah addressed to the scattered Ephraimites, in which he was prophesying their return to their homeland (chs 30–31). The same can be seen in the numerous speeches of Ezekiel, sometimes harsh and sometimes tender, which he addressed to the elders of Israel who, together with the Judean elders, visited him at his home.[33]

The Israelites, jealously guarding their genealogy, not only continued to feel that they originally came from Israel, but each separately remembered to which of the ten tribes they belonged. This can be seen when the prophet Ezekiel, for example, prophesied the restoration of the all-Israelite theocracy and planned its future constitution, even mapping out a complete territorial organisation of the Holy Land. This was because he wanted to prevent any future rivalry between various tribes. The land was to be divided into twelve sections for each of the tribes of Israel, but the former holdings were to be reshuffled. A thirteenth section was to be reserved for the priests. This would be a middle section, in the midst of which would be the holy city, with a temple and this city having twelve gates, each called after one of the twelve tribes of Israel.[34]

This plan, as is well known, was not executed by those who returned from Babylon, but, nevertheless, it may indicate that at the time that it was prepared (fourteen years after the final defeat of Judea), the twelve tribes of Israel continued to exist. There is, however, evidence that they continued to exist much later.[35] The writer of the Chronicles records that,

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fingerprint patterns of members of eight different Jewish groups were compared with those of Israeli-Arabs and other non-Jews. The results showed an affinity within the Jewish groups, and, in descending order of affinity, between them and non-Jewish groups beginning with Israeli-Arabs, Egyptian Copts, northern Sudanese, Lebanese and Syrian Arabs. The fingerprint patterns of Jews from Europe and North America displayed *no affinity* with non -Jewish communities from the same regions, even after a prolonged co-inhabitance of the regions. Sachs and Bat-Miriam concluded that fingerprint similarities suggested a common origin from what Goodman, p. 30, described as an 'eastern Mediterranean gene pool'.

[33] Ezek. 8:1; 14:1; 20:1.

[34] Ezek. 47:13–23, 48.

[35] Katzenelson, 'The Babylonian Exile', 128–139.

at the time of the consecration of the new temple in Jerusalem, built by Zerubbabel, there were twelve peace offerings, brought 'according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel'. The same was done, and with the same motive, by those who returned later with Ezra. Katzenelson argues that the exiles of the ten tribes joined the Judean exiles and became one. This explains the reason for the more frequent use of the name, Israel, as a reference to the whole of the people, as against the previous clear distinction between Judah and Israel. The prophets of the exile, especially the later Ezekiel and Second Isaiah, speak of Israel as one nation, or its synonym, 'the House of Jacob'. Isaiah 48:1 says:

> Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the fountain of Judah.

From that time on, the name, Israel, became established with those who returned to Palestine, both with the subsequent prophets and the Chronicle writers. The books of Esther and Nehemiah are the only exceptions, and this can be explained by the fact that their authors lived in Susa, the capital of the Persian province which was adjacent to ancient Babylon, where the former inhabitants of Judea were resettled.[36] The name, Judeans, is also used in the book of Ezra, more precisely in those parts where the original edicts of the Persian kings are quoted. In any case, Katzenelson goes on to say, it is without any doubt that the Jews themselves adopted the name, Israel, through their Psalmists and Chronicle writers, although this name in the past belonged exclusively to the kingdom of the ten tribes. Is it not strange, he goes on to ask, that out of the two tribes that were antagonistic to each other, the one was scattered among other nations, and, as the current myth would have us believe, was absorbed by them and disappeared from the face of the earth, while the other tribe, which remained alive, had not found a better honour for itself than to adopt the name of the enemy which had disappeared? This, in his opinion, is psychological nonsense. Would it not be more logical, he goes on to say, that the ten tribes of Israel did not really disappear from the face of the earth, but were reunited with the Judeans who came much later, giving them their own name as a gift, and receiving in exchange the name of Judean, that is, that both these names, Judah and Israel, from that time on became synonymous? Furthermore, if, in the book of Esther, the Judeans of the time are testified to be 'one people, scattered among other nations', then among them one is to count also the former Israelites. There would not be enough Jews by themselves to be scattered over all the one

[36] Katzenelson, 'The Babylonian Exile', 128–139.

hundred and twenty seven provinces of the spacious Persian Empire, particularly since, by that time, a considerable number of Jews had long since returned to Judea.

Those who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, as well as those who came later with Ezra, settled in Judea and in the southern part of what was the kingdom of the ten tribes. The middle part of the latter was occupied by the Samaritan population, hostile to Jerusalem. On the other hand, the biblical sources do not say anything about the population of the northern part of the former kingdom of Israel, but at the time of the Roman wars we hear of a three-million-strong agricultural population, with a limited education, but very religious and fanatically devoted to the rulers of Jerusalem. Even earlier, during the Maccabean Wars for independence, the Galilean population was, it seems, on the side of the Judeans.[37] From where does this population come, then? There can be no doubt that a certain portion of it consisted of the descendants of those Israelites who remained in the country, because, as mentioned above, it is hard to believe that the whole of Israel as a nation was resettled in Assyria. Nevertheless, if the whole of the population of Galilee developed exclusively from the remains of the kingdom of Israel, it would seem unusual that they were affiliating themselves with Judea, instead of becoming integrated with the neighbouring Samaritans, whose fate they had shared for so long a time.[38] This fact will be clear only if we suppose that together with immigration movements of the Judeans from distant Babylon to Judah, there was another immigration of the Israelites from the closer lying Assyria to the neighbouring Galilee. Furthermore, since the Israelites had time to become closer to and reconciled with the Judeans during their exile, this would explain their gravitation towards Jerusalem. If we accepted the legend of the complete disappearance of the ten tribes of Israel, we would have to allow the idea that the Galilean population was formed from those same Judean migrants from Babylon. However, even not withstanding the fact that the Galileans were clearly distinguishable from the Judeans ethnographically, this supposition would not be correct for yet another reason, namely that it would imply that the Judeans resettled in Babylon had increased in number according to some unheard of coefficient of growth.

Although it is true that we have no reliable evidence to state the exact general number of Judeans who were exiled to Babylon, nevertheless, the

[37] 1 Macc. 5:22.
[38] Katzenelson, ‘The Babylonian Exile’, 128–139.

number could not have been so large that the Judeans could, after some 50,000 of them had separated and had gone to Judea with Ezra and Zerubbabel, and allowing for those who remained scattered over all the provinces of the Persian Empire, provide such a powerful immigration into Galilee, that, in time, they could have formed a population of three million Jewish people.[39]

Katzenelson's conclusion, therefore, differs, for example from the theory brought forward by Philip Gillon in his article discussing the work of Professor Groen. Katzenelson's conclusion agrees that the legend concerning the complete disappearance of the ten tribes of Israel has no historical foundation. However, he claims that Israel was not destroyed, but was unified with Judea, and that this was the first beneficial consequence of the Babylonian captivity.

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Like many periods in history, there are twilight zones where fact and legend meet, and where the truth emerges through a kind of haze. We have tried, in these pages, to trace the history both of the tribes and of the nation. Much of what we have found is supported by facts, by historical records and by archaeological findings. At some points, legends support these facts, and at other points, only the legend remains, without the support of historical documents. It is possible that future investigations will prove or disprove these legends, but, in general, a fairly reliable picture seems to be presented of the history of the period we have been considering.

A brief discussion of interesting findings by more recent scholars, such as Ben-Zvi, refers to scattered tribes that trace their lineage to the various dispersions from Judah and Israel to this very day. In our detailed study, however, we have traced the wanderings of Israel up to 300 BCE, at which time the nation stood at the end of a turbulent era. It was not, however, the end, for in the centuries that followed, the story of Israel continued. This, however, must be left for another time.

[39] Katzenelson, 'The Babylonian Exile', 128–139.

INDEX OF SUBJECTS, PEOPLE AND PLACES

INDEX OF AUTHORS

INDEX OF SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

INDEX OF APOCRYPHAL, PSEUDEPIGRAPHAL, TALMUDIC AND MISHNAIC REFERENCES

Apocrypha

Pseudepigrapha

Babylonian Talmud

Jerusalem Talmud

Mishnah

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