A Way in the Wilderness
The Babylonian Captivity of the Book of Isaiah
The Myth of the Empty Land
History and the Hebrew Bible

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Doctor of Divinity (DD)
The University of Edinburgh
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A Way in the Wilderness is a study of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 40-55. In this volume I argue that many of the references to ‘wilderness’, ‘water’, and ‘way’ have misguidedly been taken as allusions to a ‘second Exodus’. Rather than being Exodus motifs, the majority of these texts refer to a new Judah after the exile, and the likely location of the text is Jerusalem/Judah, not Babylon. Another important outcome of this study concerns the nature of prophetic language. Whereas numerous scholars have dealt with linguistic, grammatical, and literary features of Hebrew poetry, not many have taken into consideration that metaphoric/poetic texts also have a different cognitive status from Hebrew prose.

In The Babylonian Captivity of the Book of Isaiah, I follow up the textual study of Isaiah 40-55 with a study of the history of research surrounding the birth of the Babylonian location thesis of this Isaian text. Based on a thorough study of the older secondary literature, particularly in Germany, I am able to conclude that none of the 19th century arguments (many of them still prevailing in recent scholarship) can be upheld today. The ‘Babylonian Isaiah’ therefore provides us with a striking example of how a thesis has continued to be influential long after the presuppositions that once led to its birth have ceased to be valid.

One of the major premises for placing Isaiah 40-55 in Babylon and not in Judah was the former belief that Judah and Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. However, recent archaeological excavations and surveys have demonstrated beyond doubt a continued material culture in Judah and Jerusalem in the period. In The Myth of the Empty Land, I use archaeology, economical models, and Hebrew and Neo-Babylonian sources to argue for continuity rather than a gap in the culture of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

Simultaneously with textual, historical, and archaeological research, I have always taken an interest in method and theory. Some of my studies in these areas, together with the updating of The Myth of the Empty Land by considering also the most recent discussions, are collected in History and the Hebrew Bible.

These four volumes are all dealing with a unified topic: The history and literature of Judah in the post exilic period illuminated through the Hebrew text of Isaiah 40-55, as well as with questions concerning theory and method.

Edinburgh, July 2010
Hans M. Barstad
Edinburgh, 2/8/10

DECLARATIONS

I herewith declare that all the work in the present submission has been authored by me.

Also, none of this material has been submitted for a degree, or part of a degree, in other academic institutions.

Hans M. Barstad
Forschungen zum Alten Testament

Edited by
Bernd Janowski (Tübingen) · Mark S. Smith (New York)
Hermann Spieckermann (Göttingen)

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Hans M. Barstad

History and the Hebrew Bible

Studies in Ancient Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography

Mohr Siebeck
To my students in
with the humble wish that they have learnt as much
from me as I have from them
Preface

I have "always" been interested in the history of ancient Israel and the ancient Near East. At the same time as I have taken a particular interest in methodological and theoretical issues, my concern has as much been the practice of history writing itself. This volume contains the major part of contributions in those areas. Even if published in earlier versions, the present collection does form a coherent work.

Quite often, scholars who write about method and theory do not take an interest in history writing— and vice versa. This would represent a variety of the traditional dichotomy between "theory and practice". The present volume, therefore, is an attempt to show how theory and practice can be mutually beneficial.

Since they cover a period of 8 years (from 1996–2003), all of the publications included here have been revised and updated. In accordance with the nature of the topics, some needed to be updated more than others. Chapter 7 has been thoroughly revised, updated, and expanded to include also the most recent discussions in the area.

The chapters in this volume all started life as papers read before various audiences too numerous to be mentioned here. I am grateful not only to those of my colleagues who invited me in the first place, but also to the many who gave valuable feedback, much of it included in the subsequent publications.

Among my colleagues, I would like to single out Bob Becking and Lester Grabbe. Bob and Lester have always been particularly supportive of my work. Over the years, they have also become very good friends.

I am grateful to Professors Bernd Janowski, Mark S. Smith, and Hermann Spieckermann, editors of Forschungen zum Alten Testament, who accepted the manuscript for publication in their series.

I have been lucky to have had superb word processing assistance throughout the work with the present manuscript. In Oslo, I got excellent help from Mr. Andrew Thomas, who started me off. Andy was always willing and supportive. In Edinburgh, I was very fortunate to meet Ms Bronwen Currie, Computer Support Officer in the School of Divinity. Her expertise brought my manuscript a long way toward completion. When Bronwen retired to move to her beloved Islay, my student Shawn White
turned out to be extremely helpful. Shawn is not only a very gifted student of the Hebrew Bible, but he is also a computer wizard. I am very grateful to Shawn for producing the final PDF file, and for making the indices.

Edinburgh, Summer 2008  
Hans M. Barstad
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<td>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</td>
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<td>AB</td>
<td>The Anchor Bible</td>
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<td>RL</td>
<td>The Anchor Bible Reference Library</td>
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<td>AHR</td>
<td>American Historical Review</td>
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<td>AIONSup</td>
<td>Annali dell’Istituto Orientale di Napoli. Supplemento</td>
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<td>AnBib</td>
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<td>AOAT</td>
<td>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</td>
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<td>American Oriental Series</td>
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<td>ArOr</td>
<td>Archiv für Orientforschung</td>
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<td>ASOR</td>
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<td>BAIAS</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society</td>
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<td>Biblical Archaeology Review</td>
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<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</td>
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<td>BBB</td>
<td>Bonner Biblische Beiträge</td>
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<td>BETL</td>
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<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<td>CBET</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
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<td>CM</td>
<td>Cuneiform Monographs</td>
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<td>ConBOT</td>
<td>Coniectanea Bibliica. Old Testament Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>CQ</td>
<td>Classical Quarterly</td>
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<td>DTT</td>
<td><em>Dansk teologisk tidsskrift</em></td>
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<td>ESHM</td>
<td>European Seminar in Historical Methodology</td>
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<td>FAT</td>
<td>Forschungen zum Alten Testament</td>
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<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
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<td>HANES</td>
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<td>History and Theory</td>
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<td><em>Israel Exploration Journal</em></td>
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<td>JANES</td>
<td><em>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Colombia University</em></td>
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<td>JAOS</td>
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<td>JBL</td>
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<td>JCS</td>
<td><em>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</em></td>
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<td>JESHO</td>
<td><em>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</em></td>
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<td>JNES</td>
<td><em>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</em></td>
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<td>JNSL</td>
<td><em>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</em></td>
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<td>JQR</td>
<td><em>The Jewish Quarterly Review</em></td>
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<td>JRAS</td>
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<td>JSOT</td>
<td><em>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</em></td>
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<td>JSOTSup</td>
<td><em>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series</em></td>
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<td>JSS</td>
<td><em>Journal of Semitic Studies</em></td>
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<td>JTS</td>
<td><em>Journal of Theological Studies</em></td>
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<td>KVR</td>
<td>Kleine Vandenhoeck-Reihe</td>
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<td>LHBOTS</td>
<td>Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies</td>
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<td>MIO</td>
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<td>NedTTs</td>
<td>Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift</td>
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Abbreviations

OBO Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBT Overtures to Biblical Theology
OLA Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLP Orientalia loviensiensia periodica
OLZ Orientalistische Literaturzeitung
Or Orientalia
OTL Old Testament Library
OTS Oudtestamentische studien

PEQ Palestine Exploration Quarterly Past & Present

RA Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale
RB Revue biblique
REG Revue des études grecques
RHPRI Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses
RHR Revue de l'histoire des religions
RivB Rivista biblica
RSiFen Rivista di Studi Fenici
RLA Reallexikon der Assyriologie. Vol. 1–, Berlin, 1932–
RN Revue numismatique

SAA State Archives of Assyria
SAAS State Archives of Assyria. Studies
SAOC Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBLDS Society of Biblical Literature. Dissertation Series
SBLMS Society of Biblical Literature, Monograph Series
SBLWAW Society of Biblical Literature. Writings from the Ancient World.
SBLSS Society of Biblical Literature, Semeia Studies
SH Scripta Hierosolymitana
SHAJ Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan
SHCANE Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East (continuation of SHANE)

SJOT Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
SO Symbolae Osloenses
SSN Studia semitica neerlandica
SWBA The Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series

TA Tel Aviv
TLZ Theologische Literaturzeitung
Trans Transeuphratène
TRev Theologische Revue
TRu Theologische Rundschau

UF Ugarit-Forschungen
UTB.W Uni-Taschenbücher für Wissenschaft
### Abbreviations

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<th>VT</th>
<th>Vetus Testamentum</th>
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<td>VTSup</td>
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<td>ZDPV</td>
<td>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</td>
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Chapter 1

History and the Hebrew Bible

1.1 Background

The much debated crisis in history appears "finally" to have reached also "biblical studies. The most important question seems to be whether or not it possible to write a history of ancient Israel on the basis of Old Testament historiography. The matter may, quite shortly, be illustrated through the following development:

In the article on "History" in the 2. ed. of Encyclopaedia Britannica, which appeared during the years 1777–1783, the biblical Book of Genesis may still be regarded as the historians’ most important source for how the world came into existence. Here, the following arguments for the dating of the earth (which is exactly 6096 years old) are typical: "... the whole account of the creation rests on the truth of the Mosaic history; and which we must of necessity accept, because we can find no other which does not abound with the grossest absurdities, or lead us into absolute darkness. The Chinese and Egyptian pretensions to antiquity are so absurd and ridiculous, that the bare reading must be a sufficient confutation of them to every reasonable person. Some historians and philosophers are inclined to discredit the Mosaic accounts, from the appearances of volcanoes, and other natural phænomena: but their objections are by no means sufficient to invalidate the authority of the sacred writings ...").

Since then, not only have historians stopped using the Bible as a major historical source, but we have also been witnessing a development where to speak every new generation of authors of that particular scholarly genre most commonly referred to as "The History of ancient Israel" have had their sources drastically curtailed. In good order biblical cosmogony,

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2 For a survey of the development of the study of history in the West, see BREISACH, Historiography, 1994. See in particular the chapter on "The Eighteenth-Century Quest for a New Historiography", pp. 199–227. On the Old Testament as the source for Western historiography already in the Early Church, see same place, pp. 77–80. BREISACH (p. 77) claims that the birth of a Christian historiography was much more complex than the often referred to change from a cyclic to a linear view of historical development. Notwithstanding the correctness of this claim, it is hardly possible anymore to characterize Greek historiography as patterned on "the Great Cosmic Cycle of Plato
then Moses,\textsuperscript{3} then Abraham,\textsuperscript{4} and finally the Exodus event and the conquest of Palestine\textsuperscript{5} all took leave of history. Typically, in the recent history of ancient Israel by Miller and Hayes, both of whom must be regarded as belonging to the “conservative wing” of biblical scholarship, the authors take the view that, following the nature of the biblical sources, one cannot write a history of ancient Israel before the time of the monarchy.\textsuperscript{6}

Obviously the matter could not stop here, and what we are witnessing at present is the beginning of the end of a history project which over the years has become more and more problematic. Elucidating symptoms of this are clearly seen in recent books by Davies\textsuperscript{7} and Thompson,\textsuperscript{8} the former claiming, among other things, that there was no united kingdom in ancient Israel in the 11th century BCE, and that this is a creation of late Persian times, whereas the latter attempts to write about ancient Israel without using the Bible as an historical source at all. Thompson, too, argues that the idea “Israel” was created in late Persian times.

Against the background of the development which I have, very briefly, outlined above, it appears that it is now time to ponder a little on what it is that is going on in biblical studies? Before we do this, however, some consideration should be given to recent developments in the academic history debate in general.

### 1.2 The Recent History Debate

What above all characterises the present “state of the art” is that the old models of historical science that have dominated historical scholarship from the 19th, and at least through the first half of the 20th century, by most theoreticians today are regarded as inadequate.\textsuperscript{9} Quite contrary to...
what some scholars appear to believe, this has far from only to do with the impact of the modern social sciences and changes in political and social realities. Rather, the new situation should be regarded as a fundamental attack on the ways in which we think about history.

It is, of course, nothing new in itself to raise doubts about such "positivistic" notions as objectivity, historians' value freedom, primary and secondary sources, the existence of a continuous history, historical truth, or history as a science. Thus, it has for a long time sporadically been claimed that there is a "crisis" in history. What is new, however, may be summarized in the following way: 1. The view that there is a crisis in conventional historiography has become "commonplace". 2. The whole question of history, historicity, historical consciousness, historical understanding, historiography, and historiography has been radicalized through the work of so-called "post-modern" theorists.

Whether your name was Leopold von Ranke or Fernand Braudel it was always a hermeneutical presupposition, shared by "all" historians to the present day, that the historian can understand the past. Thinkers like I. Kant, F. Nietzsche, M. Heidegger, H.-G. Gadamer, P. Ricœur, J. Derrida, R. Barthes, M. Foucault, J.-F. Lyotard, and J. Baudrillard, have made the very nature of such an understanding problematic, or even denied its possibility. In its most radical form the post-modernist attack on history represents a rejection of history altogether, including also the so-called "new history".

Whereas Heidegger and Gadamer still stressed the relationship between the concrete interpretation of a part of something and the meaning universe within which the actual interpretation takes place, "post-modernist" thinkers have gone much further in their critique. Especially French theorists have attacked "The Great Story" altogether and denied the existence of a "meta-story" which allegedly constitutes our horizon for understanding and which brings subject and object, the understander and the understood, together. In its most radical form the post-modernist critique has given a new meaning to the old discussion about objectivity. There can be no objectivity because there is no object "the past" against which one can judge


10 The role of KANT as one of the "founding fathers" of post-modernism is sometimes overlooked. For KANT's views on history, see the survey in WHITE, Metahistory (1993) 55–8. On the relevance of KANT for the view of history in French post-modernism, see also LYOTARD, "The Sign of History", in: Post-Structuralism and the Question of History (1993), pp. 162–80.

11 For various forms of the "new history", see also New Perspectives on Historical Writing, Ed. BURKE, 1991.
the different interpretations. And even if we do not have to deny altogether the existence of a given past, we must realise that we have no access to it. History writing, in other words, is impossible.

The consequence of the crisis in hermeneutics for the historian is obvious. We do not always have to agree with the philosophers, but we cannot pretend that there is not a problem here. This is particularly true in the case of students of the Hebrew Bible who are, after all, dealing with texts which are more than two thousand years old!

Closely associated with the crisis in hermeneutics is the impact of linguistics and literary theory on modern historiography ("the linguistic turn"). In particular, thinkers like Derrida, Ricoeur, and Barthes have stressed the autonomous character of the text and claimed that texts do not refer to a reality outside themselves.

Historians are text readers and have to deal with the hermeneutic problem that no text (= historical source) can be understood the way it was "originally" meant. And even if they should have been able to "understand" their sources, which they are not, these textual sources of the past, again, do not refer to any past reality outside themselves. Historians are also text producers, writing texts which, in turn, cannot refer to any reality outside themselves. According to some theorists, then, there is no connection at all between modern history writing and the past which historians believe that they are referring to. The past as an object will be read quite differently by each new generation of historians. It has, however, fairly little to do with past reality "as it really was". The radical consequence of this must, again, be the "end of history".

The so-called "linguistic turn" has led to drastic developments during the last 20 years or so and represents yet another radical attack on the possibility of history writing in the traditional meaning.

All this, however, has not stopped history writing or writing about history. On the contrary, despite much frustration, the enormous amount of books which have appeared in the train of the post-modernist debate repi

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12 A good survey of the situation, written by an historian, is found in BERKHOFER, Beyond The Great Story, 1995.

13 See on this also chapter 2, below. See for a short survey JGERS, Geschichtswissenschaft (1993) 87–96. For a more thorough survey, see BERKHOFER, Beyond The Great Story, 1995. One of the most important vehicles for this new and radical development has been the journal History and Theory. For the history of the journal during its first 16 years, see VANN, “Turning Linguistic”, in: A New Philosophy of History (1995) 40–69. The label "linguistic" is, of course, not wholly adequate for a description of what has been going on in the postmodernist discussion. The "turn" has as much to do with textuality, interpretation, and rhetoric as with linguistics. Apparently, the fact that also historians read texts has taken a long time to dawn upon some practitioners in the field.
sent a striking contrast to the “end of history” claims of recent theorists.\textsuperscript{14} Not only has history not ended, but what we are facing today is rather an ever increasing flow of “histories” of all sorts. As for theoretical studies there has been a veritable explosion in the production of books and articles. Not bad indeed for a field of studies which is supposed to be dead! One of the stranger phenomena here is that the overwhelming majority of these books and articles deal with the relationship to history of those theorists who have claimed that there is no history.\textsuperscript{15}

Yet, we should take the philosophers’ claim of a dichotomy between language and reality seriously. Even if we do not accept everything, it remains a fact that we have too often overlooked quite a few of the problems sed in “post-modernist” discussions. What should come out of it, is, at ist, an increased methodological awareness of what it is that we are actually doing when we make simplistic statements concerning textual reference and historical reality.

This takes us to the next, and to the historian of ancient Israel the perhaps most important, recent development in history theory: The question of historical “truth” and the relationship between history and literature. From ancient times philosophers have been stressing the difference between history (fact) and literature (fiction). Since the rise of scientific history in Germany in the late 18th and early 19th centuries the distinction between fact (= true) and fiction (= not true) has been the chief mainstay of all history writing.\textsuperscript{16} Recently, scholars like R. Barthes, H. White, and N. Davis,\textsuperscript{17} influenced by recent developments in literary theory and genre research have seriously questioned the strict distinction between history writing and fiction.\textsuperscript{18} History writing represents just another story, but it cannot be more “true”, only “different”.

\textsuperscript{14} Typically, in his article “Historiography and Postmodernism”, in HT 28 (1989), ANKERSMIT takes as his starting point the overproduction in recent historiography.

\textsuperscript{15} See typically Foucault and the Writing of History. Ed. GOLDSTEIN, 1994.

\textsuperscript{16} This, of course, does not mean that the truth value of history has not been in stormy weather before. We may, for instance, think of NIETZSCHE’s views on history (above all in his Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie from 1873). And as early as in 1921, LESSING claimed, in his book Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen, that all history writing is mythical and that historians want to create a hope for the future rather than to reconstruct past reality. Since then, discussions about truth and the possibility of a scientific history have been on the agenda with varying intensity. Cf. the surveys in IGGERS, New Directions (1984), pp. 3–42, and in BREISACH, Historiography (1983), pp. 326–36. Cf. also chapter 2 below, passim.

\textsuperscript{17} Cf. for a very short survey IGGERS, Geschichtswissenschaft (1993), pp. 87–8.

\textsuperscript{18} It is not without a certain irony that we recollect the Rankean ideal for history writing which put a lot of weight upon the ability to write elegantly and rhetorically when describing the past, and how imagination was considered as the historian’s most important tool. It is mostly forgotten today that THEODOR MOMMSEN in 1902, one year
The most radical consequence of this "genre neutralization" would, again, be the "end of history". This, however, appears not to be the case, at last not for the majority of scholars.\textsuperscript{19} What has happened, though, is that we are now facing a completely new situation concerning the question of historical truth. Future studies must start from the presumption that "truth" on the one side and "fiction" on the other is not a valid distinction anymore. In other words: What is at stake here is the belief in a scientific and analytic history, modelled on the sciences, which, precisely, is what history has mostly been about up till the last 20 years or so.

Can we, as biblical scholars and historians of ancient Israel, allow ourselves to disregard the developments in history theory which I have, very shortly, outlined above? I should think not. As we know, historians have, as a rule, not engaged themselves in philosophical questions.\textsuperscript{20} This I now started to change. Whereas theory was formerly the field of philosophers and a few theorists (more often than not within the field of literary theory) today historians, too, point to the necessity of taking also epistemological and ontological presuppositions into some consideration.\textsuperscript{21} Even if we cannot really talk of any real consensus, at least not yet, there can be little doubt that some historians today have realised that the situation has changed completely and that philosophical questions concerning historiography and historical truth cannot any longer be separated from the very task of history writing itself, but are of

before his death, received the Nobel Prize in literature for his historical works! This strikes one as even more remarkable when we take into consideration that MOMMSEN's pioneering work represents a scholarly transition from a more literary aesthetic approach to historiography to a strongly positivistic and analytical one. Cf. DEMANDT, "Theodor Mommsen, 1817–1903", Neue Deutsche Biographie 18 (1996), p. 26. The difference between the 19th century German historians and recent historians, of course, is that whereas the "stories" of the former were regarded as providing their readers with direct access to an historical past, the "stories" of the latter have, according to quite a few theorists, nothing to do with the past.

\textsuperscript{19} Even WHITE, who has been accused of being one of the foremost proponents for "the end of history movement" has himself made it quite clear that he is not the radical sceptic he has been taken to be: "I have never denied that knowledge of history, culture, and society was possible; I have only denied that a scientific knowledge, of the sort actually attained in the study of physical nature, was possible. But I have tried to show that, even if we cannot achieve a properly scientific knowledge of human nature, we can achieve another kind of knowledge about it, the kind of knowledge which literature and art in general give us in easily recognizable examples". The quotation is taken from Tropics of Discourse (1992), p. 23.

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. RICOEUR The Reality of the Historical Past (1984), p. 3.

\textsuperscript{21} Cf. the statement by BERKHOFFER in: Beyond the Great Story (1995), p. 257: "In the end, any textualization, any discourse, any scholar must make some commitment about what is real, what is fictional, and what is hypothetical in a represented world".
fundamental significance for what they are actually doing in their daily work.

The way the situation is today implies that historians simply cannot pretend anymore that nothing has happened. Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob sum up the situation to the point: “In the nineteenth-century sense, there is no scientific history, nor is there even scientific science. But it is possible to know some things more rather than less truly. In their respective realms, both history and science seek to do that. Given the issues about truth and relativism that have been raised late in this century, historians cannot pretend that it is business as usual. It is essential to rethink the understanding of truth and objectivity”.

Precisely the “But it is possible to know some things more rather than less truly” is rather important here. Much contemporary theory has been accused of scepticism or nihilism. What we need now is a healthy relativism with a multi-methodological approach to history. There is no one method for historical studies any more, but a multitude of different strategies. Pluralism in methodology is final. With the end of scientific history, it follows that there are also several “truths”.

Summing up so far we can say that the most important thing which has come out of the radicalization of thinking about history during the last 20–30 years is not that “history has ended” or that history writing has been made impossible. Despite the (quite necessary) post-modernist defiance, history still does not want to tell any story about the past, it wants to tell the most likely story, to account for the reality of what happened in the past. What is at stake here is that history, on the whole, has become much more problematic. This should, however, be regarded as a necessary development, which demands of historians to take, at least a practical, interest also in epistemological and ontological questions. The post-modernist challenge cannot simply be ignored. In the long run this will lead to stale antiquarianism.

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23 One may easily be given the impression that contemporary theoreticians are all “sceptics”. This, of course, is not the case. For a defence of objectivity and authorial intention, see e.g. McCullagh, “Can Our Understanding of Old Texts be Objective?” HT 30 (1991), pp. 302–23. Cf. also the remark further below on narrative historiography, as well as the discussion in chapter 2, below.
24 Berkhoff, Beyond the Great Story (1995), p. 50, refers to “the fallacy of a single right or best interpretation”.
25 If only to cope with one’s own feeling of being at loss vis-à-vis too much relativism or scepticism. Easily accessible introductions to the realism debate, by philosophers who are also “happy” realists, are: Devitt, Realism and Truth (1991), and Farrell, Subjectivity, Realism, and Postmodernism (1994). These problems are also touched upon in chapter 2, below.
1.3 The Hebrew Bible

If there is a crisis in history studies in general, the crisis in ancient Israelite historiography may be judged as even more dramatic. There are various reasons for this. For instance, most biblical scholars are trained as theologians or philologists, not as historians. More important, however, is the possibility that ancient Israelite historiography, similar to much of biblical studies in general, has been, and still is, more firmly embedded in historicist methods and truth values than many other academic disciplines today. This is quite easily perceived when we consider the story of what is “true” and what is “not true” in the introductory survey of the development within ancient Israelite historiography presented at the beginning of the presen paper.

Apparently, very few biblical historians practising today have understood that it is their very concept of history that is wrong. To the biblical authors there is no difference between the “historicity” of, for instance, the Primeval Story and that of other stories in the Hebrew Bible. Subsequently, the process of cutting out bits and pieces of these stories in order to evaluate these as “true” or “not true” according to whether they “look like” history or not according to truth value standards of the 20th century, is not only very unfair to the integrity of ancient texts, but also highly anachronistic. One simply cannot take out texts from an ancient culture which, incidentally, “look like” modern texts and treat these as having a different semantic or cognitive status than other texts from the same culture which are not regarded as sufficiently “historical” to be bothered with.26 This, in

26 Typically, many scholars working with the Hebrew Bible as a source for the reconstruction of the history of ancient Israel regard the Deuteronomic History as more “reliable” than the Chronicler. There are several reasons for this. The most dangerous one appears to be that the Deuteronomic History “looks” more “historical” and less “ideological” in our eyes. Besides, since it is also “older”, it is for some reason regarded more reliable. It is typical of much traditional historicism, not least in Biblical studies since Wellhausen, to regard later texts as inferior to older ones, which, in turn, are regarded as more “original” and more “genuine”. This followed as a natural consequence of the strongly genetic approach of classical historicism, but a kind of romanticist Golden Age mentality also plays a certain role here. Already in the forties, MARC BLOCH warned against this “l'idole des origines” and maintained that the fact that texts are old does not necessarily make them more fit for historical explanation. See the critical edition of his work Apologie pour l'histoire (1993), pp. 85–9). It is a good thing that (not many) scholars have now realized that the Deuteronomic History simply cannot be regarded as more “reliable” than other historiographical texts of the Hebrew Bible (cf. AULD, Kings Without Privilege, 1994), and that “Chr is no evil fictionalizer trying to mislead his audience. Chr is, rather, an accomplished historiographer, writing in accord with the accepted practices of his time”. HOGHULDN, “The Chronicler as Historian”, in: The Chronicler as Historian, Ed. GRAHAM et al. (1997), p. 29.
fact, is one of the main reasons why “historical sources” as the basis for a reconstruction of the history of ancient Israel now appear to disappear at such a fast rate that before long there will be no “historical” texts at all.

However, similar to what has happened in history studies in general, the crisis in biblical historiography clearly has not led to any “end of history”. Many scholars still write so-called histories of ancient Israel as if nothing has happened,\footnote{Weippert, “Geschichte Israels am Scheideweg”, TRu 58 (1993), p. 72, n. 2, refers to 14 different works that have appeared during the last 20 years or so. He could, of course, have mentioned also further works. Cf. also the listing of the most important contributions in this field in Soggin, An Introduction to the History of Israel (1993), pp. 34–8.} apparently unaware of the fact that there has been a veritable upheaval in the theoretical discussion about the nature of history and the possibilities of history writing in general.\footnote{There are, of course, a few notable exceptions. See, for instance, Whitelam, “Recreating the History of Israel”, JSOT 35 (1986), pp. 45–70, Younger, Ancient Conquest Accounts (1990), pp. 25–58, and Breitler, The Creation of History (1995), pp. 1–19, and passim.} In short: The intellectual climate of the last thirty years or so appears not to have caught up on biblical studies at all. To say that historians of ancient Israel are theory weak is, in my view, a gross understatement. As a genre, most of the so-called “histories of ancient Israel” represent nothing more than various forms of a retelling of the biblical stories, diluted with sparse, desultory analytical remarks, not seldom with disparate references to “archaeology”. In itself, there may be nothing wrong with this as long as the authors of these books know, or admit, what they are doing. The problem is that they themselves quite often give the impression that what they are doing is not to present us with their versions of the stories of the Hebrew Bible, but to the history of ancient Israel “as it was”.

Occasionally, historians of ancient Israel do make references to theorists in the history field. One does not, however, always get the feeling that they really have been studying these theorists, or that they themselves have a consistent history theory which can be said really to leave an impression on what they write. It is not enough dutifully to mention this or that well known theoretician in some odd footnote, or in the introduction, something which often seems to be the case also with leading scholars in the field. For instance, in the recent magnum opus of Ahlström we find a series of references to a bundle of theorists in the introduction to the work.\footnote{Ahlstrom, The History of Ancient Palestine (1993), pp. 19ff.} Nevertheless, after having read the book itself, it is very difficult to see that Ahlström himself has a clear view of what he means by “history”.\footnote{Another example is found in Van Seters’ use of Huizinga in In Search of History (1983), p. 1. Here, the problem is not that it is difficult to understand Van Seters’ use of
pect that this has to do with Ahlström’s hostility towards methodological considerations in general. This hostility is, in Ahlström’s The History of Ancient Palestine, inter alia, revealed in a footnote/anecdote in his work: “About three and a half decades ago a German student asked me what philosophy I used in studying Old Testament history and religion. My answer was: ‘None. If I have a philosophy, it is that one cannot use any philosophical system.’ After that our ways parted”.

This attitude, it should be added, is quite common, not only among Biblical scholars, but also among practising historians. It is a tendency among not a few non-historians to refer to “what is going on in history” as if all historians were now rallying behind the banners of post-modernism. This, of course, is far from being the case, and there is a gap, sometimes even outspoken ill-will, between what the large majority of historians do at what a quite small number of theoreticians write.

On the whole, this situation is unfortunate, but understandable. Many historians have felt that what is going on in philosophy is more or less irrelevant to what they themselves do. However, as long as these same persons in their very practise also do make methodological statements based on epistemological and ontological presuppositions, they simply cannot pretend that philosophy is irrelevant. They are all in fact practicing some sort of philosophy, and it would certainly not hurt their work if they had realised this.

Unfortunately, due to the enormous amount of books and articles which is being produced these days no one scholar can keep up with what is going on in theoretical studies. This has sometimes led to a most unfortunate development where some scholars “marry” this or that particular theorist which they have, after much struggle, managed to understand, at least in part. Moreover, adopting uncritically the points of

history in general, but that Huizinga, who is called upon as Van Seters’s prime theoretical alibi, does not really play any role to Van Seters at all throughout his work. Quite another problem is it that he apparently may have read Huizinga out of context! See the pertinent critique of Van Seters in Brettler, The Creation of History (1995), p. 11. Brettler is probably right when he claims that Huizinga is not so well suited for ancient Israelite historiography because of his sharp distinction between literature on one hand and history on the other. Huizinga should, however, not be too easily dismissed. One remaining value of Huizinga today is in particular to be found in his strongly anti-positivist position. Cf. Anchor, “History and Play”, HT 17 (1978), pp. 74ff.

32 For instance, in the presentation (by an aficionado!) of recent trends in history theory, in particular Richard Rorty and Hayden White, K. Jenkins writes of “... the chronic, anti-theoretical nature of mainstream “history culture” in this country [i.e. England] ...” See: Jenkins, On “What is History?” (1995), p. 5. Elton, who is among those being attacked by Jenkins, has, in a recent book, Return to Essentials (1991) characterized recent, theoretical discussions as “dangerous” and as “rubbish”.
view of other thinkers quite often provides the individual scholar with an abstract strait-jacket into which he or she attempts to adjust his or her own thinking and writing. Needless to say, such a procedure is not prolific. If one cannot read theoretical studies from the point of view that they should lead to a more acute sense of the theoretical and methodological issues involved, that they should inspire and make one understand more, and that they should make one more independent, one may be better off without any such studies. On the other hand, to reject the insights of those people whose job it is to reflect upon the nature of what it is that historians do, and not to profit from this thinking because one is ignorant or arrogant is a very dangerous business indeed, and will, in the end, only lead to a drastic wering of the standards of both historical and biblical studies.

Among more methodologically conscious contemporary historians of ancient Israel, like Lemche, Thompson, Weippert, and Whitelam, much weight has been given to the so-called Annales School with its stress on structures and developments over longer periods ("total history") rather than on events. There are, however, some major problems with this approach, and even if there is a lot to be learnt from "the Annales school", it is, in my view, not particularly suitable for historical studies in relation to the Hebrew Bible. I am here, for practical reasons, referring above all to the use of F. Braudel, who, apparently, has become the hero of quite a few Biblical historians during recent years.

Braudel stressed above all the necessity to use empirical data, often quantifiable, to be able to identify the structures underlying social and cultural phenomena. Many things could be said about this (lack of theory, statistical primitivism), but this has been done by others, and cannot take up space here. My question would be: Where in the Hebrew Bible do we find such (quantifiable!) empirical data? Since biblical historiography is narrative, event oriented and pre-logical, it simply does not provide us with the kind of empirical data the anti event-oriented and anti-narrative analytical scientist Braudel could use. Even if we take also the

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33 An easily accessible survey of the Annales School is found in JGERS, New Directions in European Historiography (1984), pp. 43–79. Together with its many recent ramifications the Annales School constitutes what is known today as the “New History”.

34 Archaeology, can of course, provide us with some information about climate, biology, and geography in Palestine during the Iron Age. Much more difficult is the question of population movements and economic trends (Braudel’s second and most important layer in his three-tier model for historical explanation). As for “traditional” historical categories like politics, culture and intellectual life (Braudel’s third layer) we apparently encounter insurmountable methodological difficulties when, for instance, it comes to relating archaeology to biblical texts. It is important to note that Braudel has been criticized also by the younger generation of Annales historians. See: APPLEBY, HUNT, and JACOB, Telling the Truth about History (1994), p. 222.
archaeological record and extra-biblical sources into consideration, we do not by far have enough empirical evidence from ancient Israel/Palestine to write anything but a very short and very fragmented history.

And not only fragmentary! Not only are there serious problems with relating the results of archaeology ("archaeological truth") to the Hebrew Bible ("textual truth"). An ever greater problem is perhaps the arbitrariness in ancient Israelite historiography caused by accidental archaeological findings of a few extra-biblical texts. The amount of work done on textual discoveries like those of e.g. Kuntillet Ajrud or Tell Dan may not at all be in proportion to the relative historical value or the representativeness of these texts. However, when such texts have been given so much attention, this is only because of our obsession with "historical facts". In sum: The idea of a "total history" ("structure", "multiple time", "the long term") ancient Palestine, based on the Hebrew Bible, extra biblical texts, or archaeology, is highly problematic.35

Also, it is important to realise that the differences between the Annales school and its less accepted predecessors are not as big as some people assume. Empirical data ("sources") are as important to Braudel and his followers as they are to researchers pursuing "traditional" history. The sources may be different, the methods may vary, but in many respects the Annales approach, which prospered in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, represents nothing more than a revised and improved edition of traditional German historiography. As little as traditional history, "total history" has been able to recapture historical reality "as it was". Also the Annales approach belongs to "modernism", to a historical-critical project that has not yet realised that there is a crisis within its walls and that the building is about to collapse. Such an approach can only bring about cosmetic changes in ancient Israelite historiography, and not the fundamental changes which appear to be needed today.

All this makes it somewhat strange to read today about the so-called paradigm shift in biblical studies, in particular with regard to ancient Israelite/Palestinian historiography. In particular scholars like Lemche and Thompson have been eager to use the concept "paradigm shift" of their own contributions to biblical historiography. This, however, is far from being an adequate description of what is really going on. Lemche and Thompson, apparently unaware of the fact that what we may call a conventional concept of history today is highly problematic, still work within the parameters of historical-critical research, assuming that history is a science and that one must work with "hard" facts.

35 That a "total history" in fact is impossible also in relation to the classical world has been stressed by BAGNALL, Reading Papyri (1995), pp. 112-17.
Still profoundly marked by the nineteenth-century absolutist/historicist/positivist\textsuperscript{36} understanding of what it is to be scientific these scholars would, in Kuhnian terminology, qualify as "normal historians", performing paradigm-based, historical-critical research whereas scholars who respond to the post-modernist crisis would represent the beginning of the paradigm shift.\textsuperscript{37} At the same time Lemche and Thompson are themselves excellent witnesses to the very paradigm crisis. What these scholars above all show us, is, as I have demonstrated in my introductory section above, the full (or near full) consequences of the bankruptcy project historicism and the belief in a scientific history. In this way they have come to represent the first of the last modernists.\textsuperscript{38}

In the future we shall, irreversibly, have to adjust to a different view on story from that of the historical-critical methods of the 19th century: A history with different "truths" that are much less (when at all) the result of scientific analyses of empirical data. A history whose epistemic standing should no longer be regarded as part of science, but much more as a part of culture.\textsuperscript{39} A history characterised by a multiplicity of methods.

1.4 A Narrative Alternative

Where does all this lead the student of the Hebrew Bible who is also interested in ancient Israelite historiography? Since writing about the history of ancient Israel forms a part of history writing in general, it can hardly be performed in isolation from the rest of academia. As we have seen, recent developments within the philosophy of history have radically changed our views on history and history writing. This must have some consequences

\textsuperscript{36} PROVAN is quite right when he accuses recent trends in ancient Israelite historiography of being "positivist". See: PROVAN, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical", \textit{JBL} 114 (1995), pp. 601–2. "Positivism", as we know, is a terrible difficult concept to define. \textsc{stockman} notes, in a study on positivism in the natural and the social sciences that of five recent writers on the phenomenon all use the word positivism of "unity of science or scientific method", and of "empiricism in some form". Three of them also include in the definition that "science is the only valid knowledge." See: \textsc{stockman}, \textit{Antipositivist Theories of the Sciences} (1983), p. 7. In the present context, the most useful definition would probably be "belief in a scientific history".

\textsuperscript{37} \textsc{kuhn}, \textit{The Structure of Scientific Revolutions}, 1970. I am not discussing here whether or not \textsc{kuhn}'s work may be useful also for the human sciences. I am referring to \textsc{kuhn} simply because he has, rightly or wrongly, been brought into the discussion.

\textsuperscript{38} On how old and new paradigms may exist simultaneously, see \textsc{kuhn}, \textit{The Structure of Scientific Revolutions} (1970), pp. 84–7.

also for those engaged in the study of ancient Israelite historiography. Are these bleak prospects? On the contrary!

The present status of history, as well as the fact that the historiography of the Hebrew Bible is pre-modern and narrative, make, in fact excellent starting points for a new orientation also in biblical and in ancient Israelite/Palestinian historiography. Following their devastating attack on the scientific rationality of much modernist historiography (including structuralist), many post-modernist historians have turned to pre-modern history.40 One of the lasting consequences of the “post-modernist” discussions will be the renewed interest in narrative history.41

The circumstance that the Hebrew Bible is narrative and pre-modern must have some consequences for the ways we work with it in relation historiography. As I have mentioned above, a major problem in relation that particular scholarly genre called the history of ancient Israel appears to arise from the lack of scholars who realise the truly narrative character of the Bible and its world. This is not only strongly anachronistic, but also detrimental to ancient Israelite historiography.

It may be that this unfortunate circumstance is sometimes brought about by religious interests,42 but for the most part it constitutes an inherent cultural part of Western civilisation. We are all “brainwashed” by German historicism, and we have, according to this mental upbringing, a tendency to classify all written material in categories of true = historical, and not true = fictional. Did this thing happen, or did it not? Did Moses live, or did he not? We are all positivists in a certain sense, some less, some more. Even to use words like “relativism” and “scepticism” is positivistic, relativistic meaning relativistically “true”, “historical”, “non-fictional”. In the same manner we use “minimalist” or “maximalist”. When we say of this or that that “it is not historical in our sense of the word”, or “not historical in the modern (!) meaning of the word”, we may be more right than we are aware of, but normally we mean that what we are referring to is actually

40 “Just as postmodernism since Nietzsche and Heidegger has criticised the whole so-called logo-centric tradition in philosophy since Socrates and Plato, that is, the rationalistic faith that Reason will enable us to solve the secrets of reality, postmodernist historiography also has a natural nostalgia for a pre-Socratic early history.” See: ANKERSMIT, “Historiography and Postmodernism”, HT 28 (1989), p. 153.

41 This interest in narrative history is not only a result of post-modernist developments. Also historians connected to the Annales School have more recently taken a vivid interest in narrative. On this and other recent developments within narrative history (“micro-narrative”, “backward narrative”), see: BURKE, “History of Events”, in: New Perspectives on Historical Writing (1993), pp. 233-48. On narrative history, see also chapter 2 below.

less sound than we should want it to be. Even if it is my firm belief that the future definitely belongs to narrative history, it will take a long time for us fully to learn to respect and to understand that narrative truth is a different truth from that of conventional history, but that it is not a lesser truth. It does not help much how many times we say to ourselves that the old categories fact and fiction are not valid distinctions anymore. We are all nursed on historicist milk and weaning is hard. Our culture is obsessed with historical facts, and we are, obviously, unable to regain our “innocence”. We shall continue to be historically conscious in a positivistic sense, to think about history and to write about history. No “post-modernist” thinker can stop this. Also, much post-modernist thinking has gone too far.

Even if several of the points made by post-modernist theoreticians are useful and no doubt represent necessary correctives, many historians still believe in some sort of objective truth, that texts may refer to realities outside themselves, that we can know something about the past (even if far less than what we thought), and that texts have “meanings”. Even the “intention of the author”, so much despised in recent trends, appears to have a future today. The return to narrative history, then, is not completely a return to “fiction”. Only we must know what it is that we are doing, and that the problems involved are indeed many.

1.5 Narrative Truth

My main point above has been that narrative history has become important in biblical studies after the decline and fall of “scientific history”. Even if this goes for all kinds of history writing, it is particularly important for the historiographic texts of the Hebrew Bible since these texts themselves are pre-modern, pre-critical, and narrative.

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43 Here, PROVAN misses the point when he claims that story and history are “heading at speed in opposite directions”. See: PROVAN, “Ideologies, Literary and Critical”. JBL 114 (1995) 585. What we are facing in recent debate is not narrative instead of history, but narrative as history.


45 See e.g. DUREY, Realism and Narrative Modality, 1993. Cf. also for a more comprehensive view the entertaining railly by CUNNINGHAM, In the Reading Gaol, 1994.

46 The present state of the history theory discussion also implies that the old discussion whether or not it is appropriate to refer to the biblical texts as “historiographic”, “historical”, or “history-like” is no longer adequate. All cultures have stories about the
However, even if narrative historiography has again been put on the agenda in “post-modernism”, it is not always clear what is meant by this concept. Also, the notion of “narrative” itself is somewhat elusive and difficult to define.\(^{47}\) In his highly influential article from 1979 Stone defined narrative in the following way: “Narrative is taken to mean the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with sub-plots”.\(^ {48}\) Even if also other definitions could be quoted or given, Stone’s definition is more than sufficient for the present purpose, not least since it suits perfectly the kind of literature that we do find in the Hebrew Bible.

One particular manner in which narrative history works is the way in which it uses particular genres. In order to illustrate how narrative genres operate in the Hebrew Bible, I have taken as an example of a “single coherent story” narrative the so-called Deuteronomistic Story (in combination with the Priestly Story). As I have mentioned above, it is not problematic to call this history, but it is pre-modern, narrative and not modern/logical/analytic. It is descriptive, prescriptive, theological, instructive, and didactic, centring on a central theme, with a particular point of view. As an example of a “sub-plot”, I have chosen the story in 1 Kgs 3–9 about the Temple building of Solomon.

The so-called Deuteronomistic History is probably written late in the 6th Century BCE. The purpose of this story (the author’s intention!) is to explain the situation in which the Judean nation\(^ {49}\) finds itself, and to show

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\(^{47}\) The literature on narrative, of course, is enormous. Since my concern here is with narrative history, I do not intend to go into the more literary aspects of this discussion. Nevertheless, it follows from what I have written above that “history” and “literature” cannot anymore be separated as strictly as it has been done. For a further discussion of this issue, cf. also chapter 2 below.


\(^{49}\) It is, of course, problematic to use such words as “nation”, “kingdom” and similar “modern” terms in relation to pre-modern societies. As one will know, there has been an enormous discussion recently on “nations” and “nationalism” with an equally huge bibliography. Leading scholars have maintained that “nation” is a modern word and should be reserved for this period (in particular for the transition period from agro-literal societies to modern industrial ones). However, since words like “nation”, “kingdom”, and “state” have been used for such a long time about ancient “communities” like the “tribal federations” or “chiefdoms” of ancient Israel and Judah, I find much of this discussion un-prolific or irrelevant, some of it even disappointing (see, for instance, *HOBSBAWM’s* rather old-fashioned “etymological” approach towards a definition in his book *Nations and Nationalism* (1995), pp. 14 ff. Others, like *Smith*, have pointed to the fact that cultural homogeneity (name, descent myths, culture, history, territorial homeland), which did persist for long periods of time in several parts of the world, not least in the ancient Near East, even qualify for the use of the term “ethnic state”. No one, hopefully, would misun-
why things went so wrong. The end of the Judean state, following Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem and the taking of members of the upper classes to Babylonia, is viewed as the Judeans’ punishment by their national deity YHWH for their transgressions and their violations of the divine laws during their stay in Canaan, the land given to them by YHWH. Here the Deuteronomistic Story ends. In the parallel story Chronicles/Ezra/Nehemiah, dealing with the history of God’s chosen people from the creation to the restoration of the land during the Persian period, the events are taken even further in time.

Major events of this great biblical story are: Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings, the Conquest of Canaan, the Davidic Empire, the Divided Monarchy, the Babylonian Exile. If the Chronicler is included, we also find a description of the return from Exile and the Resettling of the Land under Ezra and Nehemiah.

What we have here is a kind of history telling which does not pass down the past, but which actually creates the past. This, however, is not so unusual. We can say that we have in the Hebrew Bible an early example of “national” history writing.

The particular genre of this biblical national history does not distinguish itself much from similar “national histories” known from other cultures in many part of the world. In Scandinavia the Icelandic Sagas would probably provide us with the best study material. J. Hutchinson, working with The Gaelic Revival (1890–1921), has pointed to the following “myths”, “that define the cultural voyage of a nation through time”: Myth of Migration, Myth of origins/settlement, Myth of a golden age, Myth of degeneration, Myth of regeneration.

When compared to this paradigm, the Story of the Hebrew Bible, the purpose of which is national (re)birth and not any return to the past, may look like this:

1.5 Narrative Truth
Chapter I: History and the Hebrew Bible

1. Myth of Migration (Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings).


3. Myth of a Golden Age (the Davidic Empire).


5. Myth of Regeneration (Future Promise through the Resettling of the Land under Ezra and Nehemiah).

There is, apparently, a common human need which has led to the creation of a particular literary genre for this kind of national history writing. The similarities simply cannot be explained as coincidental.53

This theological story does not tell us what Israel’s history really looked like in ancient times. On the other hand, we must not make the mistake of believing that because the Deuteronomist and their fellow authors expressed themselves through specific genres, everything we find in the Deuteronomistic Story is pure fiction. It is the ordering of the different elements that is fictional, and it does not follow from this, as some scholars have chosen to believe, that there was not an ancient “kingdom” of Israel at all. Also other “national histories” are, as we have seen, written according to highly schematised forms. This, however, does not imply that

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53 I am not here going into any discussion or attempt to explain this phenomenon (if it can be explained). A wider discussion of genre would be beyond the scope of the present study. It is with interest we notice that this focusing on genre puts new light on old discussions concerning the nature of history and the question of generalizations. It has been claimed that history must seek generalizations because human action is governed by certain mental and physical laws which it is the task of the historian to discover. This appears to be the point also of MACINTYRE who apparently sees all human action as the performing of already existing stories, as “enacted narratives”. See After Virtue (1985), p. 211. The problem with generalizations in history, however, appears to be that they are insufficiently based on empirical evidence. Apparently, it is not history itself, but history writing which is governed by “unconscious structures” and gives history coherence and meaning. Conceptualised reality is not reality. I do not know if HAYDEN WHITE has the correct answer to these questions. His works have, however, been highly influential. WHITE maintains that there exist basic narrative strategies – he calls them fundamental tropes – for emplotting events, and that these incompatible forms of emplotment are products of the historian’s art in telling about the event. I have a feeling that his view is strongly influenced by structuralism. Cf. WHITE’s article from 1987: “The Value of Narrativity”, in: Knowledge and Postmodernism (1996), pp. 395–407. Cf. on these issues also chapter 2 below.
the "peoples" to which these histories refer did not exist at all prior to the writing of their history.

Even if we do not have at our disposal extra-biblical texts (which we do have for kings like Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Joash, Ahaz, Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Jehoiachin) for David and Solomon, there is no reason to deny the historicity of David or Solomon or the divided monarchy. We do not get access to the "real" history of David and Solomon through the very late and schematic Deuteronomistic history. However, if one should be interested in such matters, and to the historian this is quite legitimate, it is possible to know something. The Deuteronomistic history simply did not spring from nothing, but must be based on later traditions. This does not mean, however, that it is likely that we can . . .ly reconstruct "what really happened". But it is a big difference between knowing something and knowing nothing at all!

I now move to my other example of narrative history, the "sub-plot" of Solomon's Temple Building in 1 Kgs 3–9.54 In a similar way as the Hebrew Bible tells its story of God and his people according to a strongly schematised form, the story of Solomon’s temple building is apparently written according to a narrative structure common also to other cultures in the ancient Near East. Roughly, the common elements which may be found are: Introductory underlining of the necessity to build a temple, visit to the sacred precinct, a dream, the deity reveals what has to be done, plans for the building, the king's wisdom is emphasised, a builder is hired and materials provided, the temple is finished, sacrifices and consecration ceremonies, gathering of the people, the deity enters his new abode, blessing of the king whose dynasty shall last forever.

The first scholar to see this phenomenon clearly was A. S. Kapelrud in 1963,55 pointing to the story of the Temple Building of Gudea, ensi of Lagash (22nd Century BCE?) and the Temple Building of the god Baal in the Ugaritic Myths (before the 12th Century BCE).

More recently, Hurowitz56 has analysed more than twenty extra-biblical building accounts, all of which show several basic common topics and events, the major ones being: a reason for the building or restoring, the consent or command of the deity (ies) in relation to the project, preparation for the project (including workers, materials, laying of the foundation), a description of the building process and the building itself, dedication of the building, celebrations and rituals, a prayer or blessing.

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54 Many other examples could have been mentioned in order to show how strongly related the stereotyped and conventional literature of the Hebrew Bible is to that of the ancient Near East. On this whole issue, cf. chapter 4 below.


56 HUROWITZ, I have Built You an Exalted House, 1992.
Hurowitz has shown how the same pattern is found not only in the story of Solomon’s temple building, but also in relation to several other building accounts (the tabernacle, the restoration of the temple by the returned exiles, the repair of the walls of Jerusalem carried out by Nehemiah, and in Josephus’ description of the building of the temple of Herod.

The point here is that we are dealing with literary, not “historical” texts. Apparently, there existed a particular Building Genre in the ancient Near East. When the story of a king’s building activities was recorded, this genre was always used. Since we are dealing with literary conventions and not with any historical detailed portrayal of what actually happened, it goes without saying that we face serious problems when we want to use this or similar texts as sources for historical reconstructions of past events.

What happens to history in cases like this? Hurowitz does not reflect upon the historical consequences of his investigation. To him the story of Solomon’s temple building represents a literary genre, similar to “other types of biblical and ancient Near Eastern literary forms, such as treaties and covenants, law corpora, proverb collections and wisdom instructions, letters and the like”. In this, of course, he is quite right. Nevertheless, if we really want to reflect upon the historicity of 1 Kgs 3–9, we cannot leave it at that.

Even if specific genres are used, this does not necessarily mean that we are dealing with “pure fiction”. Far from it! In my view, there are a lot of historical “facts” to be found throughout the Deuteronomistic History and there is little cause to be equally sceptic as some scholars tend to be in this matter. For instance, no one appears to deny the existence of Gudea and his temple. Another example (I could mention several more) would be the 7th century Assyrian king Sennacherib, a king well documented in the Hebrew Bible. No one, apparently, would deny that this king built a palace at Nineveh because of the highly stereotyped documentation found in Sennacherib’s building inscriptions. There is, consequently, little cause to deny the existence of Solomon or the fact that he built a temple in ancient Israel even if the story about this event is narrative and convention.

When we take a closer look at the story in 1 Kgs 3–9 we shall find that there are also other historical “facts” to be learnt. For instance, the story reflects the historical reality that there was an exchange of goods and labour between ancient Israel and Phoenicia. We do not get a great many details from our story concerning “what really happened”, but how important is this? The main point here must be that even if the text makes use of ste-

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57 Cf. HUROWITZ, I have Built You an Exalted House (1992), p. 312.
59 For a comprehensive study of Sennacherib’s palace see RUSSELL, Sennacherib’s Palace, 1991.
reotyped genres, it is not a purely fictional text, but also a “historical” one. As a historical text it comes out of the past and it reflects historical reality. This is the kind of “historical truth” which we may find in the texts of the Hebrew Bible.

This, finally, brings me to the last point which I am going to take up here: the relationship between narrative truth and history. What does it imply for the historical value of the Old Testament stories that they are narrative? What is the relation of these stories to past reality?

The important thing here must be the new view on historical truth which I have referred to above, and the fact that we now seem to be heading in the direction of replacing traditional, analytic history with narrative history. Scientific historians’ objection to narrative has traditionally been that it belongs to fiction whereas history belongs to science, it is verifiable. Being descriptive rather than analytic, they are, simply, “unhistorical”. As I have shown above, it is exactly this kind of positivistic differentiation between narrative and history that has come under attack in recent years and which cannot any longer be strictly upheld.

We must also face the fact that history is not as important as it used to be. Our obsession with historicity must step down and give way to the recovery of the textual world itself. This does not imply that history has become obsolete, but that we must think about it in a totally different way. Furthermore, since we do not have access to past reality the way we thought we had, we should also reflect upon why and how we approach the past. How interesting is it, after all, to discuss e.g. the historicity of Abraham or whether Solomon built the temple? Are such questions really of any great importance at all? They are most certainly not as important as they used to be.

The decline and fall of scientific history is of the greatest importance to all students of pre-modern texts. Even if we cannot, and should not, let history go completely in our dealings with the Hebrew Bible, we must allow it less space as well as less importance. The narratives of the Hebrew Bible contain both fact and fiction at the same time. Both of these modes are equally interesting and equally relevant.

Narrative history is not pure fiction, but contains a mixture of history and fiction. Even if we should be less interested in traditional history, we should also realise that there is a lot of it in the biblical stories. For my

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own part, I am convinced that there are many more "historical facts" to be found in the Hebrew Bible than what most scholars tend to believe today.

The fact that the Bible has come much closer to literature, however, does not necessarily make it less "historical", less representing past reality. Novels may provide us with some valuable insights here. No one, hopefully, would deny that from reading D. H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers (1913) we can learn a lot about what it was like to grow up in a mining village in Nottinghamshire around the turn of the century, or that Jane Austen's Emma (1816) provides us with an excellent "historical" introduction to the lives of the higher middle classes in its author's lifetime? Most novels are stories which do represent past reality, but of which one does not ask the question: Did this really happen? How important is it that something really happened as long as it might have happened, and in what way convey important pieces of past reality? In many ways the relationship between narrative and reality in the Hebrew Bible is comparable to that of novels. A certain degree of objectivity may be obtained, and since these texts sometimes refer to realities outside themselves, a "mild" form of realism is possible. It is most certainly true that readers create meaning, but this is not the whole story.

That narratives about the past and narratives from the past may represent past reality is something which has now become more and more clear not only to historical theorists, but also to classical scholars. It is

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63 "... history, historical fiction, and fiction all exist along a spectrum ranging from supposedly pure factual representation of literal, historical truth to pure nonliteral, invented fictional representation of phantasy. No work of history conveys only literal truth through factuality, and few novels, even science fiction ones, depict only pure fantasy. The quotation is taken from: BERKHOFER, Beyond the Great Story (1995), p. 67. A particular challenge, or at least a phenomenon worthwhile to ponder over, is the representational status of so-called historical novels when these are based solely on the same sources as those used by historians. When some theorists claim that history is just another story, what is then the relationship between (say) STEFAN HEYM's The King David Report, or, JOSEPH HELLER's God Knows to historians' retellings of the history of ancient Israel?"

64 "Narratives – historical and fictional – can be regarded as being spread along a scale with fact (or factual narrative) at one end and fiction at the other. These two poles are not contrary opposites, any more than red and violet are, when we place them at different ends of a spectrum. All stories on the scale produce story worlds." From: LAIRD, "Fiction, Bewitchment and Story Worlds", in: Lies and Fiction. Eds. GILL and WISEMAN (1993), p. 174. The whole volume contains valuable contributions to the relationship between fact and fiction in the classical world.
now high time that also historians of ancient Israel/Palestine start to think along the same lines.  

1.6 Summing Up

The main point of this chapter is that writing about the history of ancient Israel forms a part of history writing in general and should not be performed in splendid isolation from the rest of academia. The crisis in ancient Israelite/Palestinian historiography can only be solved through an increased epistemological and ontological awareness also among biblical scholars. The apparent shortcomings of traditional historical approaches vis-à-vis recent developments within hermeneutics, linguistics, and genre theory (historical “true” versus fictional “not true”) have led to an increased crisis in history. History shall no doubt recover from its crisis, but it will never be the same again. However, the belief in a scientific and analytic history, modelled on the sciences, will never recover.

The much vaunted “paradigm shift” in contemporary ancient Israelite/Palestinian historiography is non-existing. Rather, all authors of so-called histories of ancient Israel/Palestine are still profoundly marked by a nineteenth-century absolutist/historicist/positivist understanding of what it is to be scientific. These scholars would, therefore, in Kuhnian terminology qualify as “normal historians”, performing paradigm-based research.

The recent “reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history” has, among other things, led to a renewed interest in narrative history. Narrative history is not pure fiction, but contains a mixture of history and fiction.

The fact that narrative history (by positivists and “normal historians” always regarded as “unhistorical”) has again been put on the historical agenda, is extremely important to students of the Hebrew Bible, the historiography of which is narrative and pre-modern. As examples, I have in the present context used the Deuteronomistic History and the story about the

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65 This does not imply that there are not many problems with narrative history. For an attempt to deal constructively with the several objections raised against the representational legitimacy of historical narrative, see Norman, “Telling it Like it Was”, HT 30 (1991), pp. 119–35. Quite another matter is the adequacy of narrative in relation to dealing “with the central issue of how we can systematically and objectively study the history of societies in all their complexity and multifaceted reality”. Lloyd, The Structures of History (1995), pp. 67–8. No doubt this objection is valid, but it does not really concern us here since we are dealing with an example of an ancient society where we do not have at our disposal sufficient material to write a “total” history anyway. Cf. also below chapter 2.

temple building of King Solomon. The major problem in relation to that particular scholarly genre called the history of ancient Israel appears to be that the scholarly world has failed to realise the truly narrative character of the Hebrew Bible and the way these narratives make use of certain stereotyped literary genres.

In the same way as there is no one approach to the past, to history, there is also no one truth. Since “truths” may be of different kinds, it is important to realise that we today cannot anymore make the claim that traditional historical truth is more “valuable” or more “correct” than narrative truth.

Since very few positivistic facts indeed are verifiable, the kind of historical reality which narratives reflect provides us with the most releva and the most interesting approach to the ancient Israelite/Palestinian past.

If historical (verifiable) truth should be our only concern, the history of ancient Israel should not only be very short (written on 10 pages or so), but it would also be utterly boring.
Chapter 2

Issues in the Narrative Truth Debate

2.1 The History Problem

Obviously, there are many ways in which the concept of history, historical consciousness, history theory, and historiography are important to students the Hebrew Bible. We may, for a moment, only think of what most scholars have been doing during the last hundred years or so; it is certainly no coincidence that biblical scholarly methods, deeply rooted in nineteenth century German historicism, are commonly referred to as “historical-critical”. The enormous influence of this scholarship on subsequent generations of bible researchers, noticeable also today, can hardly be exaggerated. The so-called historical-critical methods, Literary Criticism (%.terarkkritik or Quellenkritik) and Form- and Tradition History (Formgeschichte, Traditionsgeschichte) made up the mother milk of scholarly upbringing in Western theological faculties, both in Old Testament and New Testament research.

We may also think of the importance that the believing community has, quite often, attached to the truth value of the historical traditions of the Bible. The following statement by Koster would be fairly representative for many scholars: “... the historicity of the Bible is important, because otherwise our faith, be it Jewish, Christian or Muslim, would be based on (mere) fiction”\(^1\). Others, like, Barr\(^2\), McIntyre\(^3\), and Smend\(^4\) have expressed more nuanced views concerning the theological implications of historical matters.

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\(^2\) There are many useful insights in Barr, “Historical Reading and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture”, in: The Scope and Authority of the Bible (1980), pp. 30–51.

\(^3\) McIntyre discusses implications of the claim that Christianity is a historical religion in “Historical Criticism”, in: Language, Theology, and the Bible. Eds. Balentine and Barton (1994), pp. 370–84.

Chapter 2: Issues in the Narrative Truth Debate

2.2 “The New History”

Views on history, and on historical truth, have changed radically in the humanities and the social sciences during recent years. Different schools of thought (they are many!) are variously referred to as post-structuralist, post-modernist, or as deconstructionist. Well known catchwords are: the End of History, the New History, the End of the great Story, the Linguistic Turn.

All of these trends are related to the weakening of the traditional historicist paradigm that has dominated the humanities in general, an intellectual history of which also biblical studies form a part. The most important outcome of the debate has been the claim that historical truth represents a different rationality from positivistic, scientific truth, and that historians must accept to work with multi-methodological approaches to history, rather than with any single, “correct” research paradigm. It goes without saying that no one interested in history and historiography can allow themselves to disregard these developments. They are also particularly relevant for biblical scholars, working with ancient, pre-modern narratives. The history debate has mainly taken place on the Anglo-American scene. Among Ger-

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5 For a more comprehensive discussion, see BARSTAD, “History and the Hebrew Bible”, in: Can a ‘History of Israel’ Be Written? Ed. Grabbe (1997), pp. 37–64, reprinted as chapter 1 of this volume.
6 During the last 30 years or so, historicist-genetic, diachronic strategies, primarily concerned with pre-textual processes and with the internal history of the biblical texts, have come under increasing pressure from other, more “literary” orientated methods, concerned above all with the “final form of the text”. Following the rather modest beginning of the so-called “Bible as Literature” movement, literary and holistic approaches have become more and more dominating over the years. An example of a book that wants to re-orientate Old Testament theology “after history” is PERDUE, The Collapse of History, 1994. These developments are, with a few notable exceptions, not felt equally strongly in Germany, the homeland of biblical criticism, where many scholars have fused to accept what they have regarded as unscientific dramatische Endtextlesung. You should here note the wise words of KRATZ, himself a dedicated Literarkritiker: “Es ist ein großer Irrtum zu meinen, daß, wer für die kanonische Endgestalt ist, gegen die Literarkritik sein müsse, und wer für Literarkritik ist, etwas gegen die Endgestalt habe. ‘Synchronie’ und ‘Diachronie’ schließen sich nicht aus, sondern sind aufeinander angewiesen.” See: KRATZ, Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments (2000), p. 5.

7 The literature on historiography and post-modernism is overwhelming, and I cannot refer to much of it here (cf. also chapter 1 above, passim). One early “summing up” of the post-modern challenge is found in issue 3, vol. 94, 1989, of AHR. Among the many “readers” available (in themselves fitting tributes to the post-modern claim that knowledge is fragmentary) some provide useful introductions to the debate. See, for instance: Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective. Eds. APPLEBY, COVINGTON, HOYT, LATHAM, SNEIDER, 1996; History and Theory. Contemporary Readings. Eds. FAY,
man-speaking scholars less attention appears have been paid to these new trends in historiography so far.  

It should be unnecessary to add that there have also been a series of reactions against “post-modernism”. This is not so strange when we consider some of the “excesses” of the “New History”. Nevertheless, critique should always be welcomed as an invitation to scholarly dialogue. However, not all criticisms have been fruitful, unprejudiced, or relevant.

For instance, it is quite clear that some of the books and articles that have been written against the “post-modernists” do not always take seriously the real problems involved in the debate. The sweeping statements of some of these contributions are often very black and white, and the tone sometimes aggressive. The authors regard themselves as crusaders defending the truth against its enemies. However, preaching only to those already converted, few of these authors are likely to change the views of those they attack, or to contribute to the debate in a positive way.

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8 Whereas the Anglo-American academic world is burdened by overproduction, the German one is certainly not. The best introduction in German to the recent debate is: Geschicht schreiben in der Postmoderne. Eds. Conrad and Kessel, 1994. It is typical that among the 13 contributors to this volume only one is German (in addition to that of the editors). The introduction by the editors, “Geschichte ohne Zentrum”, gives a good introduction to the problems, being critical in a sound way. Quite informative for its size is Iggers, Geschichtswissenschaft im 20. Jahrhundert (1993), pp. 87–105. Cf. also the expanded and revised translation into English: Historiography in the Twentieth Century, 1997. Cf. also the work by Lorenz, referred to below. It is remarkable that post-modernism has made so little impact in the homeland of historicism, even in quite recent university textbooks. See, for instance, the not very informative treatment in Simon, ‘Historiographie’ (1996), pp. 276–82, and, even less so, in Oelmüller, Dölle-Oelmüller, Piepmeier, Philosophische Arbeitsbücher IV, 1995. Better, but very short, is: Goertz, Umgang mit Geschichte, 1995.


10 Undoubtedly, this reminds us of the heat that we have been witnessing in biblical historiographic studies recently, with a frequent use of strong invectives. However, not only are the invectives not the same (in biblical studies “maximalists” and “minimalists” or “revisionists”, and in historical studies “relativists” and “anti-realists”), but the whole issue is very different. The by far most important outcome of the post-modernist debate is that historical truth is different from positivistic, scientific truth, and that historians must accept to use multi-methodological approaches to history, rather than to work with any single research paradigm which is considered to be the “true and only one”. In the biblical debate the so-called “minimalists” have put forward almost the opposite pro-
Clearly, these are not the kinds of reactions we need. Nevertheless, when biblical scholars occasionally comment upon what goes on in the history debate, these are the kind of books that will most readily come into their hands.

Another, even more recent, reaction against post-modernism is now seen in what may be characterized as “the revenge of science”. Apparently, what we may be dealing with here (it is a little too early to say for certain) is an example of the swing of the infamous pendulum. Reacting against what they regard as a situation of extreme relativism (some would claim scepticism, or even nihilism) some scholars are opting for the other far end of the positivistic objectivity scale.11

It would be sad, indeed, if this is going to be the future trend in the history debate. I am not so much opposed to the thought that, in a multi-methodological climate, there should also be a place for a “scientific” historical reasoning. The danger, however, is that as soon as one starts to forget the necessary corrections brought about by the history debate, the insights gained will go unrecognized, and theory shall, once again, be reduced to a simplistic belief in history as a positivistic science.12 The human brain, apparently, has a weakness for absolutisms!

Nevertheless, many of the reactions against post-modernist exaggerations should be welcomed. More open to theory, for instance, is Chris Lorenz. His major work is in many respects a middle position between what he would consider two extremes: naive positivism (objectivism) on the one hand and post-modern relativism on the other.13 However, I feel that Lorenz sometimes dismisses too easily some of the “post-modern” challenges.

2.3 “The Linguistic Turn”

The probably most famous slogan of the “New History” is the so-called “linguistic turn”. Strongly simplified, we may say that this issue concerns the relationship between reality and language. At least since Aristotle is

gram, claiming that since history is a science, and the biblical texts are “unscientific”, they cannot be historical.

11 If, by chance, the vagaries of historical fashion can be read off the pages of the journal History and Theory, it may appear that something is happening. See, for instance, the recent collection of essays: The Return of Science. Eds. SHAW and POMPER, 1999.

12 As an example of someone who apparently has learnt very little from the last twenty years’ history debate we find ZAGORIN, “History, Referent, and Narrative”, HT 38 (1999), pp. 1–24.

13 LORENZ, Konstruktion der Vergangenheit, 1997. LORENZ has, in particular, many valuable reflections on objectivity in his work.
has been common to assume that language imitates reality (*mimesis*). Recent theoreticians have instead stressed more and more other aspects of this relationship, asking: Does language represent/reflect reality or does it constitute/construct it? Since language itself is vital in creating and changing reality, its representation of reality cannot, according to post-modernist theory, be stable. It is this kind of instability that eventually leads to deconstruction: all decoding leads to a new encoding, which leads to another decoding, etc., etc.

Several thinkers have laid down the conditions for this discussion.\(^{14}\) The probably most influential one has been Derrida, or, to be more precise, the Derrida reception, particularly in Anglo-American academe.

We cannot mention Derrida without referring to the famous/infamous *Il n’y a pas de hors-texte.*\(^{15}\) Few, if any, scholarly dictums have been quoted more often out of context. Quite another matter is that it is very difficult to understand the enormous impact that this passage has had.

To quote Derrida out of context is particularly problematic. The quotation is taken from a chapter of a book that basically discusses the relationship between “writing” (*écriture*) and “speech” (*parole*), trying to convince us that the latter is inferior to the former. The whole work is coherent, and one cannot understand much of it out of context.

In his book, Derrida criticizes Rousseau’s opinions on text and language, in particular the view that language is meant to be spoken, and that writing is only a supplement to speech.\(^{16}\) This, of course, is exactly the opposite of what Derrida himself believes, and he reads the texts by Rousseau as typical reflections of the “logo-centrism” of the epoch.

Derrida’s own views on text may be reminiscent of the French *Explication de texte*, or even of the close reading of the so-called New Criticism, only that he does not regard the text as autonomous, but rather as a process, an “intertext”.

Derrida, in my view, is not, in this discussion, denying the existence of reality, nor that we can have any knowledge of it. What he claims, is that this knowledge can only come from the text, and that it, if it comes from another text, represents a different knowledge.

From his own presumptions, of course, he is correct. We can readily grant that if information about the life of Rousseau, his mother and his

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\(^{14}\) See chapter 1 above, *passim*. It is no surprise that *FOUCAULT*, or rather: the *FOUCAULT* reception, has been important to the history debate. See, for instance, KOSHAR, “Foucault and Social History”, *AHR* 98 (1993), pp. 354–63; *FOUCAULT and the Writing of History*. Ed. GOLDSTEIN, 1994; BRIEGER, Die Unerbittlichkeit der Historizität, 1998.

\(^{15}\) The quotation is taken from DERRIDA, *De la grammatologie* (1967), p. 227. See also p. 224 and p. 233.

\(^{16}\) DERRIDA, same place, p. 207.
Thérèse, to all of whom Derrida is referring\textsuperscript{17}, should also be fetched from elsewhere, this would not concern the “same” persons. However, to the historian, whose duty it should always be to attempt to find out what “really happened” (even if, of course, this is not possible), such a strict demand would be a useless luxury. She or he would have to try to find out as much as possible about Thérèse Levasseur no matter how meagre the sources are. Similarly, a historian of ancient Israelite historiography should have to take an interest also in the circumstances under which the text in question came to be, and read and use ancient Near Eastern texts, as well as seek the assistance of archaeological sources.

One should not, however, dismiss the statements of Derrida too easily. For instance, there can be no doubt that everyone who thinks, speaks, writes about a historical event after the event has to use language to this. The past reality of historical events can never be identical with the “writtiteness” or “spokenness” about them after the event. In addition, the understanding of the text is being further complicated by the readers’ own interpretations. Still, our only access to the historical event is through the text. In short: Every new “version” of a factual event has to be “different” and will take us further away from it. These insights may be said to belong to the good heritage of post-modernism, and they should not be exchanged too easily with a naïve realist, objectivist view of historical truth.

In sum: When we say that what we experience as reality is a product of the fact that we have a language and are able to speak, this implies that everything we “know” has to pass through language in order to be communicated. We shall have to accept this as a useful and necessary caveat. Texts can refer to realities outside themselves. What we shall have to accept, however, is that two realities can be very similar, similar, less similar, a little similar, not similar, far from similar, but they are never “identical”.

If someone claims, on the other hand, that language ontologically has a generative rather than a mimetic function, this would be a concern of a much wider reality discussion.\textsuperscript{18} In most of the cases, however, I do not believe that this actually comes into our discussion. Apparently, the discussion suffers sometimes from a lack of clarity concerning whether the issue under discussion is an ontological or an epistemological one. I do not really believe that there are many “anti-realists” among the historians. It is true

\textsuperscript{17} Cf. also DERRIDA, same place, p. 224: “Thérèse — la Thérèse dont nous pouvons parler, Thérèse dans le texte, celle dont le nom et la ‘vie’ appartiennent à l’écriture que nous lisons ...”

\textsuperscript{18} Cf. the recent realism debate (that has taken place mostly in the English-speaking world). For an excellent introduction to this debate in German, see: Realismus. Ed. WILLASCHEN, 2000. Note, however, that all the contributions in this volume are translations from studies originally published in English.
that the slogan "anti-realist" has become a popular invective in the heat of
the debate, but I do not necessarily see that there is much "reality" behind
this statement.19 Also, some readers have a tendency to think that sympathy
for one particular view excludes the possibility of seeing the usefulness of
other views.20 As we shall see below, this has also hampered the important
fact/fiction debate.

2.4 Fact Versus Fiction

One of the most important concerns of the history debate have been the at¬
ttempts to compare fact and fiction, to explore, according to Hayden White,
"extent to which the discourse of the historian and that of the writer of
imaginative fictions overlap, resemble, or correspond with each other".21
White himself has become one of the most influential scholars working in
this area. For instance, an important discussion of the relationship between
history and fiction by Riceur is influenced by White.22 White’s interest in
the problem is based on the observation that novels and historiographic
writings are very similar. Both the writer of fiction and the writer of history
want to represent “realities”, and sometimes it is even impossible to distin¬
guish between them.23 Obviously, White is not the first one to make such
observations.

Not many of the issues of post-modernism have been equally misunder¬
stood as the fact/fiction debate. Thus, it is quite common to assume that
White and others who claim that historiography is a form of fiction do not
accept the truth value of historical statements.24 However, none of the his¬
torians that I have come across would agree that claims concerning form at
the same time constitute truth claims. In fact, White even accepts (as does
Riceur)25 the very old philosophical distinction between “fact” (= true) and
“fiction” (= not true), going back at least to Aristotle.26

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20 This is what ROLAND BARTHES has referred to as “Neither-Nor Criticism”. See
21 WHITE, “The Fictions of Factual Representation”, in: Selected Papers From the
English Institute. Ed. FLETCHER (1976), p. 21. WHITE has devoted much space to this
problem in several of his works.
48.
23 Cf. also chapter 1 above.
récit 3 (1985), p. 345: “Le récit de fiction est quasi historique dans la mesure où les
everements irréels qu’il rapporte sont des faits passées pour la voix narrative qui
Even a sober scholar like Lorenz would claim that White does not accept that stories can be “true”: “In my view the truth-claims of history vis-à-vis literature remain essential and therefore cannot be treated as accidental. This crucial difference should prevent philosophers from treating history and fiction as two exemplars of the same species, that of the narrative, of which the historical story, ideally, just happens to be somehow connected to the search for truth”.27 The way this statement is formulated, I am sad to say, misses the point. Besides, even Hayden White could have written something similar. White does not deny historical truths, his task has always been to try to find out in which ways they manifest themselves to us.

Also biblical scholars, who have contributed to the debate, taking an interest in the relationship between fact and fiction purely from a literature point of view, subscribe to the Aristotelian distinction between the two kinds of literature. Good examples would be Alter28 and Sternberg.29

In sum, the fact/fiction debate does not represent a farewell to history or to a belief in past reality as some scholars mistakenly seem to believe.30 Quite another matter, of course, is that the fact/fiction debate cannot be separated from the discussion of the role of narrative in historiography.

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26 Poetics, Chapter 9: “... they [that is the historiographer (ὁ ἱστορικός), and the poet (ὁ ποιητής)] differ in this that the one tells what has happened (τὰ γενόμενα), the other what could happen (οἷς ἂν γένοιτο)”.

27 See LORENZ, “Can Histories be True?” HT 37 (1998), p. 329. In his critique of “the two bad boys”, Lorenz puts WHITE and ANKERSMITH (whom he appears to have read more thoroughly than he has WHITE) together. However, WHITE’s views are more similar to those of L. MINK. On LORENZ, see also further below.

28 “It is important to see the common ground shared by the two modes of narrati [history and fiction], ontologically and formally, but it also strikes me as misguided insist that writing history is finally identical with writing fiction. The two kinds of literary activity obviously share a whole range of narrative strategies ...” The quotation is taken from ALTER, The Art of Biblical Narrative (1981), p. 24.

29 STERNBERG discusses the difference between “fiction” and “history” in: The Poetics of Biblical Narrative (1987), pp. 23–35. With his distinction between “truth value” and “truth claim” (p. 25), STERNBERG, too, subscribes to the classical Aristotelian distinction between fact and fiction. He is, however, more thorough than ALTER.

30 RICOEUR deals with the question of past reality in: Temps et récit 3 (1985), pp. 252–83. His views in this work, however, are fairly traditional, and influenced by Karl Heussi: “... le recours aux documents signale une ligne de partage entre histoire et fiction: à la différence du roman, les constructions de l'historien visent à être des reconstructions du passé. A travers le document et au moyen de la preuve documentaire, l'historien est soumis à ce qui, un jour, fut” (p. 253).
2.5 Fact, Fiction, and the Narrative Mode

It has become quite common to refer to the kind of history which is meant to replace, or at least to supplement, scientific positivistic history as "narrative". History is "story-like".31 At the same time it is not always certain what is being meant by this.32 Clearly, different writers have different views. We should also make a distinction between the present narrativists and the "early" narrativists of the mid-sixties. Searching for new ways of explaining history, these scholars asked whether narrative could fill the explanatory function better than Collingwood's "Reenactment", or explanations from universal historical laws. Well known names here are A. C. Danto, W. B. Gallie, and M. White.33

In the post-modern debate, F. Ankersmit and H. White are probably the two historians that have been associated most frequently with "narrative history".

One should not, however, make the issue of narrative history more complicated than necessary. Narratives are important to us simply because we have access to the past through someone else's stories about it, and we re-tell past events with our own stories.

For the present purpose, I find the pertinent remarks of Hayden White (in a recent work) suitable:

"A historical representation can be cast in the mode of a narrative because the tropological nature of language provides that possibility. Therefore, it is absurd to suppose that, because a historical discourse is cast in the mode of a narrative, it must be mythical, fictional, substantially imaginary, or otherwise 'unrealistic' in what it tells us about the world. To suppose this is to indulge in the kind of thinking that results in belief in contagious magic or guilt by association. If myth, literary fiction, and traditional historiography utilize the narrative mode of discourse, this is because they are all forms of language use. This in itself tells us nothing about their truthfulness—and even less about their 'realism' inasmuch as this notion is always culturally determinate and varies from

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31 Cf. also chapter 1 above, passim.
culture to culture. Anyway, does anyone seriously believe that myth and literary fiction do not refer to the real world, tell truth about it, and provide useful knowledge of it?"  

It is, as we see, wrong to dismiss White as an anti-realist as many do. That narratives, according to White, can be true (in an Aristotelian, if not in a positivist, scientific, factual meaning of the word) is clear from this quotation.  

Obviously, not all problems are solved even if we do accept a narrative view of history. From the discussion above, it must follow that a story about a historical event, even if told simultaneously ("eye-witness"), can never be "identical" with the historical event itself. We have access to the historical event only indirectly. One important question, then, is the nature of the form of the narrative and its epistemological status in relation to experienced reality.  

W. H. Dray, who has discussed the nature and role of narrative in historiography at some length, puts it the following way: "What matters for the present purposes is whether experienced reality, and especially social reality, can possess the kind of structure that it takes narration to display without there being a narrator".  

Here, however, White is less clear, and it is probably this vagueness that has led to the accusations that he is an anti-realist. He does not, though, deny the existence of past reality. Since he claims that the structures of history (White’s "fundamental tropes") are not found in what really happens but only in the created, artificial, literary narrative, one could possibly say that he is denying narrative reality. However, as far as I can see, White is only denying that the real events share the structure of the stories told about them later. I do not see that this is a problem. It is, at least to me, difficult to see why the structure of the narrative should be so important for the reality discussion.  

34 W h i t e, F i g u r a l R e a l i s m (1999), p. 22.  
35 Thus, it is not accurate when Lorenz claims that White "... simply negate the truth-claim of narrative altogether". Lorenz, "Can Histories be True?" HT 37 (1998), p. 314.  
36 See, for instance: W h i t e, T h e C o n t e n t o f t h e F o r m (1987), pp. 45–46.  
37 Dray, "Narrative and Historical Realism", in: Dray, O n H i s t o r y a n d P h i l o s o p h e r s o f H i s t o r y (1989), p. 145. In his essay, Dray discusses both Hayden White and Louis M i n k, but above all the book by Carr, Time, Narrative, and History, 1986.  
38 "I have never denied that knowledge of history, culture, and society was possible; I have only denied that a scientific knowledge, of the sort actually attained in the study of physical nature, was possible. But I have tried to show that, even if we cannot achieve a properly scientific knowledge of human nature, we can achieve another kind of knowledge about it, the kind of knowledge which literature and art in general give us in easily recognizable examples". The passage is taken from: T r o p i c s o f D i s c o u r s e (1992), p. 23.  
39 Cf. also chapter 1 above.
2.6 Ancient History

Again, there are some useful insights to be found in Dray, questioning David Carr’s qualms with Mink and White. Carr maintains that the anti-realists (Mink and White) claim that narrative form cannot be representative of the structure of reality because it is an intellectual “artifice” rather than something “natural”. To Carr, it is rather something natural. Dray opposes this, and asks Carr the following question: “Why shouldn’t one instead question the assumption on which it rests: that an intellectual form – a ‘cognitive instrument’ – needs to be ‘natural’, something found ready-made in experience, in order to be capable of conveying the true nature of reality?”

2.6 Ancient History

A deficiency of the history debate has been the unwillingness to distinguish between different historical situations and periods. I believe that this circumstance has discredited the discussion not a little. Above, I referred to the epistemological problem that tells of stories change past reality every time they retell their stories. It goes without saying that the amount of time that has elapsed since an event took place, and the availability and quality of the sources are decisive factors when we want to discuss how “true” historical narratives can be.

To attempt to find out what happened yesterday in your own backyard cannot easily compare to an interest in what happened in the same backyard 200 years ago, or in another country in some remote past. It is a difference of some significance whether we ask: Did the Reichstag burn in 1933, or: Is Moses a historical figure? And if we should be interested in (say) the fall of Akkad some 4000 years ago, we are facing formidable problems. We must also remember that views on history and historiography have changed considerably over the centuries. Differences in views of history among biblical scholars today and those working a hundred years ago are significant. And views of history in the Hebrew Bible and those of biblical scholars today are beyond comparison!

I certainly hope that some of the above reflections demonstrate that the history discussion is relevant to biblical scholars in general and to historians of ancient Israel/Palestine in particular. Ancient Israelite historiography is normally a field for biblical scholars and not for “historians”. Labels, however, are far less interesting in this connection than what

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people actually do. Moreover, problems of disciplinary borders are not unique to biblical scholars.41

Since students of ancient Israelite history are dealing with pre-modern sources, I find it somewhat puzzling that so very few of them take a look at what goes on in related fields. Also within other branches of ancient oriental history we have recently been witnessing an increased awareness of the methodological problems involved.42

Historiographical studies, especially by so-called “minimalists”, have claimed that “everything” we find in the Hebrew Bible is unhistorical, and that we cannot use the Bible as a source for the reconstruction of the history of Iron Age Palestine at all.43 I not only believe that this view is wrong, but that it is unreasonable even to the point that it cancels itself (If the same criteria for defining historical sources should be applied for other texts from antiquity, we simply would have no ancient history at all! Moreover, it appears that the majority of these scholars continue to write history and to write about history. At least, I have never seen that they refer to themselves as authors of fictitious literature.

Doing ancient history includes living with the frustrations that most of our data can never be verified. However, in a post-modern climate this is not so bad. It is more problematic when someone, clinging to the ideals of waning modernism, insists that history is a science, and claims that, unless we can apply hypotheses that cannot be falsified, it is illegitimate to do ancient history.44 The tellers of stories in the Hebrew Bible have as their

41 For an archaeologist arguing that pre-history and ancient history should also form a part of historical studies, see WINGHART, “Wann beginnt Geschichte?” in: Wozu Historie Heute? (1996), 1-16.
42 Highly relevant, of course, is Mesopotamian history. See VAN DE MIEROOP, Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History, 1999. There are also many insights to be found in Persian and Islamic historiography. See, for instance, the review article by ROBINSON: “The Study of Islamic Historiography”, JRAS 3:7 (1997), pp. 199-227. Discussing recent contributions to Islamic historiography by T. KHALIDI and A. NO' ROBINSON shows how the sources are problematic as far as the reconstruction of the early history of Islam is concerned, and opts for a more literary approach. An interesting point is made by SCOTT MEISAMI who claims that, quite contrary to what is normally assumed, medieval Persian writers did have a historical consciousness, as well as an interest in the past as past. See SCOTT MEISAMI, “The Past in the Service of the Present”, Poetics Today 14 (1993), pp. 247-48. On Persian historiography in general, see SCOTT MEISAMI, Persian Historiography, 1999. See also: WALDMAN, Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative, 1980.
43 A recent discussion of the views of the so-called “minimalists” or “revisionists” is found in BARR, History and Ideology in the Old Testament, 2000.
prime aim the production of “ideology” and the reuse of ancient traditions in order to make a point for contemporary society, rather than attempting to find out “what happened” in the past. This, however, does not imply that these texts do not yield a lot of historical information. Despite the scepticism of much recent scholarship, somewhere in the cognitive area between what happened, the sources, and the reconstructions of modern scholars, there are many “facts” to be learned.

We can, however, know much less than we thought we could. It has become fashionable to quote Wellhausen’s statement “etwas mehr Nichtwissen”. Obviously, this is a fitting comment also on the development of the history debate. On the other hand, one should not quote only a part of the text. As we may see, the full passage is even more illustrative: “Die Zeiten erden nicht wiederkehren; aber etwas mehr Philologie; etwas mehr Wissen und etwas mehr Nichtwissen gehören nicht zu den unmöglichen Wünschen”.45 To balance the historian Wellhausen, however, I would like to end this short discussion on historical truth with a quotation from a fiction writer, and a contemporary of Wellhausen. Charles Dickens writes in The Mutual Friend: “What to believe, in the course of his reading, was Mr. Boffin’s chief literary difficulty indeed; for some time he was divided in his mind between half, all, none; at length, when he decided, as a moderate man, to compound with half, the question still remained, which half? And that stumbling block he never got over”.

2.7 Final Remarks

History has not “come to an end”. Writing history and writing fiction is not the same. Nevertheless, changes in views of historical truth since the 1970s have been far-reaching. Also other challenges of so-called “post-modernism” will not go away, not even to the ostriches among us. Notwithstanding this, it is important to realize that everyone working in the humanities will benefit by the insights of post-modernism. This includes theologians and biblical scholars who may now be liberated from the strait-jacket of “scientific” historiography. We are all still positivists, but we are radically less so than before.

One particular problem to which too little attention has been paid concerns historical truth in ancient texts. The Hebrew Bible contains many historical facts, and it is, by far, the most important historical document for our knowledge of Iron Age Palestine. Since corroborating evidence is often

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completely lacking, however, it is, in many cases, nevertheless very problematic to use the Bible for historical reconstructions.

On the other hand, since we are dealing with pre-modern, oriental texts, with an inner logic very far from ours, we should have a much more relaxed attitude *vis-à-vis* the historical information found in the Hebrew Bible. To “burden” the Bible with our views of historical truth is not only anachronistic, but it also manifests a lack of respect for the texts themselves. I find the sometimes heated debates concerning the historicity of this or that a little unnecessary. If it becomes very important whether Moses was a historical person or not, this is not a historical matter but a matter of belief. Clearly, belief is important also in historiography, we should not, however, become too fanatical about it.

What we are left with is a kind of narrative history whose positivis truth is lying somewhere on the scale between what happened and scholarly reconstructions of what happened, but much closer to the latter end of the scale. Also, we shall have to live with the frustration that we are sometimes working with a scale, or a “force-field”, and that we cannot always pinpoint the truth. Even if there are a lot of historical facts in our stories they cannot as often as we like easily be converted to truth statements. This does not mean that history has become less important. On the contrary! What has become less important is factual historiography modelled on the sciences.
Chapter 3

“Bibliophobia” in Ancient Israelite Historiography

3.1 The Problem

Particularly in recent years, we have been witnessing that objections have been raised by some biblical scholars whenever attempts have been made to use historical information taken from the Hebrew Bible for historical reconstructions. Since I have always felt this to be a somewhat strange attitude for someone who claims to be a historian of Iron Age Palestine, I would like to make a few comments on this particular point of view.

Obviously, the matter in question is far too comprehensive for a short comment like the present. For this reason I shall limit myself to a few general points. I take it for granted that most of the scholars that have taken part in recent discussions concerning ancient Israelite historiography (more or less) believe that knowledge of the past of some sort is possible. It is, of course, quite legitimate to be a sceptic and to deny the possibility of “historical” knowledge altogether. However, when reading books and articles in our common field, I do not quite get the impression that this is the case (then again I may be wrong in my assumption).

There is no need to deny that the use of the Hebrew Bible for historical (re)construction is highly uncertain (to say the least). This, however, is a problem shared by everyone who is engaged in ancient historiography.¹ My main point here must be that we cannot treat the Bible any differently from other historical (or rather literary) sources from the ancient world, for instance, those of ancient Greek or ancient Mesopotamian historiography. This is a highly important point. If someone wants to claim that the Hebrew Bible is less suitable as a basis for historical reconstruction than (say) Herodotus’ Historiae or the “Sumerian King List”, I have no problems with this (even if I do not hold this view myself). I should, however, need to know the grounds for such a claim. No such grounds have sufficiently been put forward in the literature so far. Thus, it is not enough to say that we cannot use the Bible as a historical source because it is “un-

¹ I use the word “historiography” in two different ways. Firstly, I use the term of stories containing descriptions of past events in sources used for historical reconstruction. Secondly, it is used of modern endeavours to write “history”, that is attempts to find out what in these same sources may be “historically” true in a positivistic fashion.
historical”, “unreliable”, “ideological”, etc., and that it, moreover, is late (from the Hellenistic period), and that it, as a literary product far removed from the historical periods it describes, has no value for attempts to reconstruct historical reality prior to its composition. All of this is something which the Hebrew Bible shares also with other ancient literary sources used for historical reconstruction. If these grounds alone should be the reason behind the claim that we cannot use the Bible for historical reconstruction, we should, consequently, have no ancient history at all. There would, in fact, be no history of ancient Egypt, of Mesopotamia, the Levant, Anatolia, Persia, Greece or Rome. Since this would represent a major upheaval in intellectual history, I believe that it is imperiously required that those scholars who plead such a special case for the cultural, compositional and cognitive status of the Hebrew Bible as compared to other ancient sources inform us why this is so. In the meantime we shall have to treat the Bible in a similar way as we treat also other ancient literature.

3.2 Historical Truth in Ancient Sources

It is not uncommon to find among orientalists and classicists who are dealing with historical issues a highly negative attitude towards the historical truthfulness of the sources with which they are working. Sometimes, this attitude goes a long way back. The reliability of Herodotus, for instance, has, to a varying degree, been called in question ever since antiquity. At present, the (re?)discovery that the source evaluation of the “father of history” (with its “triptite” διψις (“seeing”), ἱστορία (“learning by inquiry”), and γνώμη (“consideration”) has more to do with literary genres than with historical source criticism in our meaning

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2 One significant problem which cannot be dealt with here, but which will receive considerable attention in future discussions, concerns the question of the linguistic nature of the texts. To put it very simple: Can the Hebrew Bible be said to represent some kind of a “linguistic museum” with a diversity bearing witness to centuries of diachronic development, or is the lack of linguistic uniformity a result of other circumstances than chronological developments? See, for instance, YOUNG, Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew, 1993; HURVITZ, “The Historical Quest for ‘Ancient Israel’ and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible”, VT 47 (1997), pp. 301-15.

of the word, has resulted in a heated debate over Herodotus’ trustworthi-
ness, not dissimilar to what is going on in biblical studies for the moment. 
The recent discussion in Greek historiography has in particular followed 
the publication of Detlev Fehling’s Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot from 
1971. The consequence of these discussions is not that we shall have to 
stop using Herodotus (or other ancient sources) for historical reconstruc-
tion, but that we shall have to be even more aware of the problems we are 
facing when doing so. Obviously, every single piece of information shall 
have to be examined with close scrutiny.5

Even if Herodotus no doubt is of great interest, and much can be learnt 
from the studying of his works,6 ancient Near Eastern historiography must 
be regarded as even more relevant to historians of ancient Israel. In the 
resent context I am above all thinking of Mesopotamian history. 7 Not

4 FEHLING, Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot, 1971 (see also the English translation 
by HOWIE, 1989). Fehling has not, however, had many followers, and the majority 
of classical scholars still believe that much of the historical information found in Herodotus 
is trustworthy. See, for instance, ERBSE, Fiktion und Wahrheit im Werke Herodots, 1991: 
Pritchett, The Liars School of Herodotus, 1993. For a useful, general volume on the 
is dealt with also elsewhere in this book. See “Index of Topics”.

5 For an excellent example of how one may extract historical information from Herodotus, we may mention THORDARSON, “Herodotus and the Iranians”, SO 71 (1996) 42–
58. THORDARSON discusses the historical foundation for Herodotus’ description of Scyth-
ian funeral rites in Book IV, 71–75 and demonstrates how Herodotus must have had ac-
cess to genuine Scythian mythological traditions. In my view, THORDARSON’s work pro-
vides us with an excellent example of how to deal methodologically with the problematic 
field of historical reliability in ancient literary sources.

6 See, for instance, the useful survey in VAN SETERS, In Search of History, 1984, in 
particular pp. 31–54. For further discussions on the use of Herodotus as a historical 
source, see chapter 5 below.

7 The book by VAN SETERS, referred to in n. 6 above, gives a survey also of Mesopo-
tamian historiography (pp. 55–99). VAN SETERS deals in his book also with other ancient 
East texts. For a more comprehensive survey of Mesopotamian historiographic texts, see GRAYSON, “Assyria and Babylonia”, Or 49 (1980), pp. 140–94. GRAYSON has also, not least thanks to his formidable editing of Assyrian royal inscriptions, been able to 
produce an excellent synthesis of the history of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. See GRAYSON, 
anian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC., 1996. The substantial volumes by KUHRT, 
The Ancient Near East, 1995, have large sections on Mesopotamian historiography. A 
useful work, dealing with history of research and methodological problems, is CARENA, 
History of the Near Eastern Historiography, 1989. Only the first volume (dealing with 
the period from 1852 to 1945) has appeared. Nevertheless, critical Mesopotamian histori-
ography must still be considered a field of research which is still in its very beginning.
Most Assyriologists, as a rule, are engaged with the publishing and editing of texts. They
only are we here dealing with literature which is more closely related both from a cultural and geographical point of view, but we are also dealing with a history which, for some of its periods, is closely intermingled with the history of Iron Age Palestine in a quite direct manner.

The “Sumerian King List” may illustrate our problem. Clearly, many other texts from the vast historiographical literature of ancient Mesopotamia could have been mentioned. I have chosen the “Sumerian King List” as an example because this is one of the texts whose historical value has rather been under attack. The debate is in many ways reminiscent of the discussion over the “trustworthiness” of the Hebrew Bible.8

It is believed that the final composition of the “Sumerian King List” took place in the late 19th century BCE (after the fall of the Ur III Dynasty). We are, consequently, dealing with a text which, similar to the literature of the Hebrew Bible, got its final shape considerably later than the events it describes. It is also assumed that the purpose of the present form of the “Sumerian King List” is to legitimize the rule of the kings of the Isin dynasty as the appropriate successors to the Ur III kings.9 We are, in other words, also dealing with a text which is heavily wrapped in a shroud of ideology. Also, the text is full of lacunae. Despite the many problems involved, students of early Mesopotamian history still consider the “Sumerian King List” as a valuable source for historical information about Sumerian history. For instance, most scholars assume that the names of the kings and cities of the Agade and Ur III kings are historically correct.10


8 Cf. chapters 1 and 2 above.
In the "Sumerian King List" we have an example of a text whose status is quite similar to that of the Hebrew Bible ("late", "ideological", "literary"), but which may still be used by historians to reconstruct historical circumstances prior to its final composition. I am not saying that this is a good thing or a bad thing. The point of issue is only to claim that when scholars do use ancient literary texts for historical reconstructions, it is important that those who deny that this is possible with regard to the Hebrew Bible apply the very same procedures also towards the "Sumerian King List" (and other historiographically ancient Near Eastern sources). If not, they shall most certainly have to make allowances as for what it is that is so special to the Hebrew Bible that it, unlike other sources, is unfit for historical reconstruction. I cannot say that I have seen that anything of this kind has sufficiently been done in the debate.

3.3 Some Examples from the Bible

When it comes to details, each and every piece of information shall have to be investigated separately. Here, many examples could have been mentioned. With the names of the Sumerian kings and their cities from the "Sumerian King List" fresh in mind, it is not difficult to see here a parallel to the kings mentioned in the Deuteronomistic history. Moreover, when so many of the kings mentioned in that work (Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Joash, Ahaz, Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Jehoiachin) are also referred to in sources outside of the Hebrew Bible, it becomes methodologically obscure to claim that the Hebrew Bible does not yield historical information concerning periods prior to its creation. We shall, however, have to go further than that. When the historian finds that the names of all these kings are confirmed by other sources, he or she will also know something about the reliability of the Hebrew Bible, at least in this particular matter, and may safely assume that also other names of kings mentioned in the Deuteronomistic history may be historically correct.\footnote{11}

I shall briefly mention just one more example. Several other, equally well known texts could have been mentioned,\footnote{12} but the story of the last days of Judah in 2 Kings 24–25 belong to the better known. In this text we


\footnote{12} See the survey by DEIST, "The Yehud Bible: A Belated Divine Miracle?" \textit{JNSL} 23 (1987), pp. 117–42.
may read how Jerusalem is besieged by Nebuchadnezzar and the king, Jehoiachin, replaced by Nebuchadnezzar with his uncle Mattaniah, who was given the name Zedekiah. If one is at all interested in the historical circumstances surrounding the fall of Judah, it is very difficult to see how one can avoid using the Hebrew Bible as a historical source for the reconstruction of the history of Palestine during this particular period.

Since this event is attested also in Mesopotamian texts,13 we have here yet another example of how the Hebrew Bible does yield reliable historical information. Again the historian, I would have thought, should say to him/herself: This is interesting, hopefully we shall some time have access to further extra biblical evidence bearing witness also to other historical details found in 2 Kings 24–25. In the meantime, there is little cause not to suspect that the Hebrew Bible is correct, and that the story in 2 Kings gives us reliable information about the last days of the kingdom of Judah.

When dealing with ancient historiography, our sources shall quite often have to be given the benefit of the doubt. Whether we like it or not, the pre-modern, narrative historiography of the Hebrew Bible does not provide us with verifiable historical "facts". Since we cannot any longer ask for historical facts the way we used to do,14 we shall instead have to ask for what is likely (very likely, quite likely, not likely). "Factual historical truth" must be replaced with its "narrative historical truth", which is related to "factual truth", but not identical with it. It is, of course, always nice when historical statements are "validated" by those of other sources. This, however, will, due to the very accidental nature of such sources, always be the exception rather than the rule.

However, when reading some of the historiographical literature today one is left with the feeling that some scholars have made up their mind beforehand about the reliability of the historical information which we may find in the Hebrew Bible. Since they are convinced that these texts are "fictitious", they are unwilling to discuss these texts in a scholarly manner. Instead, they waste a lot of energy attempting to prove what they already believe that they know. Others again, have apparently decided beforehand that, more or less, everything which we find in the Hebrew Bible is "historically correct". This other extreme, of course, must be judged as equally incompatible with the ideal of an open scholarly mind.

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Three different texts mention "Jehoiachin, king of Judah". In a fourth text he is referred to as "the son of the king of Judah" (see pp. 925–26).
14 See for this in more detail chapters 1 and 2 above.
3.4 Conclusion

To conclude: As an historical source the Hebrew Bible is of the “same” nature and quality as other ancient Near Eastern literary texts. This has the somewhat drastic consequence that if we renounce the use of the Hebrew Bible on the basis that it is late and fictional, we shall also have to do so with regard to most of the ancient sources. If we do not want to do this, we shall also have to accept, for better and for worse, the Hebrew Bible not only as necessary, but also as the by far most important source for our knowledge of the history of Iron Age Palestine. To deny this is not only unduly hyper-critical, but it is also based on a positivistic view of history which today is deplorably outdated.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} See for this in more detail chapters 1 and 2 above.
Chapter 4

The Dating of the Israelite Tradition

4.1 Introductory Remarks

Recently, we have been witnessing a later and later dating of more and more of the texts of the Hebrew Bible. Obviously, to anyone interested in the use of these texts as possible sources for information about the history of Palestine during the Iron Age, the question of dating is of vital importance. For this reason it may be worthwhile to take a closer look at recent trends in this field.

However, before we start examining more closely recent developments, we should not fail to remind ourselves that “late dating” is not something new in biblical scholarship. Even if we cannot, by far, talk about any consensus among “moderate” scholars, there have also, for a long time, been those who dated the greater part of the Hebrew Bible to the Persian period. When the Hellenistic period is referred to, the Book of Daniel, of course, springs to one’s mind. It remains a fact, however, that not a few other biblical texts have also been dated, with varying success, to “the Hellenistic era”. Texts in question are: Isaiah 24–27, Isaiah 65–66, Joel, Jonah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah 9–14, Malachi, Psalms, Job, Proverbs 1–9, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

8 MEYERS and MEYERS, Haggai, Zechariah 1–8 (1987), p. LXX.
From the references above we understand that it is nothing new in itself to date large portions of the texts of the Hebrew Bible to "the Hellenistic period". Yet, if we compare recent studies in the field with earlier contributions there are some conspicuous differences. Clearly, there is now a much more consistent and deliberate dating to the Hellenistic era. Moreover, the late dating now appears to embrace also the historical traditions of the Hebrew Bible. This particular circumstance, seemingly, affects also the view on the historical trustworthiness of the texts. Whereas it was felt earlier that the Deuteronomistic history, despite its ideological bias, contained at least some reliable historical information from pre-exilic Israel, this is to a lesser degree the case today. One important result of this particular development is recent attempts to look for and to find Greek influence in, for instance, the Deuteronomistic history. A few quotations may illustrate this development.

A scholar like Lemche writes:

"The writers who invented the 'history of Israel' seem to have modelled their history on a Greek pattern".22

And Bolin:

"Very little of the HB, either in content or composition, is to be found in any historical era earlier than the Persian Period. What I have attempted to demonstrate is that the Persian Period is not the place to look for the writing of the biblical texts. Rather, the bible itself points us to the beginning of the Hellenistic period for that process."23

And Nielsen:

"The fact that the similarities between the Herodotean and the Deuteronomistic historiography also include the tragic ornamentation of the course of history supports the assumption that the Hellenic literary tradition, which Herodotus was part of, influenced the Deuteronomistic history. Thus it becomes probable that DtrH was written at a time and in

15 For a dating of Song of Songs to the Hellenistic era, see POPE, Song of Songs (1977), pp. 25-6.
17 WESTERMANN, Die Klagelieder (1990), p. 57.
18 MOORE, Esther (1971), pp. LVII–LX.
20 For scholars who have dated Chronicles to the Hellenistic period, see JAPHET, I and II Chronicles (1993), p. 24.
23 BOLIN, "When the End is the Beginning", SJOT 10 (1996), pp. 14–5.
a milieu where the Hellenistic influence was important in the Israelite or more correctly, the Jewish tradition.”

And Wesselinus:

“The most likely scenario for the origin of Primary History therefore seems to be that a Jewish author (alternatively, leader of a group of authors) who was well versed in Greek literature set out to write a history of his own people at some time in the third quarter of the fifth century BCE or a little later (see below for date); such a person may not have been very common in the Persian era, but a few decades later, still before or a short time after the conquests of Alexander the Great, it was considered conceivable that there would be Jews who would know the Greek language and culture very well, so there is no reason why such a combination of religion and knowledge would have been possible earlier.”

From the above quotations it may appear that something “new” has enter the discussion concerning the Hebrew Bible and its “late” dating. It is now felt that even the Deuteronomist(s) are building on Greek literary models and that it, consequently, has become necessary to make comparisons between the historiography of the Hebrew Bible and Greek sources, above all Herodotus’ Historiae.

For my own part, I do not think that it is completely without value to make comparisons between the Deuteronomistic history and Herodotus. We have, however, to know what we are doing. The real danger starts when we claim that the biblical texts are modelled on Greek prototypes. Undoubtedly, there are similarities between the Pentateuch and Herodotus, and the Deuteronomistic history and Herodotus. The issue here is not that this is not the case. Having read Herodotus I can easily see that there are similarities. It is, however, the nature of these similarities that must concern us here. We may, for instance, find even more similarities between the Deuteronomistic history and the Icelandic sagas. For my own part, I have pointed to some really striking parallels between the Deuteronomistic history and the history of Ireland at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. This, however, is not problematic. Because of the distance in time no one would claim that the Deuteronomistic history was modelled on Irish or Icelandic prototypes!

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25 Wesselinus, “Discontinuity, Congruence and the Making of the Hebrew Bible”, SJOT 13 (1999), p. 45. Wesselinus discusses the Primary History (= the Pentateuch), Nehemiah, Ezra, and Daniel. He compares, in detail, the Primary History and Herodotus’ Histories (pp. 38–48 and passim), and concludes that the former is modelled on Herodotus, and written between 440 and 350 BCE.
26 Obviously, this is not as “new” as some may believe. Among those scholars who have compared Herodotus’ work to the historiography of the Hebrew Bible particular mention should be made of Van Seters. See his: In Search of History (1983), passim.
27 See chapter 1 above.
When dealing with comparisons, we may, tentatively, attempt to sort out parallels into “historical” and “typological”. When we make historical comparisons we compare things within the “same” historical, linguistic, or literary context (“culture”, “social system”, “civilization”). Typically, comparisons made between Assyrian laws and the laws of the Hebrew Bible would fall under this category. We should, however, always keep in mind that a historical comparison should not be excessively interested in questions of origin or in whether this or that particular phenomenon is a result of cultural diffusionism. Such views, apparently highly popular in earlier days, will, as a rule, be too speculative to be really prolific. Mostly, they are also based on inadequate “evolutionist” views of how cultures grow and develop.

With “typological” comparisons I mean in the present context comparisons which may be made between literary phenomena appearing in quite different contexts, and from no matter how distant periods of time or localities. Similarities in separate cultures would, as far as we know, in the majority of cases, not follow historic-genetic connections, but rather be the result of how the human brain works, and of how humans, for some reason, behave in “similar” manners in “similar” situations. Parallels between the Deuteronomistic history and the history of Ireland at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century should be classified as “typological”. As for similarities between biblical historiographical texts and Herodotus’ Historiae these are undoubtedly far too general to be of any real relevance in a discussion about provenance and influence. This fact should be recognized no matter whether one believes that the influence goes from Herodotus to the Bible (cf. the examples which I have referred to above) or from the Hebrew Bible to Herodotus.

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28 NIELSEN has pointed to many interesting similarities between tragedy in Herodotus’ Historiae and in the Deuteronomistic history. However, since tragedy is a feature also of ancient Hebrew literature in general, it is not possible to say that tragedy in the Hebrew Bible is modelled on Greek prototypes. Many authors have discussed tragedy in the Hebrew Bible. Important works, also used by NIELSEN, are: GUNN, The Fate of King Saul, 1980, and, more thoroughly, FOKKELMAN, Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, 1986. For further references, see POWELL, The Bible and Modern Literary Criticism (1992), pp. 468–69 (index, under “tragedy”). We should not fail to notice, though, that it has also been claimed that Greek and Hebrew tragedy are completely different literary modes. See FRYE, The Great Code (1983), p. 181. If accepted, such a demand, of course, makes all assertions about Hellenistic influence in this particular area meaningless.

29 For this reason, the view of MANDELL and FREEDMAN that Herodotus was influenced by Genesis-Kings (= Primary History), when composing his Historiae, is equally to be rejected. MANDELL and FREEDMAN, who date Genesis to Kings exactly to 561–560 BCE, believe that Herodotus had access to an Aramaic translation of the Primary History.
4.2 Deuteronomy

The Book of Deuteronomy is vital as a background for any understanding of the Deuteronomistic history, irrespective of the view one takes on the relationship between Deuteronomy and the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, or the relationship between the “Priestly Work” (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers) and Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history. It is not, on any account, possible to go into any details on such problems here. Nor is it possible to touch upon the many difficult problems relating to the dating, composition, or literary development of Deuteronomy. 30

In its present context Deuteronomy forms a part of the Great Story the Israelite people in antiquity. In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy we find the account of the Prophet and Law Giver Moses who leads God’s chosen people out from Egypt, through the desert to the borders of Canaan, the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy, the arduous travelling has come at an end, and the Israelites, camping east of the river Jordan, are soon to enter their new homeland.

Yet, the narrative parts of Deuteronomy are modest, almost exclusively restricted to the story of the death of Moses in chapter 34. What we actually find in Deuteronomy is a speech made by Moses. Since his audience is now on the verge of entering the Promised Land, the speech contains those laws and regulations, given by God, which must be observed in the new land. The speech, in fact, is nothing but a Law Book, with implicit and explicit exhortations.

In the very centre of the story of the Israelites and their relationship to the “national god” YHWH we find the firm belief that YHWH has elected the Israelites among all the inhabitants of the earth to be his particular favourite and property. Consequently, these traditions also play an important persuasive part in the speech of Moses. We find retrospective glances to the promises to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the escape from Egypt, to the Covenant at Mount Sinai, and to the desert wandering.

The most distinguished promise to the Israelites, however, is the promise of the land of which they are now about to take possession.


The law materials that we find in the Hebrew Bible – both in Deuteronomy and in the Priestly writings – are, whatever else they may be, also the conditions agreed upon in the covenant between YHWH and his people. However, it follows from Deuteronomy (Deut 30, compare also Josh 24) that it is up to the Israelites themselves to make the choice between YHWH – with a good quality life in the promised land – and other deities; with disasters and loss of land as the ultimate consequence.

Another characteristic feature of Deuteronomy – and clearly as important as the different laws and regulations – are threats of punishment and promises of reward. Deuteronomy stands as the prologue to the history of the elected people in the Promised Land, which is also the story of their covenant with YHWH. In the prologue, the conditions for the use of the id are clarified. If the Israelites in their new land obey the laws and commandments of YHWH and worship him as their sole deity, they shall be blessed and have a prosperous life. If they do not they shall be cursed. The worshipping of other deities is regarded as particularly abominable. The punishment is depicted in some detail: Sickness, crop failure, defeat, siege, invasion, looting, and deportation from the Promised Land. The importance of the loss of land aspect of Deuteronomy can hardly be exaggerated.

4.3 The Deuteronomistic History

When using the designation “The Deuteronomistic History” in the present context I do not necessarily adhere to the theories of Martin Noth or to any of the several variant theories among his successors. Nor do I wish to discuss whether there actually ever existed a coherent, written history in ancient Israel prior to this document as we now have it. It may well have been, or it may not. Those interested in such questions should rather consult the vast secondary literature on the topic. For our immediate purpose, it suffices to say that with the expression “The Deuteronomistic story” in the present essay I refer simply to the biblical books of (Deuteronomy), Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings. What we find here, is a large, independent and mostly consistent literary work, characterized by its prose style and the constant repeating of certain theological main points through the use of certain set phrases.

The significance of this highly ideological work is clearly seen also from its length which amounts to approximately 25 % of the Masoretic

31 See the literature referred to above. A short, but succinct survey from the historiographic point of view (with literature) is found in LONG, 1 Kings with an Introduction to Historical Literature (1984), pp. 2–8. A recent contribution to the discussion is ROSEL, Von Josua bis Joachim, 1999.
text! Furthermore, the period dealt with also attests to the importance of the work. Joshua - Kings tell the story of the Israelite people from the conquest of the Promised Land until the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. According to conventional scholarly chronology this means a period of about 700 years. And those are not any 700 years! The Deuteronomistic history wants to tell the story of the Israelites throughout the whole period of their national existence in Canaan, the land given to them by YHWH their god. The Deuteronomistic history gives us the story of the Iron Age kingdoms of Israel and Judah from the time of their foundation to the time when they ceased to exist as sovereign states.32

It is impossible – and unnecessary – to give a full review of the contents of Joshua to Kings in the present context. Only a few, major points should be made. Above all, the Deuteronomistic history is a book about a People and their God in their Land (formerly belonging to the Canaanites), given to them by their God. And most of all, perhaps, it informs us about the leaders of this people! In the Book of Judges, for instance, the Israelites are depicted as a body completely without a will of their own, badly in need of a strong leader. Under good “judges” the Israelites worship YHWH as their god and obey his laws and regulations. When the leader dies they leave YHWH and start worshipping the despicable Baalim of the Canaanites. As a result of this, YHWH must punish the people he has elected for himself. He lets the enemy win on the battlefield. The people regret their sins, and they pray to YHWH for forgiveness. Their prayers are granted, and YHWH sends another “judge” to save the Israelites from the enemy. After the death of the new leader the story repeats itself: The Israelites forsake YHWH and indulge in the worshipping of other deities. Here, in a nutshell, we find the “history philosophy” of the Deuteronomists. As we see, this represents a contemporary, theological interpretation of history rather than any attempt to convey past reality in a positivistic fashion.

However, the political leaders whom the Deuteronomists despise the most are the kings. A major theme in their history is the strongly negative view of so many of the Israelite and Judean kings. This may be perceived already in the Books of Samuel, a text reflecting the transition period between the charismatic “judges” and the establishing of kingship, but above all in the Books of Kings. According to the Deuteronomists, it is primarily the kings who are responsible for provoking the wrath of YHWH and for his various castigations of his people in the Land, leading up to the Final

32 The use of words like “king”, “nation”, and “state” may appear anachronistic in the present context. I do not, however, want to take up this discussion here. This is not because I feel comfortable using these terms without any definitions, but simply because this (rather imprecise) language usage reflects much of the current debate.
Punishment: the sacking of Jerusalem, and the taking away of the whole of the Judean population into exile to Babylonia.

The particular Deuteronomistic view penetrates the entire story of the Israelites, from Joshua to Kings. Major historical disasters are particularly stressed. In 1 Kgs 1–11 we may read the story of King Solomon. Great importance is attached to the story of the building of the temple in Jerusalem. According to the Deuteronomists, cultic activity can only take place at the Jerusalem temple. Nevertheless, Solomon is punished by YHWH for his sins, and after his death his grand kingdom is dissolved and divided into two parts: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern of Judah. In later tradition the time of Solomon would always be regarded as the golden age in Israel’s past. The next catastrophe takes place in 721 BCE with the siege and conquest of Samaria by the Assyrians and the end of the northern kingdom. Finally, with the Babylonian invasion and the fall of Jerusalem in 586, the greatest disaster of all in the eyes of the Deuteronomists took place. Judah now ceased to exist as a nation in her own right.

The angle is widely theological. All the misery that has befallen the Israelites has come as a result of their violation of the covenant with YHWH. They did not worship YHWH as their sole God, nor did they follow His Law.

The theological overtones appear in a narrative pattern that is strongly schematized. Since, in the eyes of the Deuteronomists, it is the kings that are to blame for what happened, they are portrayed as good or, for the most part, as bad. They are characterized, for instance, in the following way: “King X did evil (or right) in the eyes of YHWH”. A good king would typically pull down the altars of foreign gods, worship YHWH as his only god, and follow the commandments given to the people by Moses. A bad king would be punished for not following YHWH. Thus, the books of Kings are not about the kings in any ordinary sense, but about good and bad kings. A king either followed YHWH or he did not.

Moreover, the kings of Israel, the northern kingdom, had rebelled against the Davidic dynasty, and were, consequently, all of them evil. For this reason the punishment of Israel occurred already in 721 when the ungodly capital of Samaria was sacked by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:6–8. Revised Standard Version):

“In the ninth year of Hoshea the King of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan,”

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and in the cities of the Medes. And this was so, because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs which the kings of Israel had introduced.34

The Deuteronomists present the history of Israel from the conquest of the land to the exile as a long, coherent account about the elected people who entirely and at all times broke the contract with YHWH, their god.

From beginning to end the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings tell the story of covenant violation, rebellion and apostasy. The final catastrophes that struck Israel and Judah are described as the heavy price that had to be paid for the many infringements upon YHWH’s commandments revealed to the Israelites before they entered the land, and that are now be found in the Book of Deuteronomy.

4.4 The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East

When taking a closer look at the contents of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history we find many “similarities” between genres, phraseology and motifs of these texts and those of the ancient Near Eastern literary heritage. Such correspondences are so many and so striking that there can be but little doubt that all of these texts belong within a wider, common cultural sphere! Such observations, of course, are not new at all, but have been made ever since the first discoveries of texts from ancient Mesopotamia after the middle of the nineteenth century. Ever since those early days, a steady stream of new texts has been discovered at numerous sites in Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere. Many of these texts have been made available to scholars also without an expert knowledge of the ancient Semitic or Egyptian languages. In view of recent claims that the Hebrew Bible is modelled on Greek prototypes, it becomes more vital than ever before to remind ourselves of how deeply embedded are the traditions of the Hebrew Bible in the “surrounding cultures”. With a few exceptions, the flavour and mentality of the biblical texts are through and through “oriental”, and not “Greek”. It was this that led Morton Smith, in a now classical work, to talk about “the Common Theology of the Ancient Near East”.35

34 On the historical circumstances behind the fall of Samaria, see BECKING, The Fall of Samaria, 1992.
35 SMITH, “The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East”, JBL 71 (1952) 135–47. I mention SMITH because his article has become somewhat of a classic. Apparently, the “commonness” concerns not only “theology”, but also literary and historiographic traditions and laws, as well as social and economic conditions. Another classic is the book by ALBREKTSON, History and the Gods, 1967. Here, the author demonstrates beyond doubt
A proper evaluation of the significance of "the Common Theology of the Ancient Near East" is essential for any sound understanding of the growth and nature of the texts and traditions of the Hebrew Bible. Since, however, the literature is vast and possible examples overwhelming, only a few illustrations can be given in the present context.36

**Law**

As mentioned above, the Book of Deuteronomy consists of a speech made by Moses. The speech contains those laws and regulations, given by God, which must be kept when the Israelites enter the Promised Land. Similarly, in the Priestly tradition (Exodus - Numbers) the laws are given to the Israelites through Moses at Mount Sinai on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. The laws given to the Israelites by Moses in Deuteronomy (and in Exodus - Numbers), are not the Laws of Moses but the Laws of God. The notion that the major deity is also the lawgiver represents a typical example of "the common theology of the ancient Near East".

Here, one illustration must suffice. On the upper part of the Louvre Hammurabi stela (the best preserved and most complete edition of Hammurabi's Law) there is a scene where the sun-god Shamash sits on his throne and presents the law to King Hammurabi who stands before him. The fact that the illustration covers almost one third of the stela indicates the importance of the iconography of the deity as lawgiver for a proper understanding of the situation.37 The parallel to YHWH and Moses is obvious. The main point is the underlining of the deity as the protector of the king and his people. It is clear that the laws referred to, both on the Louvre stela and in Deuteronomy (or in Exodus - Numbers), must be much older

how the view that historical events were regarded as divine actions was commonplace in the ancient Near East, and not exclusive to the Hebrew Bible the way some scholars had thought.

36 The examples which I shall discuss below would, naturally, be those most relevant to historiography. However, it is important to be aware of the fact that so to speak all the literary genres of the Hebrew Bible have ancient Near Eastern prototypes. On prophecy, see: WEIPPERT, "Aspekte israelitischer Prophetie", in: Ad bene et fideliter (1988) 287-319; BARSTAD, "No Prophets?", *JSOT* 57 (1993) 39-60; NISSINEN, References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources, 1998. On wisdom, see WEEKS, Early Israelite Wisdom, 1994. However, ancient Near Eastern wisdom, too, has been regarded as an important influence on the Book of Deuteronomy. See HALLO, "Biblical Abominations and Sumerian Taboos", *JQR* 76 (1985) 21-40. For more specific genres like Song of Songs, see NISSINEN, "Love Lyrics of Nabû and Tašmetu", in: "Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf" (1998) 585-634. For the City Lament, see MICHALOWSKI, The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur, 1989.

than the "literary compositions" in which we may now find them. This, however, appears not to have bothered the "authors" of our two texts.

In addition to such overarching parallels, there are, of course, also well known similarities between legal systems and individual laws, far too numerous to be dealt with in any detail in the present context.\(^{38}\)

Treaty

One important factor in Deuteronomy and in the Deuteronomistic history is the view that YHWH has attached himself to his people through a contract/treaty/covenant. Scholarly discussions (of varying quality) about the relationship of ancient Near Eastern treaties to similar phenomena in the Hebrew Bible have convincingly shown how deeply rooted such ideas are in a common culture.\(^{39}\)

From Deuteronomy we may also learn how closely connected the divine laws are to the covenant. In fact, the laws form a part of the very treaty terms: If the Israelites obey the laws and commandments of YHWH and worship him as their only god, they shall be blessed and prosper. If they do not, they shall all be cursed. Elaborate curse catalogues are found in chapters 28–32 in Deuteronomy (cf. also Lev 26). Again, the literature of the "surrounding cultures" shows us that curses (= threats of punishment) in which gods are asked to bring evil on those who break their oath are characteristic of Mesopotamian (and West-Semitic) treaties, and common in all periods from Sumerian to late Babylonian times.\(^{40}\)

Like many other ancient Near Eastern traditions the treaty tradition also turned out to be of remarkable longevity, following standard forms for centuries. Many of the same elements which we may find in the earlier


\(^{39}\) There is a vast literature on the topic. Cf. McCARTHY, Treaty and Covenant, 1978; NICHOLSON, God and His People, 1986.

treaty literature are found also in a Punic document as late as the third century BCE.41

War

Any reader of the Hebrew Bible must be struck by the great role played by the deity in relation to war, and the numerous occurrences of holy war descriptions. YHWH himself is described as a great warrior.42 From Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic history we learn how the enemies of Israel were also the enemies of the god of Israel, and how YHWH assisted his people in times of war (cf. Josh 8:1, Josh 10:11, Josh 24:11–12, Judg 4:14–16, 1 Sam 17:45–47, 1 Sam 23:4–5, 2 Sam 5:22–25, 2 Kgs 3:17–20, 2 Kgs 15–18, 2 Kgs 7:5–7). Quite unlike what we find with the Greeks, holy war permeated ancient Israelite society. Especially following the publication of Weippert’s pioneering study in 197243 scholars have been engaged in comparing holy war in the Hebrew Bible with ancient Near Eastern war traditions. The many similarities in phraseology and ideology are striking indeed.44

King

Obviously, there is no such thing as a monolithic king ideology to be found either in the Hebrew Bible or in the ancient Near East.45 Also, when using a word like “ideology” in the present context former discussions concerning “divine kingship” easily come into one’s mind. Needless to say, this should be avoided. On the other hand, we must not let the unfor-

43 WEIPPERT, “‘Heiliger Krieg’ in Israel und Assyrien”, ZAW 84 (1972), pp. 460–93.
45 For a survey, see most recently: King and Messiah, Ed. DAY, 1998.
tunate exaggerations and over-interpretations of former times keep us from seeing highly relevant, important parallels between texts in the Hebrew Bible and texts from the ancient Near East. Such similarities are so copious and so striking that they can only be explained as a result of close cultural interdependency.

In the Hebrew Bible and in the literature of the surrounding countries the king was installed by the deity. As god's representative on earth, the king was also responsible for the prosperity and welfare of his people. From the short survey of the contents of Deuteronomy above we noticed how YHWH's punishment for breaking the covenant consisted, above all, of military attacks by enemy armies or the destruction of the agricultural economic system. Similarly, if the elected people did not violate the covenant the reward would be the keeping up of the agricultural productio and victory over the enemy. There are numerous texts in the Hebrew Bible that attest to this theology. For the present purpose, I would like to draw attention to the last part of the story of the temple building of King Solomon in 1 Kgs 8. The whole story abounds in interesting parallels to ancient Near Eastern texts. Here, however, I quote only 1 Kgs 8, vv. 33–40. The translation is that of the Revised Standard Version:

"When thy people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against thee, if they turn again to thee, and acknowledge thy name, and pray and make supplication to thee in this house; then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again to the land which thou gavest to their fathers. When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against thee, if they pray toward this place, and acknowledge thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them, then hear thou in heaven and forgive the sin of thy servants, thy people Israel, when thou dost teach them the good way in which they should walk; and grant rain upon thy land, which thou wast given to thy people as an inheritance. If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar; if their enemy besieges them in any of their cities whatever plague, whatever sickness there is; whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by any man or by all thy people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hand toward this house; then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and render to each who heart thou knowest, according to all his ways (for thou, thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men); that they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest to our fathers." 47

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46 The whole of the text of the temple building in 1 Kgs 5–9 is modelled on ancient Near Eastern prototypes, providing us with yet another fascinating illustration of "the Common Theology of the Ancient Near East". See on this the thorough study by HUROVITZ, I Have Built You an Exalted House, 1992.

47 HUROVITZ, I Have Built You an Exalted House (1992), pp. 291–300, provides interesting extra-biblical parallels to the prayer of Solomon. However, all of his examples are restricted to house building prayers. For a detailed study of Solomon's prayer and its role
As an example from Mesopotamia the letter from the scholar scribe Adad-shumu-ussur to Assurbanipal (668–c. 630 BCE) illustrates well how the king was responsible for the prosperity and welfare of his people:

“Ashur, [the king of the gods], called the name of [the king], my lord, to the kingship of Assyria, and Shamash and Adad, through their reliable extispicy, confirmed the king, my lord, to the kingship of the world. A good reign – righteous days, years of justice, copious rains, huge floods, a fine rate of exchange! The gods are appeased, there is much fear of god, the temples abound; the great gods of heaven and earth have become exalted in the time of the king, my lord. The old men dance, the young men sing, the women and girls are merry and rejoice; women are married and provided with earrings; boys and girls are brought forth, the births thrive. The king, my lord, has revived the one who was guilty and condemned to death; you have released the one who was imprisoned for many days. Those who were sick for many days have got well. The hungry has been sated, the parched have been anointed with oil, the needy have been covered with garments”.

From Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kgs 8:22–53 we learn many interesting details concerning the role of the king in securing prosperity for his people. The prayer forms a part of the larger temple building text of Solomon (1 Kgs 5–9), which has important covenant overtones. However, the probably most important feature of this text is its role in relationship to the securing of the royal dynasty! This may be seen from the words of Solomon in 1 Kgs 8:25–26 (RSV):

“Now therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father what thou hast promised him, saying: There shall never fail you a man before me to sit upon the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me. Now therefore, O God of Israel, let thy word be confirmed, which thou hast spoken to thy servant David my father”.

That it is the Davidic dynasty that is reconfirmed in our text may be seen clearly also from YHWH’s answer to Solomon in 1 Kgs 9:1–9. I quote here only verses 4–7 (RSV):

“And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel for ever, as I promised David your father, saying: There shall not fail you a man upon the throne of Israel. But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have giv-


48 The translation of ABL 2 is taken from Parpola, Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars (1993), pp. 177–78. For other examples of parallels, including some earlier ones from ancient Sumer, see Schmid, šalom ’Frieden’ im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament (1971), pp. 30–44.
en them; and the house which I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight; and Israel shall become a proverb and a byword among all peoples”.

From the short survey of the contents of the Deuteronomistic history above, it appeared how the kings of Israel (the northern kingdom) had rebelled against the Davidic dynasty, and were, consequently, all of them depicted as evil. For this reason the punishment of Israel happened already in 721 B.C. when the wicked capital Samaria was destroyed by the Assyrian army. The philosophy of history lying behind this description is typical of the ancient Near East. In Mesopotamian texts, the view that the fate of the dynasty or kingdom is determined by the behaviour of its founder is well known. However, it was not only the behaviour of the archetypal dynastic founder that affected the events (Jeroboam was a crook, Israel fell, David was pious, Judah stood). As we noticed in the overview of the Deuteronomistic history above the course of history was dependent also upon single rulers. This was the case in Mesopotamia, too. For instance, in the Middle Assyrian poems of Adad-Nirari I and Tukulti-Ninurta I, both telling the story of the battles between Assyria and Kassite Babylonia, led by the Kassite kings Nazi-Maruttash and Kashtiliash IV, we may read how the wilfulness of the Babylonian Kassite kings provoked the rage of the Mesopotamian gods who then came to the rescue of the Assyrians.

More dramatic, of course, is the case of the last Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus as Unheilsherrscher, leading to the fall of the mighty city of Babylon to Cyrus. A quotation from the Cyrus cylinder may well illustrate this point:

“Marduk, the great lord, the protector of his people, joyfully looked at his (Cyrus’) good deeds and at his righteous heart. He ordered him to march to his city Babylon. He made him to take the road to Babylon and marched at his side like a friend and companion. His large troops whose number, like the waters of a river, could not be established, paraded at his side, their weapons girded on. Without combat or battle, he caused him to enter Babylon, his city. He saved Babylon from oppression. He delivered into his hands Nabonidus, the king who did not worship him.”

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4.4 The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East

God

It is well known that there are many similarities between YHWH and the deities of the ancient Near East. Yet again, this is something that clearly points towards a strong ancient Near Eastern influence rather than a Hellenistic one on the traditions of the Hebrew Bible. For instance, the several similarities between the religious hymns and prayers of the Hebrew Bible and those of the ancient Near East have been known for a long time and can hardly escape the attentive reader browsing through the standard collections.53 One observation here would concern the rich, common terminology used for the deity in Israel and in the ancient Near East. As one example, I may single out the widely used epithet “king”.54 Another well own example would be the influence of ancient Near Eastern ideas of creation on the biblical Book of Genesis.55 More relevant to the present discussion and to what has been dealt with above are the many similarities between circumstances relating to the nation god and his land.56

Well known from the Deuteronomistic history is the notion of the deity favouring the people. Above, I referred to the characteristic curse language of the treaty. Related to this curse language are statements about divine vengeance and destruction. If the people did not follow the will of the deity they would be punished.57 This particular feature of Deuteronomy is shared with the rest of the ancient Near East.58

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54 For the Hebrew Bible, see the thorough study by Brettler, God is King, 1989. For an example from Assyria, see Livingstone, “Assur”, DDD (1995), cols. 200–201.
56 Block, The Gods of the Nations, 1988, gives a useful survey of connections between deities, territories, and nations in ancient Israel and in ancient Near Eastern societies. Unfortunately, the study is sometimes tainted with “biblio-centric” value judgements.
58 After the final punishment, and the sacking of Jerusalem, post-exilic national trends eventually developed a theology of the return to the land from the Diaspora. It is interesting to note that this particular motif, too, so well-known from the Hebrew Bible, also...
It has been claimed that ancient Israel constituted a monotheistic culture whereas the religions of the surrounding countries were polytheistic. This, I believe, was not actually the case, and represents at best an oversimplification. All the evidence available today points towards the fact that the belief systems in Israel and other Near Eastern cultures in the Iron Age were fairly similar, with several, different deities. It was only at a very late stage in Judah that YHWH was worshipped as the sole deity. This circumstance is reflected also in many texts of the Hebrew Bible. Well known is the prohibition against the worshipping of foreign deities in Exod 20:3: “You shall have no other gods besides me.” It is easily forgotten that in order to be of any relevance this prohibition must presuppose a polytheistic situation. Similarly, we noticed above the heavy weight that Deuteronomist and the Deuteronomistic history put on the prohibition against the worshiping of “foreign” gods. Here, too, we have clear indications of the polytheistic landscape of Israel in earlier days. Finally, we should not fail to mention also the prophetic literature. The prophetic literature abounds in polemical statements against “foreign” deities. One may here consult the following selection of texts: Isa 2:6, Isa 27:9, Jer 7:31, Jer 11:13, Ezek 6:6, Ezek 8:14, Hos 8:4–6, Amos 8:14, Jon 2:9, Mic 1:7, Hab 2:18–19, Zeph 1:4–5, Zech 10:2.

When we consider the vast evidence in the Hebrew Bible for the worshiping of deities other than YHWH, it becomes clear that the bulk of these texts must reflect circumstances prior to the Hellenistic era. In Hellenistic times, the belief system of Judaism simply would not require such a massive preoccupation with deities other than YHWH. On the other hand, we should not be led to believe that the kind of “practical monotheism” which we do encounter in the present, late form of the Hebrew Bible is influenced by Greek thoughts. For instance, in 8th century Assyria we have an illustrating example of the favouring of one god when we may read in an inscription: “Have confidence in Nabu, do not trust another god!” And while in Assyria, one should not fail to notice the striking similarities between YHWH and the god Ashur. In Deuteronomy it is demanded of the Israelites that they shall centralize their cultic activities to the temple in Jerusalem.


60 The present author has written a monograph on this phenomenon in the book of Amos: BARSTAD, The Religious Polemics of Amos, 1984. The study is an attempt to use the Book of Amos as a source for the history of Israelite religion in the Iron Age.


rusalem. Also the god Ashur is through and through Assyrian, and has no temples unrelated to his cult in the city of Ashur. The origin of Ashur is unknown as is the origin of YHWH. Unlike all the other major deities in Mesopotamia Ashur is, like YHWH, without family or consort. In Deuteronomy, we find a strong prohibition against the production of sculptured images (Deut 5:8 and Deut 4:15–19. Cf. also Exod 20:4). Similar to YHWH, and unlike most deities in the ancient Near East, the god Ashur also did not have an anthropomorphic representation.

4.5 A Hebrew Einheitskultur

we have just seen, the Deuteronomistic history is through and through saturated with an ideology which we may call "the common theology of the ancient Near East": A god who acts in history, a "national" god who rewards and punishes his people, etc. Consequently, the ancient Israelites did not create anything that was quite new. The "scribes" that wrote what we now find in our Hebrew Bibles formed themselves a part of a common international arena. This point is extremely important and highly relevant to recent discussions regarding the dating of the ancient Israelite traditions. It has, however, not always been sufficiently appreciated. If what we find in the Hebrew Bible in fact represents nothing but a variant of what we may find everywhere also in the neighbouring cultures we shall have to reckon with a strong possibility that also the biblical traditions may go back a long time. I am not here at all taking into consideration the question of historical reliability in a positivistic fashion. My only point is that it is quite likely that the traditions that made up the raw materials for the Deuteronomistic writer(s) may be rather ancient. They were most certainly not created overnight in Persian or Hellenistic scribal centres, but represent centuries of development.

Here, I believe that we are well advised to take Mesopotamia and Mesopotamian traditions as a model. Despite an enormous amount of tablets, written in several different languages, the actual number of literary genres and works that were handed down from generation to generation was fairly insignificant.

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63 A recent study on this topic is REUTER, Kultzentralisation, 1993.
64 At a later time, Ashur is connected with several goddesses, for instance Ishtar of Ninive. At an earlier stage also YHWH was worshipped with a female deity, Ashera. One of the first to argue convincingly for this was OLYAN, Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh, 1988. By now, the literature on this topic is vast. Cf. WYATT, "Ashera", DDD (1995), cols. 183–95.
65 See, in addition to the work by MAYER, referred to above, METTINGER, No Graven Image? (1995), pp. 42–4. METTINGER is building also on research done by MAYER.
We are, in other words, not dealing with newly invented, very different, or independent literary creations. Rather, all of the literature belongs to the same “tradition stream” or Einheitskultur, the bulk of which must have been known to most of the ancient Near Eastern civilized world.\(^6\) Since we are in the lucky position to have Mesopotamian literary documents available from several centuries it is here possible to follow the various stages in the development of a literary work from an early stage to its final, “canonical” form.\(^6\) This, of course, we are unable to do with the traditions of ancient Israel, and it remains a fact that the critical analysis of the biblical traditions has, from time to time, been somewhat speculative.

However, even if we do not possess today the same confidence in our own perspicaciousness as former generations when it comes to the possibility of reconstructing the tradition process, we should not let this lead to doubt the antiquity of these traditions nor to believe that they arose for the first time in Persian or Hellenistic times. On the other hand, we should not be naïve and think that the handing down of the traditions during several centuries could happen entirely without this process setting its marks on the tradiatum, constantly changing the tradition.

Also the different texts of the Bible represent, in my view, what we may call a tradition stream or an Einheitskultur. Recently, there has been much talk about the “intertextuality” of the Hebrew Bible. In fact, this constitutes nothing new. Even if there, apparently, are great differences between the Deuteronomists and the Chroniclers, both scribal groups deal with the same persons, topics and events. And it is not difficult to recognize biblical wisdom genres no matter whether they appear in the Book of Proverbs or in other biblical texts. Nor is it problematic to identify hymnal compositions, whether they are to be found in the Book of Psalms, in the prophetic literature, or, scattered around in the historiographical books of the Bible. It was, for instance, the discovery that there were so many similarities between the prophetic books and the Book of Psalms that led Mowinckel many years ago to the conviction that the prophets had been attached to the cult, and that they should be regarded as “cultic prophets”.\(^6\) More recer

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\(^{66}\) Compare the following statement by OPPENHEIM about Ashurbanipal’s (668 – 627 BCE) 20000 tablets strong library in Nineveh, now in the British Museum: “We are entitled to assume that the topical range of Assurbanipal’s collections is representative of the main body, if not the entire content, of the scribal tradition”. The quotation is taken from: OPPENHEIM, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (1964), p. 15. See also the remarks by WEIDNER, “Die Bibliothek Tiglatpilesers I”, AFO 16 (1952-53), pp. 197-98, and by REINER, “Another Volume of Sultantepe Tablets”, JNES 26 (1967), p. 177.

\(^{67}\) As was done with regard to the Gilgamesh Epic by TIGAY, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, 1982.

\(^{68}\) MOWINCKEL, *Psalmenstudien* 3, 1923.
ly, the interest in intertextuality has become more conscious, not least as a result of the important book by Fishbane published in 1985.

### 4.6 Scribes, Sources and Diachronic Growth

The creation of the Hebrew Bible at all stages in its history, "from the Iron Age to the Middle Ages", reflects, in some way or another, a scribal milieu. Scribal institutions were responsible for "looking after" the literary heritage of a society. Scribal institutions were important also in Iron Age Palestine, especially in Jerusalem, where they were responsible for the creation of the traditions which we today find in the Hebrew Bible. Unfortunately, we do not know much about these activities. It may be, for instance, that the royal court was responsible for historiographical and annalistic works, and the temple for religious law. This however, is pure guesswork.

One major discussion in relation to the question of literacy in ancient Israel concerns the problem of "schools". In this particular area, there has been much disagreement among biblical scholars. Frankly, I do not feel that we can actually ever give a good answer to this question. The evidence for Palestine is simply too scarce. Also, I have a feeling that scholars sometimes have the medieval scriptorium or the modern school system of Europe at the back of their minds when debating the issue. For what is a "school"? Is it not also a "school" when a single village scribe (if there ever was such a person) lets his successor into the intricacies of scribality? More important to us is the fact that scribality and literacy were "wide-

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spread”. The corpus of ancient Hebrew inscriptions from the Iron Age, the earliest possibly going back to the 10th century BCE, is fast growing.\textsuperscript{73}

Even if the Deuteronomistic history is rather to be likened with a history theology, a religious salvation history, or whatever one chooses to call it, than with history in a “positivistic” fashion, we should not be led to believe that the Deuteronomists were pure fiction writers who actually invented their material as they went along. Any such procedure would be far from both practice and mentality of the ancient Near Eastern cultures. Literary production in the ancient Near East and in ancient Israel is determined above all by its stereotyped language and different sets of conventional literary types. A superb knowledge of the conventional literature – oral and written – combined with an ability to reuse and to put together various materials from the indigenous literary traditions and contemporary purposes were the hallmarks of the good literati also in Palestine. The results of their work are now at display in the selection of texts found in the Hebrew Bible, reflecting at the same time the \textit{Einheitskultur} of ancient Israel.

Also the Deuteronomists were tradition cultivators who worked with and built upon whatever traditions were available to them. What these traditions looked like in the period(s) prior to the Deuteronomists we can hardly say. We may guess, of course (as many scholars have done before us\textsuperscript{74}), but one is quite often left with the feeling that it is very difficult to get beyond mere speculations, and gain any certainty in the matter. We do find in the texts of the Hebrew Bible, however, quite a few vestiges in the texts pointing to the process of diachronic growth. Since these are well known to the scholarly world, I shall here refer only to one example in the Books of Samuel. Many others could have been mentioned.\textsuperscript{75}

The Books of Samuel make, from a compositional point of view, a fairly variegated impression on the reader. It appears that the author must have used various sources.\textsuperscript{76} The best known example is probably the story of Saul’s accession to the throne in 1 Sam 8–12. The different sources that constitute this story in its final state make Samuel on one hand protest vehemently against the introduction of the monarchy, and on the other support it strongly. Typically Deuteronomistic is the statement in 1 Sam 8:6–7 (RSV): “It displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to rule us.

\textsuperscript{73} See RENZ, \textit{Die althebräischen Inschriften}. Teil 1, 1995.
\textsuperscript{74} For literature, see the notes on Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomists above.
\textsuperscript{76} It is important that we do not forget about this, particularly in these days when there is so much talk about the “unity of the text”. BREITTLER has reminded us of this in his recent, useful article on the sources in another text from Samuel: BREITTLER, “The Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2”, \textit{JBL} 116 (1997), pp. 601–12.
Samuel prayed to YHWH, and YHWH said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people, and everything that they say to you for they have not rejected you. It is me they have rejected to be king over them." This highly negative attitude towards kingship, so typical of the Deuteronomists, appears in strong contrast to the rest of the story of King Saul where there is no end to Samuel’s enthusiasm when it comes to making Saul a king. Obviously, we catch here a glimpse of the author’s “source selection procedure”.

4.7 The Persistence of the Tradition

common objection against the reliability of historical traditions found in the Hebrew Bible is that they were written down a very long time indeed after the events which they purportedly describe took place. There are, however, many indications that the traditions of the ancient Near East were extremely tenacious. This fact should not be confused with a false belief in “the unchangeable East”. We do know that even if the “same” traditions were used, the adaptation to new situations could sometimes change the stories completely. At the same time, we know from Mesopotamia that the basic structures of the economic administrative system did not change much at all for the better part of 3000 years! And above we noticed how the contractual relationship between a deity and his people is attested through two millennia.

Probably more relevant to the Hebrew Bible is a Sumerian example. From Mesopotamia we know that Sumerian continued to live on as a scribal language long after it had ceased to be a spoken language. As a strange matter of fact Sumerian outlived even Akkadian as a literary language, and Sumerian religious texts were used as late as in the 1st century BCE in Parthian Babylon. Even if Sumerian had long since been replaced by Aramaic, which was replaced by Greek, and

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77 Again, we should not confuse this procedure with the recovery of “reliable” historical documents. See on this the important study by ASH, “Solomon’s? District? List”, *JSOT* 67 (1995) 67–86. Here ASH both demonstrates how 1 Kgs 4:7–19 (a text that used to be regarded as being of high historical trustworthiness) is based on a pre-existing source used by the Deuteronomists, but that it is totally without any historical value in relation to the time of Solomon.

78 One needs only to compare the Chronistic and the Deuteronomistic descriptions of King David to see my point here. For further perspectives, see GRABBE, “Reconstructing History from the Book of Ezra”, in: *Second Temple Studies* 1 (1991), pp. 98–106.


even if Sumerian was badly understood throughout the whole of the first millennium BCE we notice with great interest how the scribal system not only transmitted, but even used 2000 years old cultic hymns written in Sumerian for theological purposes. What this at least tells us is that the scribal schools of Mesopotamia were able to take proper care of their own literary traditions!

I believe that this fact is not without relevance also to the transmitting of ancient Hebrew texts. I am, of course, not claiming that we have 2000 years or so of handing down of ancient Hebrew traditions before the fall of Judah in 586 BCE, but I believe that the mere fact that such activity went on in other, related cultures, makes it plausible that also some of the traditions which we may find, for instance, in the Deuteronomistic history, go back a long time. This would apply quite independently of what happened later to these traditions in their different “final” compositions, be it from Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, or Medieval times.

4.8 Final Remarks

As we know, there are major problems involved in attempting to date biblical texts. For my own part, I have always felt the dating of these texts to be a very rickety business indeed, and I have strong doubts about its feasibility. For instance, in most cases, I do not believe that it is possible to say of a text whether it belongs to the “Persian” or to the “Hellenistic” era.

Also, dating discussions are sometimes not very thorough, or they may be based on superficial or arbitrary evidence. It is also unclear, in many cases, whether a scholarly dating to a certain period applies to all of a text or only to a part or parts of it. Also, it is not always stated whether the dating concerns the time of the final composition, or whether it is felt that some of, or most of, the materials which we may find in the texts may go back to earlier sources.

From what I have attempted to show above, it follows that I find it quite likely that biblical texts were produced over fairly long periods of time, often by reusing older materials. From Qumran we know that there were many different “proto-Masoretic” text traditions in circulation. Quite possibly, Nevi’im was fixed as late as during the 1st centuries before and after Christ, and Kethuvim around the end of the 1st century after Christ. The standardization of the Masoretic text is, as we know, an even later phenomenon.81 If the information which we may find in (say) a Hellenistic

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text does go back to a period prior to the final composition, the dating of the final composition may be less interesting to the historian of Iron Age Palestine who wants to use these texts as sources. Whether the information found in the texts do yield reliable information on the history of Iron Age Palestine or not has to be decided in each and every case.

Any claim that the Deuteronomistic history (or the Chronicler, for that matter) is influenced by Greek historiography must be regarded as highly problematic. As we have seen above, the flavour and mentality of the vast majority of our texts are ancient Near Eastern, not Greek.

In addition to this decisive factor, yet another argument against any form of Greek influence needs to be referred to. The very views on history and historiography in ancient Greece and in the ancient Semitic words are dialically different. I am here not only thinking of the totally different historiographical concerns of the Greeks and the Semites. Also with regard to such concepts as “past”, “future”, and “time”, as well as when it comes to making distinctions between notions like “truth” and “fiction” the ancient Semitic and ancient Greek worlds were far, far apart.  


Chapter 5
Is the Hebrew Bible A Hellenistic Book?

5.1 Background

It is no big secret that there has been an, occasionally heated, debate in recent years concerning the dating and reliability of the historiographical traditions of the Hebrew Bible. One particular feature of the discussion has been the claim that everything, or most of, what we find in the Hebrew Bible not only was finally edited in the Hellenistic era, but that it also originated during that period. Since I have criticized this view in some detail on another occasion, I shall not discuss it thoroughly in the present context. Rather, it is my intention here to scrutinize in some detail an article by the Danish scholar Niels Peter Lemche, “The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?”, published in 1993, that has come to play a certain role in the discussion.

In his article, Lemche points to four different circumstances that, according to him, support a Hellenistic date of the Hebrew Bible. Since the statements presented in Lemche’s article possibly may carry some weight with future discussions, I feel that it is highly important to take a closer

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1 The establishing of the European Seminar in Historical Methodology (that met for the first time in Dublin in 1996) reflects recent developments within the field. The initiative for the creation of this new important forum came from Lester Grabbe. So far, six volumes of proceedings, all edited by professor Grabbe, have been published: Can a “History of Israel” Be Written? 1997; Leading Captivity Captive, 1998; Did Moses Speak Attic? 2001; “Like a Bird in A Cage”, 2003; Good Kings and Bad Kings, 200 Ahab Agonistes, 2007.

2 See the chapter “The Dating of the Israelite Tradition”, above.

3 Lemche, “The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?” SJOT 7 (1993) 163–193. It could be argued, of course, that the article by Lemche is already outdated by now, and that he has expressed himself on the same topic also in other connections, and that it, for these and similar reasons, is unfair to Lemche not to take into consideration also other of his works that deal with the same questions. However, having read Lemche’s scattered, subsequent remarks on the topic, I cannot at all see that these more recent observations in this area make it unnecessary to deal specifically with his 1993 article. Also, the study in question has already become somewhat of a classic, and the possible impact of the article on biblical research alone justifies a closer examination. That Lemche himself believes that the article is not out of date, may be deduced from the fact that he actually agreed to reprint it in 2001 in the third volume of proceedings referred to in the footnote above.
look at the very arguments supporting them in order to see what they are all about, and whether they are really worth while. Quite often, one experiences in our discipline that scholarly views may have great influence even if one has not really bothered to question their cogency.

In his article, Lemche proposes four different reasons, or “arguments”, for a Hellenistic dating of the Hebrew Bible. Below, I shall deal in some detail with each and every one of them.

5.2 Lemche’s First Argument

Lemche presents his first argument in the following way:

It is a fact that the history of Israel as told by the Old Testament has little if anything to do with the real historical developments in Palestine until at least the later part of the Hebrew monarchy. It cannot be excluded (and there is, as a matter of fact, no reason to exclude it) that we here and there may possess genuine historical recollections, but it should at the same time be argued that from a historian’s point of view we have to consider the historical literature in the Old Testament a poor source of historical information”.

I have quoted Lemche’s first argument in full because he himself claims that this is one of the points that “may speak in favour of a hellenistic [!] date of the Old Testament”. However, it it hard to see, when reading this passage from Lemche, that it contains anything which supports specifically a Hellenistic dating of the texts of the Hebrew Bible! Rather than a concern for the question of Hellenistic origin, this argument actually addresses the greater question of the reliability of the biblical traditions for historical reconstructions in general. As such, Lemche’s claim would be equally valid also for other historical periods, for instance for the Persian or for the Roman ones.

We do note with interest, though, that whereas the conclusion is negative (the historical literature in the Old Testament must be considered by the historian “a poor source of historical information”), Lemche himself here appears to believe that we have reliable historical sources in the Hebrew Bible relating to “the later part of the Hebrew monarchy, and that we also elsewhere “may possess genuine historical recollections”.

Nevertheless, I shall refrain from making further comments on these particular points, and I am content to conclude that of Lemche’s four points in support of a Hellenistic date for the Hebrew Bible, there are now only three left.

5 LEMCHE, same place.
5.3 Lemche’s Second Argument

I shall now quote Lemche’s second argument in support of a Hellenistic dating of the Hebrew Bible:

“An extensive part of this literature should be considered the creation of the Jewish diaspora, first and foremost the patriarchal [!] narratives, the story in Exodus about the Israelites in Egypt and their escape from Egypt, but also the conquest narratives [!] in Joshua. All of these aim at one // and the same issue, at the more or less utopian idea that a major Jewish kingdom – even empire – should be (re)established in Palestine, an idea that emerged in spite of the fact that it had no background in an ancient Israelite empire.”

Again, however, there is hardly anything in the statement that supports a specifically Hellenistic dating of the Hebrew traditions – despite Lemche assertion that this is the case. We do note, yet again with interest, that Lemche here appears to refer only to those parts of the Hebrew Bible that belong to the Priestly writer, and not to the historiographically “more relevant” Deuteronomists (with the exception of Joshua). I am not going to discuss here whether or not it is justified to claim that an extensive part of this literature originated in the Diaspora. For my own part, I believe that most of the Hebrew Bible was created on Palestinian ground. This, however, is irrelevant to the present discussion. Since there were people from Israel and Judah living in Egypt and Mesopotamia in Persian and Hellenistic times, it is impossible to see how Lemche’s statement here can support a particular Hellenistic dating over a Persian one. We may safely conclude, then, that out of Lemche’s four arguments there are now only two left.

5.4 Lemche’s Third Argument

The next point in Lemche’s 1993 article, however, appears to be much more relevant. We may read on p. 183: “The writers who invented the ‘history of Israel’ seem to have modelled their history on a Greek pattern.”

It is a little disappointing to notice, though, that this somewhat sensational claim is not in any way followed up by any discussion, nor supported by further arguments. The sole “argument” is the following statement:

“Both histories [that of Herodotus and that of the Old Testament] have as their beginning a perspective that encompasses the world as such, and this perspective only at a later point narrows down to include but a single nation, respectively the Greek and the Hebrew.”

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6 LEMCHE, same place, pp. 182–183.
7 LEMCHE, same place, p. 182.
This, I believe, is not much considering the fairly strong implications of Lemche’s “The writers who invented the ‘history of Israel’ seem to have modelled their history on a Greek pattern.” Also, the overall understanding of Lemche of the work of Herodotus is here hardly adequate. *Histories* is not about the Greek nation, nor does it really start with “a perspective that encompasses the world as such”. The topic of Herodotus is the relationship between the Greeks and the Persians, with an accent on the Great Persian War, and his “larger perspectives” are several, fairly heterogeneous extensive digressions, “logoi”, like, for instance, the one on the Egyptians in Book II.

Lemche refers to the works of John Van Seters in support of his view. There are, however, some inaccuracies appearing in relation to Lemche’s view of Van Seters, and I feel that it is necessary to make a few comments on them. I shall start by quoting more comprehensively from the context of Lemche’s statement:

“The writers who invented the ‘history of Israel’ seem to have modelled their history on a Greek pattern. The first in modern times to stress this point is presumably John Van Seters, although his reference to Hecataeus of Miletus may seem gratuitous, as we no longer possess [!] Hecataeus’ history, except in the form of rather diminutive fragments. It would be preferable to propose the history of Herodotus as the earliest point of comparison and to indicate that there are a number of similarities between the histories of Herodotus and the Old Testament.”

There are several problems with the passage that I have just cited from Lemche’s paper, also beyond the fact that Lemche’s general claim about

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8 An example of a text that does have as its beginning “a perspective that encompasses the world as such”, and where the story later narrows down to include a single city state alone, is, for instance, Enuma Elish. Starting with the creation of the world, and ending with the building of the temple (Eshgalla) of Marduk (or Ashur in the Assyrian version) in Babylon, this text makes a striking parallel to the biblical story that runs from the creation in Genesis to the temple building of king Solomon. Again, it becomes apparent how closely the literature of the Hebrew Bible resembles Mesopotamian literature. For further parallels between biblical and Mesopotamian texts, see the chapter “The Dating of the Hebrew Bible”, above.

9 This, of course, does not prevent different scholars from laying stress on a variety of perspectives. Châtelet, for instance, quoting Legrand, sees the Persian wars as the most important topic: “Histoire des Guerres médiqües précédée d’une histoire de leurs antécédents, de leur préparation et de leurs lointaines origines: tel est, selon Ph. E. Legrand, le titre qui répond le mieux à l’intention profonde d’Hérodote lorsqu’il composa son iéropâ.” See: Châtelet, La naissance de l’histoire 1 (1962), p. 110. Lateiner, on the other hand, claims that “Herodotus, impressed by the astounding fact of Hellenic victory in 490 and 480–479, wished to create a permanent record that would reveal and display the past histories of the peoples concerned”. See: Lateiner, The Historical Method of Herodotus (1991), p. 7.

similarities between Herodotus and the Hebrew Bible appears to be taken out of the air. As we have seen above, he himself has hardly identified even one single parallel between the two works in question.  

Equally problematic is Lemche’s statement that “The writers who invented the ‘history of Israel’ seem to have modelled their history on a Greek pattern”. From this (and from other statements in his article) it appears that Lemche actually thinks of a genetic relationship between Herodotus and the Deuteronomistic history (I take it that “the writers who invented the history of Israel” must be the Deuteronomists). If we here have a claim that the Deuteronomists actually used Herodotus as their source, or that they were historiographically influenced by Herodotus, it is wrong to point to the works of Van Seters. The first scholar to stress such a relationship at any time is probably Lemche himself. If he had taken the trouble to read Van Seters more carefully he would have noticed that the kind of comparison that Van Seters suggests is not of the historical/genetic kind. The following excerpt from In Search of History should give us an indication:

“If the relevance of a comparative study of early Greek and Hebrew historiography may be accepted on the basis of this preliminary sketch, we may then consider a number of specific topics that would seem helpful for solving problems in Old Testament studies. I do not intend to give a comprehensive treatment of all the current issues in Herodotean studies or a detailed analysis of the Histories. What I hope to demonstrate is the possibility of using this method of comparative analysis as a control on the study of Old Testament prose narrative. Here the comparative data will not be anthropological or sociological materials, helpful as these may be for form critical analysis, but literary ones, using a body of literature closely related in time and space to that of the Hebrews but largely ignored.”

The interest of Van Seters in relation to Greek historiography is primarily to do with his criticism of the approach of much traditional and current biblical scholarship, and the widely held view that there lies a long process

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11 VAN SETERS, on the other hand, points to several similarities between the two works (see below). Old Testament scholars have, of course, made sporadic references to Herodotus for many years. See, for instance, VON RAD, “Der Anfang der Geschichtsschreibung im alten Israel”, Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 32 (1944), pp. 6-7; CHILDS, “A Study of the Formula, ‘Until this Day’”, JBL 82 (1963), pp. 290-291. Others have recently compared Herodotus to the Hebrew Bible in a more comprehensive way: NIELSEN, The Tragedy in History, 1997; WESSELIUS, “Discontinuity, Congruence and the Making of the Hebrew Bible”, SJOT 13 (1999), pp. 38-48 and passim.

12 VAN SETERS, In Search of History (1983), p. 18. The only time VAN SETERS suggests the possibility of direct influence from Greek authors is related to the Chronicler’s reference to what VAN SETERS deems as fictitious sources: “In this he [the Chronicler] seems so close to the Greek historiographical tradition as to suggest that he was directly influenced by it”. VAN SETERS, same place, p. 48.
behind the creation of its historiographical traditions. The following quotation illustrates this concern further:

"Scholars have long noted that so much of the Bible’s prose narrative is made up of larger or smaller units strung together in a loosely connected chain with little subordination of major and minor items. However, the point at issue is the significance of this style and the nature of the connectives between the units – how the smaller *logoi* are combined to form larger ones and how these in turn form the literary works. Many scholars insist that these combinations could have resulted only from a multistage tradition-historical process, but the parallel phenomena in Herodotus are strong evidence to the contrary. The Greek examples show that any early Greek prose writer using the conventions of his day would have composed his work in a paratactic fashion with varying degrees of unity. Why should early Hebrew prose have been different?"13

Van Seters’ reason for choosing Greek historiography as a basis for his comparisons results also from the fact that he believes that the kind of multi-genre literature that we find in Herodotus and in the Hebrew Bible is unparalleled in earlier times:

"Furthermore, in terms of the scope of subject matter and the themes treated, nothing in the literature of the Near East before the fourth century so closely resembles the biblical histories as the Greek prose histories. Both deal with recent events, such as the Persian Wars or the Exile, and their causes through successive periods of the past. Both reconstruct the distant past through the technique of genealogy development with anecdotal or folkloristic digressions. The combination of “official” sources, such as chronicles, with oral tradition, and of poetic fragments with prose narration in a multigenre product, is not evident in any other body of preserved literature from the Near East in this period."14

In sum, Lemche is not justified in his use of Van Seters when claiming that “the writers who invented the history of Israel seem to have modelled their history on a Greek pattern”. I do not know whether this treatment by Lemche is a result of arrogance or of ignorance, but it cannot conceal the fact that Van Seters has written an excellent book where large parts are taken up by relevant discussions of Greek historiography, and of Herodotus in particular.15

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13 VAN SETERS, *In Search of History* (1983), p. 37. This last question, of course, is a sound one, well worth contemplating.

14 VAN SETERS, same place, p. 51. Here, however, VAN SETERS is wrong. There are Mesopotamian texts with similar traits. In fact, VAN SETERS himself refers to such texts, same place, pp. 64–68. On Mesopotamian historiography, see most recently the survey by VAN DE MIEROOPI, *Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History*, 1999. For further discussions on Mesopotamian historiography in the present volume, see also under “Index of Topics”.

15 VAN SETERS discusses Herodotus in various places in *In Search of History* (1983), above all on pp. 31–54. He has also made references to Herodotus in other of his works. However, since the use of Herodotus in subsequent publications by VAN SETERS does not go beyond, or is less relevant to, the present discussion there is no need to take it into consideration here. For instance, in his book *Prologue to History* (1992), pp. 78–103,
Quite another matter, of course, is the rather patronizing way in which Lemche refers to the works of Van Seters. He tells us that Van Seters’ reference to Hecataeus “may seem gratuitous”, as we only have fragments of his work, and that it, in Lemche’s view, would be preferable to use the history of Herodotus as a basis for a comparison with history in the Hebrew Bible.\(^{16}\)

It is shamelessly presumptuous when Lemche claims that Herodotus, not Hecateus, whose work is too fragmentary, must form the basis for a comparative study of Greek and Hebrew historiography as if this originally was his suggestion.\(^{17}\) It was, in fact, Van Seters who first proposed this in 1983 in his book *In Search of History*. I would like to quote from Van Seters’ work again:

“My purpose has been to indicate in a general way the literary and intellectual milieu ... which Herodotus did his own work. Some of the authors mentioned would seem to deserve a closer examination were it not for the fact that their preserved works are so fragmentary. Further attention must therefore be focused primarily upon Herodotus himself [italics mine] as both the product of this literary development and as a skilful author in his own right.”\(^{18}\)

One further point needs to be taken up here. The closest Van Seters gets to raising questions about “historical influence” is on p. 53 of *In Search of History*, where he writes: “The comparison of Greek and Hebrew historiography raises the question whether it is possible to account for the similarities we have suggested.” Van Seters himself believes that this Near Eastern influence came into Greek culture in the 8th century BCE when the Phoenician alphabet and other cultural features were introduced into the Greek cultures. This, in my opinion, is very likely. However, since this view, which is commonly acknowledged among many scholars, is unacceptable to Lemche’s Hellenistic inclinations, he here attacks Van Seters:

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\(^{17}\) LEMCHE, same place.

\(^{18}\) VAN SETERS, *In Search of History* (1983), p. 15. VAN SETERS’ use of Hecataeus is found in two different contexts: First in his short, but succinct discussion of the Ionian historiographers, and, secondly, when Hecataeus is discussed as one of Herodotus’ sources.
“In favour of this, Van Seters discusses the possibility that the Phoenicians were the carriers of the Greek tradition to the Orient. This sounds like an unnecessary complication and is totally unattested. In spite of Van Seters’ splendid defence of his exilic date, a more relevant moment can and should be proposed for the confluence of Greek and Oriental tradition, that is the time of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires when the Greeks ruled the East. In this age, the Jews of Mesopotamia would have had easy access to the Greek as well as the Babylonian traditions.”

In my view, Lemche’s claim that the Phoenicians did not play a significant role in the exchange of cultural traditions between the East and the West in the Iron Age, and that such an acculturation only took place during the Hellenistic period, is rather remarkable. Hardly anyone today would deny “Phoenician” influence on Greek culture.

It is generally acknowledged that the Greeks and the Phoenicians expanded, traded and founded “colonies” simultaneously all over the Mediterranean world. The extant Greek sources indicate that the Phoenicians established settlements and dedicated temples in places like Athens, Crete, Kythera, Melos, Messenia, Rhodes, and Thera in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, and, possibly, even earlier. Archaeology, in fact, seems to attest Phoenician influence on material culture already from the 9th century.

The definite Phoenician influence, of course, was the take-over of the Semitic alphabet by the Greeks.

19 “… the Greek tradition to the Orient”, incidentally, is not what Van Seters is saying since he is referring to Near Eastern influence on the Greek culture, not the other way around! Again, this somewhat inaccurate reading of his secondary sources can only be taken as a token of Lemche’s over-eagerness to Graecize the Hebrew Bible.


23 Gehrig, same place, p. 27.

24 Hardly anyone today would disagree over the fact that the Greeks inherited the alphabet from “the Phoenicians”. Incidentally, this claim is found also in Herodotus (V, 58). The setting of a date for the takeover, however, has varied a lot. An unlikely early dating to around the middle of the second millennium BCE was suggested by Bernal, Cadmean Letters (1990), p. 123. Naveh, too, sets a rather early date around 1100 BCE. See his Early History of the Alphabet (1982) p. 177. The majority of scholars still agree that the Semitic alphabet was transmitted westward around 800 BCE. See McCarter, The Antiquity of the Greek Alphabet (1975), p. 126; Powell, Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet, (1991), p. 20. A useful collection of studies dealing with various as-
In a wider context, the question of "Phoenician influence" belongs to the relationship between ancient Near Eastern and Greek literatures as a whole. This is a vast field, and cannot be dealt with here. It should be mentioned, though, that it has become more and more accepted among scholars that Near Eastern influences on the Aegean region go back a long time.25 True, there has been a lot of speculation in this area.26 This, however, should not prevent us from addressing this very important question in a scholarly manner in the future. Since much evidence today points towards a strong oriental influence on Greek culture we are not dealing here with what Lemche refers to as "an unnecessary complication". Lemche may agree or disagree, but he cannot simply ignore the massive scholarship in this area.

Obviously, this is not the place to discuss the very intricate problem Herodotus' sources.27 Still, the "Phoenician question" is interesting, of course, also in connection with Herodotus' Histories. In my view, the work by Herodotus indirectly supports the view that Semitic traditions were well known in the Aegean region. It is not surprising that the Phoenicians figure prominently in the war history of Herodotus. This is mainly a result of aspects of the transmission of the Phoenician alphabet is found in: Phoinikeia Grammata, eds. BAURAIN, BONNET, and KRINGS, 1991. It goes without saying that the takeover of such a fundamental cultural vehicle as the alphabet is a strong indication that also other parts of the cultural heritage of the Semitic world must have been known to the Greeks!

25 Again, we are dealing with a huge field of research (albeit apparently unknown to LEMCHE). A recent book by BAURAIN, dealing with the period 11th to 5th centuries BCE, has a bibliography of 72 pages! See BAURAIN, Les Grecs et la Méditerranée orientale (1997), pp. XV–LXXIV. Other works that may be consulted in this connection are: HELCK, Die Beziehungen Ägyptens und Vorderasiens zur Ägäis, 1979; BURKERT, The Orientalizing Revolution, 1995; DUCHEMIN, Mythes Grecs et sources orientales, 1995; PENGGLASE, Greek Myths and Mesopotamia, 1997; BUCHHOLZ, Ugarit, Zypern und Ägäis, 1999. Cf. also the remarks by MARINCOLA, Authority and Tradition (1999), p. 272.

26 I do not consider as speculative, though, the claim that Greek cosmogony has been strongly influenced by Phoenician ideas. EISSFELDT has pointed convincingly to striking parallels between the cosmogony in the Phoenician fragments in Philo of Byblos and the cosmogonies of Anaximander and Democritus. These similarities are so conspicuous that they have to be the result of a genetic historic relationship between the texts in question. See: EISSFELDT, "Phönikische und griechische Kosmogonie", in: Eléments orientaux dans la religion grecque ancienne (1960) 1–15. Apparently, there are also many good points in WALCOT, Hesiod and the Near East, 1966, demonstrating influence from, in particular, Hittite and Babylonian, but also Ugaritic and Egyptian materials on Hesiod's theogony.

27 Since discussions of sources must build on whatever information one may find in Herodotus's Histories, a work that may even be unfinished or incomplete, they are bound to be arbitrary. Still, as long as we are aware of the very speculative nature of our enterprise, such speculations may provide us with insights that can lead to a better understanding of Histories.
their powerful navy. The naval strength, however, merely reflects the importance of the merchant fleet. Phoenician ships had been a well known sight in every harbour of the Mediterranean for centuries. In all of the three locations where Herodotus is most likely to have lived or sojourned – Halicarnassos, Samos, and Athens – there were important harbours. In all of these places, Herodotus is bound to have come across Phoenician merchants, sea men, or mercenaries. He may also have made the acquaintance of Phoenicians who lived as foreign residents in these or in other cities, and who would have acted as his informants.

Herodotus himself claims to have visited Tyre (II, 44). He maintains, in II, 54, to have received information from the priests at Thebes in a similar inner (also the “dragoman”, ἑμπρετός, in II, 125, who supposedly transed a Pyramid inscription for Herodotus, may have been a priest). In I, 182 Herodotus refers also to the priests of Babylon.

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28 The Persians did not have a fleet of their own, but were highly dependent on Phoenician naval power to keep their empire together. See Elayi, Recherches sur les cités phéniciennes (1987), p. 89. We may understand better the importance and strength of the Phoenician navy when we read in Herodotus how of the altogether 1207 triremes as many as 300 were provided by “the Phoenicians and the Syrians of Palestine” (VII, 89). We also learn from Histories that the ships from Sidon were considered to be the best (VII, 96, 99), even preferred by the Great King himself (VII, 100). On the prospering economy of the Phoenicians during the Persian period, see: Elayi, Economie des cités phéniciennes, 1990. That the strong Phoenician economy also had a military side has been shown by Elayi, “Les symboles de la puissance militaire”, RN 26 (1984) 40–7.

29 If Wallinga is correct, and he may very well be so, the Karians of Halicarnassos also played an important role in the Persian naval organization. See Wallinga, “The Ancient Persian Navy”, Achaemenid History 1 (1987), pp. 74–75. Since, in antiquity, the ship’s company did function as the “news agency” par excellence, we may here possibly have yet another source for “Eastern influence” on Herodotus’ home city. For a critique of Wallinga’s thesis, see the review by Elayi of his book, Ships and Sea-Power, iden, 1993, in: Trans 8 (1994) 177–180.

30 Of relevance to the student of the Hebrew Bible is the seemingly never ending discussion whether Herodotus went to Babylon or not. More interesting, of course, is Herodotus’ Babylonian logoi themselves, and the question of the reliability of his description of Babylon. Highly critical (of both questions) is Rollinger, Herodots babylonischer Logos, 1993. In my view, Rollinger goes too far in denying historical trustworthiness in Herodotus. I cannot go into further details here, but am content to quote the wise words of one of Rollinger’s reviewers, (who, in her review, also gives several examples of how Herodotus’ Histories do contain much correct information): “The odds are getting better all the time in favour of H.’s veracity and reliability. He was, of course, demonstrably wrong on some points. But this reviewer was not persuaded by Rollinger] that H. never went to Babylon, as H. implies. There is no good reason to doubt that he went there ...” See: Dalley, “Herodotus and Babylon”, OLZ 91 (1996), col. 532. The most important thing here, however, must be that each and every piece of information found in our sources has to be scrutinized individually. Only through such a process will
Regardless of whether such visits actually did take place or not Herodotus’ knowledge of Semitic, Egyptian, Persian, and other historical matters is unlikely to have originated basically from trips like the ones described above. The way he presents his information points rather in the direction of more secondary and popular views than towards knowledge based on learned scholarly treatises. In my view, this is not only the case with the Persian *logoi*, but with much of the material that we may find in Herodotus about foreign nations. It has been suggested that much of the information about Persian matters may have come from Herodotus’ personal contact with Zopyrus, the Persian aristocrat that fled to Athens (III, 160). In my view, much of the Babylonian material may also originate from the same source. Similarly, much of his information about Egypt may be the result of, for instance, contacts with surviving relatives of the legend: Phanes from Halicarnassos (III, 4).

5.5 Lemche’s Fourth Argument

On page 184 of Lemche’s 1993 article we are presented with this author’s fourth point in support of a Hellenistic origin of the Hebrew Bible:

“The Persian period does not seem to meet the requirements of being the time when the historical books of the Old Testament were written down. First of all it would have to be proved that Greek authors were known and extensively read in the Persian empire, and I very much doubt that this was the case.”

Even if I myself would hesitate to call this somewhat peculiar statement an argument, Lemche himself appears to believe that it supports his view that the Hebrew Bible was created in the Hellenistic period. The clue to the understanding of his statement, of course, lies rather in its second part: “First of all it would have to be proved that Greek authors were known and extensively read in the Persian Empire, and I very much doubt that this was the case.” As we see, Lemche’s fourth argument is not really an argument at all, but presupposes that the Hebrew Bible was written in Hellenistic times. Only if we accept Lemche’s argument three (“The writers who invented the ‘history of Israel’ seem to have modelled their history on a

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31 One scholar has compared the kind of cultural superficiality that we may come across in Herodotus to tourism: REDFIELD, “Herodotus the Tourist”, *CQ* 80 (1985) 97-118.
Greek pattern”) does “argument” four make any sense. However, as we noticed above, there is very little cause indeed to accept Lemche’s third argument since it has the form of a short statement and is not really supported by any evidence at all!

Nevertheless, I feel that it is necessary to comment a little further also on Lemche’s fourth point. There are, I am afraid, some unacceptable idiosyncrasies appearing also in connection with this last case.

“First of all it would have to be proved that Greek authors were known and extensively read in the Persian Empire, and I very much doubt that this was the case.” What is really meant by this statement? Following the Persian conquest of the East Greeks around 545 B. C. the Greek author Herodotus (who, according to some sources, possibly was born in 484 BCE) was fact himself a citizen of the Persian Empire. After the inclusion of the Greek islands of Asia Minor into the Persian Empire, there took place also a wide-reaching process of acculturation, known to most scholars (but apparently unknown to Lemche?). One effect of this was the spread of Greek culture in the Persian Empire. As one scholar put it: “Greeks living throughout the Achaemenid Empire, therefore, significantly altered the cultural patterns of the Persians and their subordinate ethnic groups.”

Lemche further claims that the biblical books could not have been written down in Palestine in the Persian period because:

34 BALCER, “The Greeks and the Persians”, Historia 32 (1983), p. 262. Cf. also the standard article by STARR, a very thorough study that shows influences both ways: “Greeks and Persians in the Fourth Century B.C. Part 1”, IrAnt 11 (1975) 39–99, and “Part 2”, IrAnt 12 (1977) 49–115. A main conclusion of STARR is that there must have been a significant number of Greeks in Persia proper. Do note, however, a major point in STARR, “Part 2”, p. 103 (nuancing the work by BALCER referred to above): “We always must come back to the major fact that Achaemenid and Hellenic cultures were firmly set in the fifth and fourth centuries and were not, in themselves, likely to respond seriously outside impetus”. One interesting approach is that by GEORGES, Barbarian Asia and the Greek Experience, 1994, dealing with the question of “Greek identity” and “the other” in Greek thought. GEORGES treats in some detail the formation of these ideas and attitudes against the background of those foreign peoples of the Near East with whom the Greeks came into the closest historical and cultural relationship, and against whom they defined themselves. Many other works could have been mentioned in this connection. It suffices, however, to refer to the recent synthesis by MILLER on the topic: Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC, 1999. The book has a 39 pages bibliography, referring to most of the relevant literature up till 1998. For contacts between Greeks and Phoenicians in the Persian Period, see ELAYI, Pénétration grecque en Phénicie, 1988. This important study demonstrates, among other things, how Hellenization in the ancient Near East did not start with Alexander and his successors, but was widespread also in the Persian period. Cf. also ELAYI, “La présence grecque dans les cités phéniciennes”, REG 105 (1992) 305–327.
"... we know practically nothing about the situation in Palestine except from the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and although these books have generally been highly regarded as first hand sources of information, some critical voices have arisen lately, arguing 1) that the mission of Ezra never took place and 2) that the authenticity of the so-called "autobiography" of Nehemiah may also be doubted — with reference to the fact that autobiographies constituted an acknowledged and wide-spread literary genre in the Greek world.

Palestine in the Persian period hardly seems to have embraced the kind of society in which to look for the authors of literature like the one found in the historical parts of the Old Testament. From a material point of view the Persian conquest seems to have brought little positive to Palestinian society in general ...."

In the passage that I have just quoted from Lemche's paper we find not a few puzzling statements. First of all, of course, it is not an argument against the possibility that the Hebrew Bible was written down in the Persian period that we know little about the period! The unreasonable logic ... this claim would be that all ancient societies of which we have poor knowledge (something that, incidentally, would be the case for most regions and periods of the ancient world) must have been without literature or culture! Equally less convincing as a scholarly argument, and hardly worthy of comment, is the claim that Palestine in the Persian period was unfit for literary production, or rather, "for the authors of literature like the one found in the historical parts of the Old Testament."

The latter part of Lemche's assertion, though, may call for a remark. For what is meant by: "From a material point of view the Persian conquest seems to have brought little positive to Palestinian society in general"? If Lemche by this means something similar to his claim that Palestine in the course of the more than 200 years of Persian rule (from ca. 559 to ca. 331 B. C.) was unable to produce any literature, there is hardly anything to be added. If he by this comment, however, refers to the lack of a specific Persian material culture, he should know that this is not something peculiar to Persian Palestine, but that the same phenomenon is found also elsewhere in the Persian Empire.36


36 One may, for instance, compare the quotation concerning Mesopotamia by Oppenheim: "The encounter between the Achaemenid empire and Babylonia seems to have left a surprisingly insignificant impact on the latter". See: Oppenheim, "The Babylonian Evidence of Achaemenian Rule", in: The Cambridge History of Iran. Vol. 2 (1985), p. 585. And, similarly, Haerinck writes: "Un niveau perse existe sur la majorité des sites fouillés, mais semble finalement difficile à reconnaître. En effet, l'arrivée des Perses et leur domination n'a pas entraîné une destruction, de sorte que sur aucun site il n'y a un niveau qui pourrait bien démontrer une invasion ou destruction volontaire de la part des Perses. Ainsi, il est presque tout à fait impossible de distinguer le matériel neo-babylonien du matériel acheménide". See: Haerinck, "La Mésopotamie sous les Achéménides", in: Proceedings of the First European Conference of Iranian Studies (1990), p. 159. For Phoenicia, one may compare the statement of Elayi: "La domination perse a
Also, it simply is not correct that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah “have generally been highly regarded as first hand sources of information” the way Lemche claims. On the contrary, it is commonly held that these texts are important sources, but that they can only be used with utmost care. In fact, many scholars regard the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as the most complex of all the texts of the Hebrew Bible with regard to historical reconstructions, and not a few believe that the books are more literary than historical.37

Consequently, Lemche’s claim that it is necessary to make a course direction in Ezra-Nehemiah research, and his reference to the fact that “some critical voices have arisen lately” appear to arrive very much post festum. in fact, these “recent” views are quite “old”.38 It was in particular the merit Sigmund Mowinckel, in an article published in 1923,39 that many scholars do not anymore regard the “I-narrative” in the Book of Nehemiah as a historical “autobiographic memorial”. Mowinckel studied style, genre, and bias in the Nehemiah text and found striking similarities to Assyrian and Babylonian royal inscriptions. He was able to conclude that style and composition were hymnic-monumental, and that the text constituted a com-

37 Already by consulting a few representative “introductions” to the Hebrew Bible one soon finds that evaluations of the historical reliability of the traditions found in Ezra/Nehemiah vary a lot. See, for instance: EISSFELDT, Einleitung in das Alte Testament (1956), pp. 634–690; WEISER, Einleitung in das Alte Testament (1966), pp. 285–88; FÖHRER, Einleitung in das Alte Testament (1969), pp. 261–267; KAISER, Einleitung in das Alte Testament (1969), pp. 144–150; SOGGIN, Introduction to the Old Testament (1976), pp. 420–422. Quite contrary to what some might perhaps have expected. I find, the whole, that biblical scholars are far more critical of their sources when these are ed for historical reconstructions than many of their colleagues in other branches of ancient Near Eastern studies, or in the classics. This, I believe, cannot only be a result of the fact that much biblical scholarship has long-standing traditions within a university context, I also have a feeling that many scholars working with biblical texts are afraid that if they are not “critical” enough they may be accused of being “theological”, or “un-scientific”. Quite another matter of course is the overwhelmingly positivistic view on “historical sources” represented by the large majority of the scholars that I have referred to in the present footnote.

38 LEMCHE here appears to contradict himself since he also writes: “It is, as a matter of fact, an age-old position which hereby make [...] its re-entrance on the scene”, referring to two works by TORREY. See LEMCHE, “The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?”, SJOT 7 (1993), n. 40.

memorative writing that glorifies the great governor with regard to the hereafter. What mattered was solely Nehemiah’s posthumous reputation.

The study soon became a classic. Despite its shortcomings, and the fact that it was written by a non-Assyriologist, Mowinckel’s pioneering work is still regarded, also by Assyriologists, as an important contribution. Since then, many scholars have discussed the phenomenon, both inside and outside of the Hebrew Bible, and we know now that the Akkadian “autobiography”, for instance, constitutes a widespread and well-known literary genre.

Summing up, Lemche’s remarks that “some critical voices have arisen lately, arguing ... that the authenticity of the so-called ‘autobiography’ of Nehemiah may also be doubted” emerge in the light of the above as fair inaccurate. Lemche further claims that: “autobiographies constituted acknowledged and wide-spread literary genre in the Greek world”. Here, the obsession with a Hellenistic background apparently has got the better of the author. Since autobiography was a well known literary genre in Israel’s neighbouring cultures in antiquity, and since so much of the contents of the Hebrew Bible depended upon the literatures of the ancient Near East, no one should be surprised to find also autobiography in the Hebrew Bible. There is absolutely no need to regard this as Hellenistic influence.

Quite another problem is that Lemche quotes works by Carroll, Clines, and Grabbe in support of his claim. In the studies referred to, however, there is hardly any mention of the Nehemiah autobiography at all. Even

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40 MOWINCKEL’S work represents a German version of a part of his doctoral dissertation in Norwegian on Nehemiah, Statholderen Nehemia, 1916. The same year, he also published a study on Ezra: Ezra den Skriftearde, also written in Norwegian. Basing his study on ancient Egyptian and late Jewish narrative and legendary material, Mowinckel here showed how the “autobiography” was not a historical “memoir”, but a literary creation. For a German version of this particular thesis, see: “‘Ich’ und ‘Er’ in der Ezra eschichte”, in: Verhannung und Heimkehr (1961) 211–233.


more problematic, though, is the fact that none of these scholars refer to the relevancy of autobiographies in the Hellenistic world at all. Yet again, I fear that Lemche’s relationship to his secondary literature does not exactly qualify as a model of accuracy. Rather, what Lemche appears to be doing here resembles more what he himself dislikes the most in ancient historiography: the production of one’s own sources!

On the whole, Lemche’s treatment of the Persian Empire strikes me sometimes as rather odd. I cannot go into all the details here, but I would like to mention some examples. A sentence like the following [commenting on Joel Weinberg’s “Tempel-Bürger” thesis], is, to my mind, rather revealing:

have little to offer here, except that I have severe doubts about the efficiency of Persian administration in those days, doubts caused by a report like Xenophon’s Anabasis. Here, in the heyday of the Persian empire (at the end of the 5th century BCE), Xenophon together with a small army of Greek mercenaries (c. 5000 men [!]) participated in an expedition that brought them to the very heart of the Persian Empire. The expedition was, however, not to end here when their Persian warlord was killed in a battle. Now the Greeks simply turned around and walked home. In spite of having lost their commanding officers, they were able not only to get rid of their Persian persecutors but to proceed their journey right through – at the beginning – the richest province of the Persian empire. They were only met by really serious opposition when they crossed the borders of Anatolia, although their opponents were not the Persians proper but local mountain tribes, seemingly the subjects of the Persian king. The report by Xenophon thus hardly indicates that the adversaries of the Greeks were citizens in an efficiently governed state or empire!”

The above makes, in more ways than one, surprising reading, and what Lemche actually does here is rather remarkable. On the strength of Xenophon’s Anabasis alone, he is able to characterize all of the vast Persian Empire as inefficient! Likewise, without paying any attention whatsoever to current Xenophon scholarship, he reads Xenophon’s “eye-witness” description in an uncritical way. Not even the more conservative among biblical historians would put a similar naïve trust in her or his sources as Lemche here does!

Even if I can hardly go into any details in the present context, I would like to quote from the work of Christopher Tuplin, a well known authority on matters Persian. Tuplin says about Xenophon, that he, “of course, never visited Persia”, and of his work: “The Anabasis is autobiographical justi-
fication, propaganda for Panhellenism and (above all perhaps) didaxis on the characteristic Xenophontic themes of leadership and military practice. Topographical facts are strictly incidental.\footnote{Tuplin, same place, p. 45.}

It is beyond my point here whether Tuplin is absolutely correct in his interpretation, or not. The important thing is that Lemche apparently is ignorant of the fact that such views do exist, and that he does read the text of Anabasis in an unscholarly manner.

A second and third point are more serious: Lemche uses Anabasis as a source for the reconstruction of Persian organizational and administrative practice without paying any attention whatsoever to the vast amount of scholarly work that has been done in this area. And thirdly: When we compare the hyper-critical attitude of Lemche towards the historical value of the “fictitious Nehemiah autobiography” above to his more naïve acceptance as historical of everything which we may find in the “fictitious Xenophon autobiography” the discrepancy between the two approaches is more than remarkable.

I have referred to such incongruities as being a result of “bibliophobia”.\footnote{See chapter 3 above. Cf. also Becking, “Is de Hebreeuwse Bijbel een Hellenistisch boek”, NedThT 54 (2000), pp. 5–6.} With this term I refer to a tendency among some scholars to avoid the use of biblical sources for historical reconstruction whereas, at the same time, other ancient texts may be used freely for such procedures. It should go without saying that when ancient texts are used as historical sources, one cannot treat biblical texts any differently than other texts.

Also another sample of Lemche’s Persica calls for a comment:

“A utterance like the following by Philip J. King, ‘The Persian Period was a time of peace and prosperity, when Judah was allowed a great deal of administrative independence’, should awaken suspicion. How do we know this, except that it is the convenient common opinion of many scholars? Modern examples of crumbling societies left on their own and with ‘a great deal of administrative independence’ provide a sad picture of local incompetence, and Jamieson-Drake’s demonstration of the total collapse of Judean society around 600 BCE points at socio-economic conditions in Palestine in the following centuries that will have demanded more than the occasional visit of a Persian emissary to settle. As a matter of fact, the often praised leniency of the Persians towards the subject nations may have been nothing more than a display of absolute lack of responsibility from the Persian part. Maybe they did not interfere in local affairs because they did not care!”\footnote{Lemche, “The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?”, SJOT 7 (1993), p. 185.}

From the citation above it must be concluded that Lemche, in his eagerness to put the Hellenistic era on the market as the period in which the Hebrew Bible was created, exhibits a tendency to paint a gloomy picture of everything Persian.
Quite the opposite of what Lemche appears to believe, Persian administration was rather known for its efficiency. It was only because of this that is was possible for Cyrus in the course of only twenty years to create an empire that stretched from the Aegean to the Kabul Valley, and from Lydia and Armenia in the north to Egypt in the south, and for him and his successors to keep this vast realm together for more than 200 years!

It is relatively accepted today, now that the complex nature of Achaemenid government is better and better understood, that the different regions of the Persian Empire enjoyed a relatively strong local independence from the central government, and that the Persian material culture is difficult to identify simply because it is regional, and not Persian.\(^{50}\) In order to maintain and exercise central power, Persian military garrisons apparently ved separately from the local populations.\(^{51}\)

Incidentally, we know much more about the Persian Empire than Lemche appears to be aware of. Today, in fact, research on Achaemenid history is flourishing as never before,\(^{52}\) and – not least – studies of Syria-Palestine during the Persian period,\(^{53}\) where our knowledge of the history

\(^{49}\) Even if it was Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, who, according to our sources, conquered Egypt in 525 BCE, it is generally recognized that the campaign was originally planned by Cyrus himself. Cf. FRYE, The History of Ancient Iran (1984), p. 96.

\(^{50}\) For the lack of a specific Persian material culture in Mesopotamia, cf. also the statements by HAERINCK and OPPENHEIM, quoted above. On Phoenicia, cf. the remark by ELAYI (above in the same footnote).


\(^{52}\) Of great importance and inspiration have been the “Groningen workshops”, a co-operative project between the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Groningen and the Department of History at University College, London. The proceedings of the workshop, Achaemenid History, were published by the Netherlands Institute for the Near East in Leiden from 1987. The most recent synthesis of the Persian Empire is the monumental work by BRIANT, Histoire de l’Empire Perse, 1996. The rich bibliography of BRIANT’s work reflects adequately the “state of the art”. See also the supplement (127 pages), likewise a goldmine of a bibliography, by the same author: “Bulletin d’histoire achéménide (I)”, Topoi (Supplément 1) 1997 and in Bulletin d’histoire achéménide II. Paris, 2001.

\(^{53}\) The importance of the establishing in 1988 of the French multidisciplinary initiative Association pour la recherche sur la Syrie-Palestine à l’époque perse (ASPEP) can, in this connection, hardly be exaggerated. In the wake of ASPEP there followed also the publication of the journal Trans euphratène, the first issue of which appeared in 1989. Browsing through the issues of Trans euphratène from its start till today gives one a fairly good impression of what is going on in the field. An excellent “introduction” to
of Judah has increased considerably.\textsuperscript{54} Also to those who believe that large parts of the Hebrew Bible were created on Babylonian soil,\textsuperscript{55} there are now increasing literary and archaeological evidence also for this part of the Persian Empire.\textsuperscript{56}

It is astonishing how Lemche appears to be unaware of these important scholarly developments. As we noticed above, he claims that "... we know practically nothing about the situation in Palestine [in the Persian period] except from the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah ..." This, as we have seen, is not in accordance with what most scholars working in this area believe.

5.6 Conclusion

In the present study I have discussed the four points in Niels Peter Lemche’s 1993 article, “The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?” that, according to the author himself, support his view that the Hebrew Bible must be dated to the Hellenistic era.

Since Lemche’s views on the dating of the Hebrew Bible apparently are widely referred to (even if I doubt that all the scholars that refer to them can really have studied his arguments closely), I felt it necessary to deal in


\textsuperscript{55} LEMCHE himself appears to be somewhat wavering on this particular point. In his article “The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?”, p. 182, he claims that an extensive part of the Hebrew Bible was created in the Jewish Diaspora. If this was the case, why does he, on pp. 184–185 of the same work, have to argue so vehemently against the possibility that the Bible is the creation of the Persian province of Judah?

some detail with his methodological reasoning. However, quite contrary to Lemche’s claims, I have not found one single argument in his article that really can be said to support a dating to Hellenistic times.

This should come as no surprise to Lemche, who, on p. 187 of his paper, writes: “There is no reason to gloss over the fact that the majority of Old Testament scholars of the present day will not readily accept new ideas like these concerning the date and ideological background of the Old Testament.” For once, I could not agree more! It goes without saying, though, that to “the majority of Old Testament scholars” the disagreement is not caused by any opposition to new ideas, but by a deep conviction that Lemche’s own views on the dating of the Hebrew Bible to the Hellenistic era are utterly unconvincing.
6.1 Preliminary Remarks

I am not, in the present context, going to treat the period of the exile (586–538 BCE) in any compendious way, but I shall rather occupy myself wi’ the widespread belief that Judah during this period was a tabula rasa where no activity to speak of took place.¹ Even if the exilic epoch has, indubitably, had its share of the scholarly literature, it is, however, in particular the Persian period that has attracted the mind of the researchers during recent years,² embodying above all such ideological historical characteristics as the “return from exile” and the “restoration.” Far less attention has been paid to the Babylonian period, the very period of the “exile” itself, the half century or so following the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.³

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¹ This chapter was first published as a small monograph, The Myth of the Empty Land. A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the “Exilic” Period, 1996. The reason why the present version has only been sparingly updated, is that it should be read in connection with chapter 7 below. This chapter, “Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period”, not only brings the debate up to date, but also expands the argumentation.

² See, for instance, the bibliography by DION, The Jews During the Persian Period, 1990.

The reasons for this apparent lack of interest in the Neo-Babylonian period may be of various kinds. For one thing, the period is notoriously poor with regard to sources. Also, the period certainly was not regarded as a glorious one in the later tradition. To those Hebrew scribes who were later to write the history of Judah during the time following Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem the period could only be felt as one of national humiliation, filled with gloom and despair. No wonder that later on, in the Persian period, the interest of the chroniclers and the theologians was not so much concerned with Judah proper, or with her inhabitants, a symbol of YHWH’s punishment for the transgressions of his chosen people, as with those families who returned from Babylonia, and with them, in their view, the future was.

It was in particular this inherent biblical mentality that soon led to the belief that Palestine was completely depopulated and in ruins after 586 BCE. In later Jewish culture this view of the Babylonian period subsequently developed into a kind of “national symbol”, and the exiled people who suffered “by the waters of Babylon” became a well-known Jewish motif. This idea of an uninhabited and uninhabitable Palestine, following the subjugation by Nebuchadnezzar, was deeply rooted also in the mentality of 19th century scholarship, and its after effects may be felt strongly even today. The notion of a total exile, with the carrying away of the entire population, inevitably also led to the belief that the centre of gravity for cultural and spiritual life was moved away from the uninhabitable and ruined Jerusalem and Judah to Babylonia. The myth of the empty land was complete.

Today, after a hundred years or so of so-called “historical-critical”
research, the majority of the scholarly world apparently does not quite believe any more that life in Judah really ceased to exist completely during the “Exilic period”. When browsing through a fairly representative selection of handbooks and introductions, as, for instance, those of Oded, Herrmann, Soggin, Miller and Hayes, some of them influenced by the research of Kittel, Noth, Buccellati, and others, it appears that scholarly consensus today has become more and more aware of the fact that life must have gone on in Palestine also after 586.

There is, however, still a long way to go. What we may witness today with regard to post-586 Palestine is a kind of “middle-position”, combined with a certain aporia. The new consensus which is emerging regarding life in Palestine after 586, and which seems to be replacing, at least to some degree, the former idea of a tabula rasa, is that whereas “exilic” Judah now at last awarded the right to exist, she is still not entitled to any economic, cultural or religious activity during this period. Thus, our problem today seems to lie with the fact that the after effects of the former utterly negative view of life in Judah during the exilic period still dominate the scholarly scene.

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11 Miller and Hayes, A History of Ancient Israel and Judah, 1986, has a more up-to-date view of the archaeology of the period (p. 417), and a good section on the problem related to Gedaliah (pp. 421–424), as well as some reflections on the continuation of cultic life (p. 426).
12 Kittel, Geschichte des Volkes Israel 3 (1927) pp. 67–68.
13 Noth maintained on several occasions that Palestine should not be regarded as a tabula rasa after 586. See, for instance, Noth, “La Catastrophe de Jérusalem en l’an 587 avant Jésus-Christ”, RHPR 33 (1953) 81–102. In a dissertation by Eitz, Studien zum Verhältnis von Priesterschrift und Deuterojesaja, 1969, we find the view that the deportees were not very important, either politically or religiously, because they were so few in number, and that what influence that did come from the Diaspora was the result of a few men in later times (pp. 3–4). Eitz is an example of someone who draws the full consequences of Noth’s view.
Thus, even if most scholars, apparently more or less vaguely, admit that "most of" the population was left in the country, the following quotations from a few, but representative researchers may well illustrate our present situation. A scholar like Oded can write: "The dearth of information about the Jewish community which remained in Judah is not an accident, since the centre of gravity in the events which influenced the nation's historical development moved from Judah to the Diaspora." And Soggin states: "The spiritual centre of Jerusalem and Judah was transferred to Babylon, and there it remained for some decades, until the first of the exiles returned home." And Bright: "... but though there were doubtless godly people in Judah who, like their brothers far away, mourned over and longed for its restoration [referring to texts like Pss 74 and 79, 63:7–64:12, and Lam], they were too leaderless and helpless to do more than dream. The impulse to restoration, when it came, did not come from them. It is probable, indeed, that the religious loyalty of many of these people had been seriously undermined, and that theirs was a Yahwism in no very pure form [referring to texts like Ezek 33:24–29, Isa 57:3–15, 65:1–5, 11f.]." "Though Israelites in Palestine were still the numerical majority, Israel's future scarcely lay with them. Israel's true centre of gravity had temporarily shifted from the homeland." And Weinberg declares: "It is highly unlikely that a material culture of any degree of sophistication could have been maintained during these centuries in Jerusalem without leaving more substantial remains than have been found

15 Less representative is THOMAS, who still adheres to the 19th century view on the situation in Palestine after 586 BCE. If TORREY is found to be extreme (cf also below), THOMAS is no less so, but at the very opposite end. Believing that the whole of the population, but for the peasantry, was deported, and that most of the Hebrew Bible was written in Babylon, he writes: "While the people of Israel yet lived in their own country, their native genius never grew to full growth. On foreign soil, in Babylon, this genius wavered gloriously." THOMAS, "The Sixth Century B.C." JSS 6 (1961) pp. 33–34.

16 Compare also SMITH, The Religion of the Landless (1989) pp. 32–35, who refers to much of the available evidence for continued settlement in Judah, but appears to be somewhat undecided as to what conclusions to draw from it. Also, he appears not to be too well informed on the archaeological evidence.

17 I am not claiming that other scholars do not hold more adequate views, but the bulk of scholarship appears still to be found along these lines. For the most recent developments, see chapter 7 below.


20 BRIGHT, A History of Israel (1980) p. 345. Also BRIGHT admits that "the popular notion of a total deportation which left the land empty and void is erroneous and to be discarded" (pp. 343–344, referring to works by JANSSEN and ACKROYD).
so far; we must think more in terms first of squatters and then of people able to maintain only a mere subsistence level.\textsuperscript{21}

What Jewish\textsuperscript{22} culture there was, was in Babylonia, not in Judah! What a very strange idea indeed! If, in fact, "most of the population" remained in Judah, as it must have done, and as the majority of scholars now actually admits, this society must have consisted not only of peasants (even if these would have made up the vast majority of the population in an agrarian society), but also of artisans, traders, village and town elders, scribes, priests and prophets. In other words, what we are dealing with is not some picturesque idea of a bunch of illiterate peasants, but a functioning society, with many of its different political institutions still intact. What is actually represented in the scholarly writings from which we have just been quoting, are fairly antiquated views on the nature and function of ancient societies, deriving from some romanticist notion of the last century, and now deeply rooted in our scholarly tradition. We simply cannot allow ourselves any more to think of Judaean society after 586 BCE as a community where no culture existed, or where scribes, priests, and prophets were no longer active. On the contrary! The services of (say) priests and prophets must have been equally essential to the Judaean society after 586 BCE as it was before the disaster. A prophet, for instance, was basically an intermediary and an intercessor between the deity and the people, and the population of Judah after 586 BCE needed more than ever before to know the will of the deity and their future destiny.

It is the merit of Janssen\textsuperscript{23} for example, to have argued convincingly


\textsuperscript{22} There appears to be some confusion in terminology in the scholarly literature with regard to such terms as Jewish, Judaic, Judahite, and Judaean. Quite obviously, these are very imprecise words, and cannot be used with any degree of precision at all. Today most scholars use "Jews" and "Jewish" for the period from the exile onwards, when the Judean population no longer made up an independent state, but constituted a religious community. However, as it may appear somewhat anacrornistic to use the terms "Jewish" or "Judaic" of the culture and inhabitants of Judah in biblical times, one should in the future discuss whether it may be more correct to reserve the terms "Jews" and "Jewish" entirely for the post-biblical period.

\textsuperscript{23} JANSSEN, Juda in der Exilzeit, 1956. In his underlining of the important role of those who were left behind in Judah for the development of Israelite religion, JANSSEN points in particular to texts like Lamentations (pp. 9–12), Isaiah 21 (pp. 12–19), Obadiah (pp. 18–19), exilic psalms (pp. 19–10), Jeremiah, Ezra and Nehemiah, Zechariah 1–8, Haggai, and Trito-Isaiah (pp. 22–23). Despite the great merit of JANSSEN’s work, however, it should be kept in mind that it is clearly a product of the 1950s, and sometimes also methodologically flawed. Thus, it is not always possible to read actual historical information out of the biblical texts the in way JANSSEN does. This applies not least to poetical texts. One may compare, for instance, JANSSEN’s use of Lam 1:6 and 2:2.6 (p.
that the people who were left in Judah after 586 BCE must in fact have been responsible for a fairly large amount of the literature which we find in the Hebrew Bible, and that, consequently, poetic texts of a very high literary quality actually were produced in Judah in the "exilic period." It is not possible to take up this discussion here, but it would be sufficient to refer to the Book of Lamentations. No one, to my knowledge, has ever disputed either the fact that Lamentations represents outstanding literary quality, or that it is a product of Palestine. When we find that poetry of such high quality as Lamentations was actually produced in Judah after the disaster of 586 BCE, there is no reason whatsoever why similar poetry or other kinds of texts could not likewise have been written during the "exilic" period.

Consequently, if one as a historian wants to acquaint oneself with that period of ancient Jewish history commonly referred to as "the exile", one soon meets with apparently insurmountable difficulties. Not only are the sources apparently too meagre to draw any decisive conclusions, but there are also certain developments within the field, ultimately going back to the Bible itself, which have resulted in an untenably biased view of the period. Against such a background it is nevertheless quite necessary to ask the question again: What was life in Judah really like in the years following Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, the period between 586 BCE and 538 BCE, the exilic era properly so called? It should be stressed once again that it is solely for conventional reasons that I here refer to the periods between the years 586 BCE and 538 BCE as the era of the "exile." To say that the "exile" lasted from 586 BCE to 538 BCE is, in fact, rather meaningless, and if there ever was an area of biblical research that could do with some reassessment it is certainly to be found in connection with such scholarly mis-

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24 When JANSSEN's book was first published, it made little or no impact on the scholarly community. Among the rather few reviewers of JANSSEN, we find some who were reasonably satisfied, and others who were dissatisfied. None, however, seems to be altogether convinced, and there is certainly no enthusiasm to be found. See reviews by KUHL in BO 15 (1958) 255-56, STENZEL in TRev 54 (1958) 20, MAAS in TLZ 82 (1957) 685-86, DE VAUX in RB 65 (1958) 130-31, and PLÖGER in ZDPV 72 (1956) 186-87. Too critical of JANSSEN is HAMMERSHAIMB, Some Aspects of Old Testament Prophecy from Isaiah to Malachi (1966) pp. 96-100. Apparently, it is only quite recently that the scholarly world has started to appreciate more fully the important contribution of JANSSEN.

25 On this dating, cf. above n. 3.
conceptions as “exile”, “return” and “restoration”, areas in which theological ideas and historical events are constantly being confused.

With this somewhat categorical statement, I do not imply that the use of such terms as “exile”, “return” and “restoration” is altogether unfounded, and I do not support the more extreme views of Torrey, for example. In Torrey’s view the whole matter of the exile is widely overestimated, and he claims that a return never took place. During his long and distinguished career Torrey campaigned fervently in favour of the Palestinian origin of all of the Hebrew Bible, and it is within this wider context that his works and theories must be placed. This led Torrey to the extreme view that there was hardly any such thing as an exile, and consequently no such thing as a return from exile. The whole matter was a fiction, created by the Chronicler. In evaluating the views of Torrey, we shall have to be very careful. Even if he was certainly not correct in every respect, for instance in his dating of Isa 40–55 and in his claim that there was hardly any exile to speak of, or any return whatsoever, he did make several important points which cannot easily be dismissed. Among these are the stress on the importance of those who were left behind in Judah, and an awareness of the exaggerated importance generally attached to such ideological strategies as “exile” and “return”.

It is unfortunate that scholars have shown a tendency to neglect Torrey because of his more extreme views. As we shall see below, much recent

26 One scholar who has been particularly engaged in problems relating to “history and ideology” in the exilic era is Carroll. See, for instance, Carroll: “Textual Strategies and Ideology in the Second Temple Period”, Second Temple Studies 1 (1991) 108–24, “Israel, History of”, ABD 3 (1992) 567–576; and “The Myth of the Empty Land”, Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts (1992) 79–93. I am grateful to Robert Carroll for stimulating discussions during many years. As one may see, the title of the present chapter is taken from one of his articles. His far too early death is still mourned by his friends and colleagues.

27 See also Garbini, History and Ideology in Ancient Israel, 1988.

28 See above all Torrey, The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemic published in 1892. Here, he concludes that Ezra and Nehemiah are completely without any historical value and throw no light on the history of the Jews in the Persian period whatsoever. See also his Ezra Studies (1910) pp. 285–289 (“... nor is it intrinsically likely that any such return took place”, p. 288). Several years later, Torrey claims, more categorically and without any argumentation, that there was no return whatsoever. See The Chronicler’s History of Israel (1954) pp. XXVII–XXVIII.

29 Thus, in his Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy, 1930, Torrey also claimed that the Book of Ezekiel contained prophecies originally composed in the city of Jerusalem and addressed to its inhabitants. These prophecies had later been worked over (in an easily detectable manner) to fit into the concept of the Chronicler’s “Babylonian exile”. Compare also Torrey’s article “Certainly Pseudo-Ezekiel”, JBL 53 (1934) 293–95.

30 See his book The Second Isaiah, 1928, where he dates these prophecies to the Persian period.
scholarship has proved Torrey right with regard to the necessity of stressing continuity rather than a complete break in Judean archaeology, history and tradition between the period prior to Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion and the period following the disastrous events of 586. However, in producing a major ideological barrier before and after 586, commonly referred to as “the exilic period”, biblical scholarship has created a problem for itself. The ideological “exile”, which formed a natural part of the biblical tradition, later became an inherent part our scholarly historical tradition, from which we now are having great difficulties freeing ourselves.

In sum, even if we should consequently not subscribe to the more extreme views put forward by Torrey, denying that there ever was an exile or turn, we should not dispute that Torrey made some very strong points. That I want to claim is merely that the use of much current terminology is very problematic, and that the importance that has been attached to such ideas as “exile”, “return” and “restoration” has come to be exceedingly overstated as a result of scholarly readings of the texts of the Bible as more or less accurate descriptions of what actually happened in 6th century Judah. I am, in other words, concerned with what the exile was rather than with what it became in later tradition. Indeed, the problem of what the exile became is also a very legitimate scholarly project, not least because this is mainly the description of the phenomenon which we may find in the Bible itself and, which, consequently, has constituted a part of our common cultural heritage to this very day. My own interest, however, is much more narrow and concerned primarily with the question of what was actually going on in Judah during the period commonly referred to as the “Exile”.

6.2 The Biblical Evidence

"When the prevailing 19th century view of “exilic” Judah came into existence, scholars had no access to archaeology or to Mesopotamian texts that could throw any light upon the period of the “Babylonian exile”. Besides Josephus,31 the Bible constituted the only source of information. When viewing the quantity of scholarly literature which has emerged on the topic since then, it is difficult for us really to fathom the far-reaching consequences of the fact that practically everything we believe that we know about the period of the “exile” is ultimately based on the biblical texts, without which we would “know” as little about conditions in “exilic” or “post-exilic” Palestine as we know (say) about the history of the Moabites,

31 Cf. further below.
or the Ammonites, or the Edomites during the same period. For this reason, it is maybe somewhat unfortunate that the Bible cannot (and should not) be read as a history book, a fact that certainly takes some time to dawn upon the scholarly world. No matter how “historical-critical” practitioners of that particular scholarly genre referred to as “the history of ancient Israel” regard themselves, their efforts so far have hardly ever amounted to much more than a paraphrastic recapitulating of the biblical stories themselves.

Our main biblical source for the events leading up to the exile is the account in 2 Kgs 24–25. In 2 Kgs 24:1–6 we read how Judah in the days of Jehoiakim (who had for three years been a Babylonian puppet, but had revolted) was attacked by a joint army of Babylonians, Arameans, Moabites and Ammonites. Jehoiakim’s son, Jehoiachin, is made king in his place. He is besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, who carried off all the treasures of the temple as well as those of Jehoiachin’s palace and cut in pieces all the gold vessels from the time of Solomon (24:6–13). “He carried away all Jerusalem (ארץ יהודה), and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained (נהל נ_sat), except the poor people of the land (ארץ נשיא) (24:14).

Then there follows the “duplicate”, vv. 15–16, where the contents of vv. 12–14 are repeated in a somewhat different form. Among the differences of some interest to us is that the number of exiles in v. 16 is given as 7000 plus 1000, as against the 10,000 of v.14, and that the carrying away of Je-

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32 Incidentally, when we today are just starting to know a little more about the different peoples surrounding ancient Israel, this is mainly a result of recent developments in archaeology, and of the new understanding that these cultures must be studied in their own right, and not only as a background for ancient Israelite history. The city states of the Levant in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods are dealt with in various parts of the present volume. See above all further below, as well as chapters 5 and 7.

33 Apparently, this would apply also for some of the more reflective scholars in this field. We have, however, especially in recent years, also been witnessing a small group of scholars pushing the limits for what is considered to be “historically reliable” in the Hebrew Bible. Having in turn successively abolished the “historicity” of the patriarchal stories, and more recently of the stories of the exodus from Egypt, and the settlement stories, one recent trend appears to hold the view that a proper history writing can only start from the time of the Israelite kingdom. See, for instance, MILLER and HAYES, A History of Ancient Israel and Judah 1986. Since “history” is a “modern” concept, it is wrong, however, to think that the Books of Kings are radically more “historical” than (say) the Book of Joshua. Quite recently, scholars like THOMPSON (Early History of the Israelite People, 1992) and DAVIES (In Search of “Ancient Israel”, 1992) have also claimed that the biblical texts do not yield any historical information at all. This, however, is to go too far. Even if these texts cannot be treated as historical sources in the way that most scholars have done over the years, this is not to say that they are completely without any historical value. On various problems in relation to the question of the historicity of the Hebrew Bible, see chapters 1 and 2 above.
hoiachin to Babylon, with his mother, his wives and his “officials” and the “chief people of the land”, is now mentioned specifically (in v. 15). The reference to the people brought into exile in v. 16 represents a variant of v. 14.

Nebuchadnezzar replaced Jehoiachin with his uncle Mattaniah, who was given the name Zedekiah. Zedekiah, in turn, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, an event which led to another Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in Zedekiah’s eleventh year (2 Kgs 25:1–2). Following a famine in the besieged city, a breach was made in the wall, and king Zedekiah escaped with his army. He was, however, followed by the Babylonians, who captured Zedekiah and took him to Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah, where he is blinded, and taken as a prisoner to Babylon (25:4–7).

Following this event, the “captain of the bodyguard” (רְבֵּית בָּשׁוֹחַ), a high ranking Neo-Babylonian official by the name of Nebuzaradan (cf. v. 11) came to Jerusalem, “and he burned the house of YHWH, and the king’s palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the palaces he burned down” (25:9). The Babylonian army then broke down the city wall (25:10), and the rest of the people who were left in the city, and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the “rest of the multitude” (ח useRef ראתו), were all carried into exile (v. 11). “But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land (מָלָא הֶאֱרָם) to be vine-dressers (דָּרוֹן) and ploughmen (דָּרוֹן) (v. 12).

In 25:13–17 there follows a list of metal object (bronze, silver and gold) which were taken away from the temple and brought to Babylon.

Vv. 18–21 relate an incident, where a number of twelve high Judaean officials, including the chief priest Seraiah, as well as “sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city”, were taken to Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah where they were killed. “So Judah was taken into exile out of its land”.

In v. 22 we may read how a certain Gedaliah was appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, of “the people who were left in the country”, and of how, when approached in Mizpah by several heads of families, he urged them to be loyal to the Neo-Babylonian officials. If they agreed to serve the king of Babylon, they would fare well (vv. 23–24). Apparently no popular figure in Judah, Gedaliah was soon to be killed by a member of the royal family (v. 25). “Then all the

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34 On the Gedaliah problem, see MILLER and HAYES, A History of Ancient Israel and Judah (1986) pp. 421–424. On the other hand, it is difficult to know precisely what was the office and authority of Gedaliah. The verb דַּקְשׁ נָה seems to have the meaning of empowering officials in a quite general sense. Cf. SCHOTTROFF, “דַּקְשׁ נָה heimsuchen”, Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament 2 (1976) pp. 469 and 474.

35 A fuller version of the Mizpah incident is found in Jer 40:7–41:18.
people (הָלָדְתֵּים), both small and great, and the captains of the forces (שִׁיר הַהָלָדְתֵּים) arose, and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Babylonians" (v. 26).

The last verses of 2 Kgs 25, vv. 27–30, tell how Jehoiachin was released from prison, and how he dined regularly at the king’s table, having a seat above those of the kings who were with him in Babylon, and how he received a regular allowance every day of his life.36

When reading the above story of the last days of Judah, it soon becomes apparent that we simply cannot read these texts as we read “historical documents.”37 The very logic of the ancient narrator is different from that of the western, historically disposed reader, who indeed has lost his innocence, in particular following the breakthrough of historical thinking in Germany in the early 19th century.38 The mentality of the biblical writer primarily that of an oriental storyteller. Too often, one gets the impression that the majority of modern scholars regard the biblical texts as historical documents that have been distorted or corrupted or become unreliable as a result of a long tradition process, and that these texts, when treated with a proper dose of “historical-critical methods”, may be restored to their original reliable status, and yield the kind of historical information scholars are looking for.39 For this reason, one will also frequently find the same schol-

36 That the king received rations from the Babylonian king is supported by Babylonian textual evidence (see also below). However, that the king of Judah should be treated in any way differently from the other kings taken captive, and be given “a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon” is unlikely. Here the literary genre of our story reveals itself. This part of the story is related to the literary genre of special treatment of Jews at foreign courts, and slightly reminiscent of the fates of Joseph, Daniel and Esther. For a discussion of this particular literary genre, see WILLS, The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King, 1990. Even if WILLS is well aware of the existence of such genres also in the Deuteronomistic history, the relevance of 2 Kgs 25:27–30 may have escaped him.

37 We cannot, in fact, read any “historical document” the way we once thought could. The apparent lack of interest of many historians of ancient Israel in the epistemology and methodology of history studies in general is not wholly ascribable to the fact that the majority of these scholars were trained as theologians and not as historians. A similar lack of interest in theoretical reflection appears sometimes to be prevailing also among professional historians. Apparently, we are dealing here with a variant of the traditional tension between theologians and practitioners. I do believe, though, that it would be to their mutual benefit if “the two sides” started talking to each other. For a more detailed treatment of the theoretical and methodological problems in relation to the history, see chapters 1 and 2 above.

38 For an interesting study of historical consciousness from Augustinian times to the present day, see KEMP, The Estrangement of the Past, 1991.

39 One example which would illustrate my point may be found in the attempt by JONES to argue from the biblical texts that there were no sacrifices in Judah between 586
ars approaching the three different biblical sources for "the last days of Judah", to be found in Kings, Chronicles and Jeremiah, with the intent of finding out which is the more reliable source, or to compare them in order to attempt to reconstruct "what really happened." However, any such approach to the biblical texts fails to do justice to the very nature of these texts, all of which, as sources for the historian, no matter whether he is of a somewhat positivistic, or of a more relativistic persuasion, are equally "reliable", or "unreliable".

To us the story in 2 Kgs 24–25 may not be "logical" or "coherent", but this obviously did not worry the ancient writer. Thus, we may read in 2 Kgs 24:14, in connection with the deportations under Jehoiachin, that "all "Jerusalem" were taken into exile, with the exception of "the poor people of the land." Despite the fact that "everyone" was taken into exile, however, there are still enough people around for a new contingent, as well as for the "rest of the masses of the people" to be taken to Babylon in connection with the deportations under Zedekiah (2 Kgs 25:11). As we may read, this time too the Babylonians leave "some of the poorest of the land, to be vine-dressers and ploughmen."

When the country has been completely emptied twice, the Babylonians appointed Gedaliah as governor of the "people who were left in the country." So, despite the fact that it has been stated twice that "all" were deported, there were apparently people still left in Judah. That those who were left not only consisted of "the poor people of the land" may be learnt from the episode of the killing of Gedaliah, where names of well-known families are mentioned in connection with the meeting in Mizpah, and the killing of Gedaliah. And then, when, according to our story, "all the people" had already been taken to Babylon, we read about how, after the kill-

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40 The text of 2 Kgs 24:18–25:21 is found, almost identically, but for some minor textual variants, in Jer 52:1–27. We also find a version of the story of king Zedekiah and the last days of Jerusalem, shorter than the one in 2 Kings 25:1–11, in Jer 39:1–14. For a recent attempt to view the sources of Kgs, Jer and Chr together, see COGAN and TADMOR, 2 Kings (1988) pp. 320–321.

41 When there is, occasionally, more "historical" information to be found in Kings than in Chronicles, this has basically to do with the fact that the former has more material, and not with the fact the author of Kings is more "reliable". For a pertinent critique of some of the research that has been done in this area, see BRICHTE, Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics (1992) p. 284 n. 14.

42 In the Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian periods one often comes across the Akkadian word saknu used of a governor of the territories of the Mesopotamian Empire. See CAD 17 (1989) p. 183. This word appears in the Hebrew Bible as an Akkadian loan word פֶּסֶד (e.g. Jer 51:23,28,57). Even if the lexem is not mentioned explicitly in connection with the appointment of Gedaliah, it is highly likely that his title was פֶּסֶד.
ing of Gedaliah, "all the people" went to Egypt. We might wonder: who are all these people who seem to surface all the time, when, allegedly, there is no one left in the country? The answer to this question is simple enough. When the ancient writer says "all the people" he does not mean "all the people", but a large number. And when he refers to a large number, this may simply be because he wants to make a point with regard the the importance of what had happened. This does not necessarily imply that the number is large in itself. Also, we should keep in mind that members of the peasant proletariat, the non-landowning families, despite being a majority, probably did not count as "people" at all.

What we are facing here is a prime piece of ancient Hebrew storytelling, and not an historical account of what actually happened in Jud: "when Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem." Several attempts to come grips with this text have been unsuccessful simply because we are not dealing with an historical "source" at all. When the Deuteronomist tells his story he can say that "all of Jerusalem" were taken into exile on several different occasions, and there is nothing "wrong" with this. It is, furthermore, a cultural misapprehension to call this exaggeration for emphasis or hyperbolical expression for rhetorical effect (or whatever one chooses to call it). This is simply the way the ancient Hebrews told the story. This kind of story-telling lacks what Western readers would call logic, something which is quite common not only in biblical, poetical texts, but also in so-called prose texts, and should not be read with a rational mind.43 This, however, is exactly what has normally been done in biblical scholarship over the years, and it is, among other things, to such a misreading of an ancient oriental narrative that we owe that picture of non-existent life in Ju-

43 During recent years we have, fortunately, been witnessing quite a number of studies focusing on the literary qualities of the biblical narrative texts. Through an increasing number of studies on the compositional techniques and rhetorical devices of biblical narratives we have gained new insights, and a much better understanding of the ways which the ancient authors worked. The majority of these approaches, however, are pure literary, and avoid questions of history. Among the fast growing number of studies in this field we may mention ALTER, The Art of Biblical Narrative, 1981; MISCALL, The Workings of Old Testament Narrative, 1983; AICHELE, The Limits of Story, 1985; SKA, "Our Fathers have Told Us", 1990; BAL, On Story-Telling, 1991; GUNN and FEWELL, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible, 1993. Others, like STERNBERG, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 1987, touch upon the problem of history, but reject it. Scattered useful remarks on the history problem are found in BRICHTO, Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics, 1992. There are many valuable remarks in DAMROSCH, The Narrative Covenant, 1987, who wants to combine historical and literary approaches to the text, but is scarcely concerned with history as such. Future studies will have to combine insights from both the historian and the literary critic in order to understand better how we may, if possible, extract historical knowledge from these texts. There are some good points to be found in VAN SETERS, In Search of History, 1983, but I feel that we still have a long way to go.
dah after 586. Of this one may easily acquaint oneself by browsing through the secondary literature on the "exilic period". At the same time, of course, this is not the same as saying that these texts do not reflect history or contain any historical information at all.

A similar attitude must also be taken with regard to the actual figures for the deportations mentioned in our texts. Thus, the Book of Jeremiah (Jer 52:28–30) indicates a three-fold deportation, totalling 4,600 persons. 2 Kgs, on the other hand, mentions two different figures for the deportation in 597: 10,000 in 2 Kgs 24:14 and 8,000 in 2 Kgs 24:16. For the major deportation eleven years later no figures are given. It is here simply stated that "the rest of the people" were taken into exile. The third deportation mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah (Jer 52:30) is not mentioned by the euteronomists. Also Josephus seems to know only of two deportations. His figure for the total number of deportees is approximately 13,000.44

The only conclusion that we may draw from these rather bewildering figures is that we cannot trust any of them to be "exact". When scholars have been left with the feeling that the number of deportees referred to in the Book of Jeremiah is the more trustworthy one, this is probably because it is the lowest, and subsequently "appears to be" more "authentic."45 There are, however, no grounds for any such assumption. Again, when the ancient writers used figures the way they do in the story of "the last days of Judah", they were not concerned with numerical accuracy in any way.

44 Josephus' writings represent, in several respects, an important source for the history of the Jewish people in antiquity, as well as for our knowledge of Palestinian matters in general. When I do not bring Josephus into the discussion in the present context, this is not because I consider him to be generally unreliable or irrelevant. There are probably few ancient sources which have, in a similar manner to Josephus, been so unwarrantably attacked for being notoriously unreliable. Fortunately, we have been witnessing a rehabilitation of Josephus in recent years. Again and again archaeology has proved Josephus right over against the prejudices of modern scholarship. For only one, more recent example, one may compare WILL, "The Recent French Work at Araq el-Emir", The Excavations at Araq el-Emir 1 (1983) p. 151. At Araq el-Emir, however, we are dealing with monuments from the 2nd century BCE, to which Josephus had direct access. It is quite a different matter when Josephus refers to historical events that took place several hundred years before his own time. In such cases we would have to enter into a discussion concerning Josephus' sources. The very same principle would have to apply to the matter of Josephus' population and deportation figures. As BYATT has convincingly demonstrated ("Josephus and Population Numbers in First Century Palestine", PEQ 104–105 (1972–1973) pp. 51–60), there is little reason to doubt that Josephus is right in his estimation of the 1st century population in Palestine as around 2,260,000. But this is something quite different from attempting to evaluate his figures relating to the deportations which took place in Palestine 500 years before his time, or, for that matter, other statements by Josephus concerning Palestine and Babylonia in the 6th century BCE.

Large, round figures are more likely to indicate the momentousness of events, rather than forming substance for statistics. Consequently, all attempts to evaluate such figures, and to compare them in order to find out what is the "correct" number of deportees on the basis of these figures, is not prolific in the first place, and bound to end up in sheer speculation. And even if some of these figures should be "correct", which they are not, they would not be of much help to us as long as we are unaware what percentage of the whole population they represent.\(^46\)

In the more critical debate\(^47\) it has been claimed that the biblical stories contain ideology and not history. As all "history writing" contains ele-

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\(^46\) The problems concerning the population of Jerusalem during the exilic period are particularly difficult. With the introduction of palaeodemography as an academic discipline many of the earlier, totally unfounded speculations concerning the population of ancient Palestine have fortunately left us. Some works dealing with the population of ancient Jerusalem are BROSHI, "La population de l’ancienne Jérusalem", *RB* 82 (1975) 5–14; BROSHI, "Estimating the Population of Ancient Jerusalem", *BAR* 4 (1978) 10–15; WILKINSON, "Ancient Jerusalem", *PEQ* 104–105 (1972–1973) 51–60. See also for the later period WEINBERG, "Demographische Notizen zur Geschichte der nachexilischen Gemeinde in Judäa", *Klio* 54 (1972) 45–59. For an evaluation of the important works of WEINBERG, see DION, "The Civic-and-Temple Community of Persian Period Judea", *JNES* 50 (1991) 281–287. Dealing with the population of Palestine in the early period is SHILOH, "The Population of Iron Age Palestine in the Light of a Sample Analysis of Urban Plans, Areas, and Population Density", *BASOR* 239 (1980) 25–35. Cf. also GEVA, "Population Changes as Reflected in Pottery Types", *PEQ* 111 (1979) 109–112. Also concerned with the population of ancient Palestine in the late periods are BROSHI, "The Population of Western Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine Period", *BASOR* 236 (1979) 1–10; DAUPHIN, "Chronique archéologique", *RB* 85 (1978) 429–32 (Byzantine), and REICH, "Archaeological Evidence of the Jewish Population at Hasmonean Gezer", *IEJ* 31 (1981) 48–52. Of a more general and theoretical character are HEICKSEN, "Archaeological Light on Population Problems", *Bulletin of the Near Eastern Archaeological Society* 6 (1975) 31–39, and CAROTHERS and MCDONALD, "Size and Distribution of the Population of Late Bronze Age Messina", *Journal of Field Archaeology* 6 (1979) 433–54. In particular, the above mentioned works by BROSHI have brought some common sense into the speculations concerning the population of ancient Jerusalem. Building his theories upon similar works by scholars in related areas, BROSHI takes as his starting point how many people could survive per dunam (= 1000 m\(^2\)) in ancient Palestine. With regard to Jerusalem, BROSHI claims that he can tell how many inhabitants it had at different periods according to the size of the city in a given period. Estimating a range in population density from 40 to 50, BROSHI calculates the population of Jerusalem under king Josiah to approximately 20,000. As there are too many unknown factors involved here, such estimates, of course, should only be regarded as recommendations. See also chapter 7 below for references to more recent discussions of these matters.

ments of ideology,⁴⁸ this is not so surprising. What we really have to take into consideration is rather the inner logic and mentality of the biblical stories. Already the way the author⁴⁹ presents his story should give us a good indication that neither accuracy nor a highly developed critical attitude to the sources, nor any striving for inner coherence are to be found among the issues that mattered to this writer, whose sole concern it was simply to tell the story of the “last days of Judah” – in his own way. On the other hand, the fact that story writing, from our particular point of view, makes a sloppy background for history writing,⁵⁰ does not of course imply that there is no history whatsoever to be learnt from the biblical stories. It would, for instance, be hypercritical, or even ridiculous, to claim that Nebuchadnezzar did not lay siege to Jerusalem or that no deportations took place whatsoever.

⁴⁸ The very word “ideology” is also a creation of the intellectuals of the modern, western, European world. See SWINEWOOD, A Short History of Sociological Thought (1991) pp. 275ff. Cf. also WALSH, “The Role of Ideology in Cultural Reproduction”, in Cultural Reproduction (1993) 228–249. The term “ideology”, therefore, is equally problematic as the word “history”, and it is only with the greatest imprecision that we can use such anachronistic conceptual apparatus on biblical narratives at all. The distinction made between “history” on the one side and “ideology” on the other is equally problematic. “Bias”, “preconceived opinions”, “underlying motifs”, or whatever one chooses to call it, has formed a “natural” part of historiography at all times and the current distinction between “history” and “ideology” must be judged as rather artificial. The word ideology in our context, then, is best used in a very general, descriptive sense, as the value system of a certain group. Cf. GEUSS, The Idea of a Critical Theory (1989) p. 5. Even if the historiographers of the Hebrew Bible have as their prime aim the production of “ideology” and the reuse of the ancient traditions in order to demonstrate something for contemporary society, rather than attempting to find out “what happened” in the past, this does not imply that these texts do not yield a lot of historical information. We do know, however, far less than we thought we knew, and, for instance, the scholarly academic genre that goes by the name of “History of Ancient Israel” probably has a problematic future. Nevertheless, despite the scepticism of some recent scholarship, somewhere in the cognitive “force field” between “what happened”, and the “ideology” of the sources, and the “ideology” of the modern scholars, there are some “facts” to be learned. On these and similar problems, see above chapters 1 and 2 above.

⁴⁹ It is quite common to use the term “editor(s)” rather than “author(s)” for the person(s) behind the biblical stories. “Editor”, however, is not a good term. Not only does it reflects the terminology, as well as the mentality, of classical German source criticism, but also because it represents a misunderstanding of what authorship was like in the Ancient Near East.

⁵⁰ For instance, it is very likely that the stories of the Hebrew Bible were not written down immediately, but circulated orally for a certain period of time. It should be regarded as somewhat of a certainty today that oral history is not a sound base on which to reconstruct the given history of ancient cultures. Cf. FENTRESS and WICKHAM, Social Memory (1994) p. 76 n. 7.
The conclusions which we shall have to draw from these biblical texts should be simple enough. Only the most nihilistic relativist would claim that no deportations took place at all. Thus, we know from many different sources that deportations formed a common element in the political history of the ancient Near East.\(^{51}\) Akkadian sources tell us of Nebuchadnezzar’s wars in the west.\(^{52}\) Also, it remains a fact that the Babylonian onomastic evidence from the Neo-Babylonian period contains Jewish names.\(^{53}\) One Babylonian source even mentions the name of king Jehoiachin.\(^{54}\) Archaeology also bears witness to the destructions following the campaign of Nebuchadnezzar in Judah.\(^{55}\) Beyond this, however, we really cannot know very much about details. We cannot say, for instance, how many deportations took place, nor can we know for certain the precise number of people who were deported.

In Chronicles we read about how the people of the land (לאחרי) after king Josiah’s death made his son Jehoahaz king. After three months, however, Pharaoh Necho brought Jehoahaz to Egypt and replaced him with his brother Eliakim, to whom he gave the name Jehoiakim (2 Chr 36:1–4). When Jehoiakim had reigned for eleven years he was brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar together with “some of the temple vessels” (יםixo νυτοτιον), which the Babylonian king brought to his own palace. Jehoiakim was replaced by his son Jehoiachin (36:5–8), who, in turn, had only reigned for three months when he was taken to Babylon, with the “precious vessels of the temple”, and his brother Zedekiah was made king of Judah in his place (36:9–10).

Zedekiah had reigned for eleven years when he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. When the Babylonians came to conquer Jerusalem, the Babylonian army killed without mercy, young men and young women, old and very old, “everyone was killed” (הנה ימים רבים), and the Babylonians brought a rich booty, including “all the vessels of the temple, great and small”, back to Babylon (36:11–18). Nebuchadnezzar burnt down the temple and the palaces of Jerusalem, broke down the wall of the city and destroyed a\(^{11}\)

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\(^{51}\) Cf. ODED, Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, 1979, and NA’AMAN and ZADOK, “Sargon II’s Deportations to Israel and Philistia”, JCS (1988) 36–46. However, deportation in the ancient Near East is a problematic topic, and we certainly cannot treat the phenomenon as homogeneous. Also, we know much less about the Neo-Babylonian deportation policy than we do about that of the Assyrians. For one attempt to discuss some of the problems involved from the biblical point of view, see HERRMANN, “Prophetie und Wirklichkeit”, in: Gesammelte Studien (1986) pp. 183–187. On Neo-Babylonian deportation policy, see also below.

\(^{52}\) See also further below, as well as Chapter 7.

\(^{53}\) See also further below, as well as Chapter 7.

\(^{54}\) See also further below, as well as Chapter 7.

\(^{55}\) See also further below, as well as Chapter 7.
it precious vessels. All the survivors were taken to Babylon to become the slaves of Nebuchadnezzar, and the land lay desolate for seventy years (36:19–21).

There has been a tendency in biblical scholarship to make the claim that the Chronicler is more “ideological”, and the Deuteronomist more “historical”. Such a view, however, is based upon a misunderstanding of the biblical narratives. Thus, the description of “the last days of Judah”, as it appears in the Chronicler’s story in 2 Chr 36, is no more, and no less, “historical” than the corresponding stories of the analogous events depicted in the Deuteronomistic history, or in the Book of Jeremiah, for that matter. This implies that the amount of “historical information” which we may extract from these stories, from all three texts, would appear to be fairly similar, and not amount to much more than the knowledge that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and other big cities in Judah, that he took a large booty, and that he deported some of the population of Jerusalem, including the royal family, to Babylonia. Further bits of information are of course available, but as we have no means of controlling them, we are hardly allowed to read much more out of these stories.

As we may see, the story of Chronicles is nevertheless different in several respects from that of 2 Kings. Not only is the text shorter and more coherently built up, but its “exaggerations” are not so much “rhetorical” or “argumentative” but rather “ideological”, making the claim that the whole country lay desolate for seventy years, a view strongly related to the one we find in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Life in Judah during the “exilic” period is virtually non-existent. The whole country lies in ruins. The whole population, except for the odd, half wild, peasant, trying to eke out a living in the hill side, has been taken away to Babylon. The future of YHWH’s people lies not with these insignificant peasants within the borders of Judah, but with the return of exiles from Babylonia.

56 The literature on the relationship between the Chronicler and the Deuteronomistic history is vast, and it is not necessary to cite it all here. For just one example, which is of relevance also to the present discussion, see the recent contribution by KALIMI and PURVIS, “King Jehoiachin and the Vessels of the Lord’s House in Biblical Literature”, CBQ 56 (1994) 449–457. Here, it is claimed that when the Chronicler contended that the vessels of the Temple were brought to Babylonia intact, opposing the Deuteronomistic story in 2 Kgs 24:13 about how the Babylonians cut the precious metals to pieces, this was in order to underscore the continuity of holiness between the worship in the second Temple and the Temple of Solomon.

57 The discussion on whether or not we have to reckon with a common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah is less important in this connection. Both of these texts share a common interest in their stressing of Judah as a desolate country after 586. Cf. also below.
Chapter 6: The Myth of the Empty Land

According to the Chronicler, the land of Judah was veritably depopulated for seventy years. As we have seen, the impression that the deportations were total, is given also by other sources (2 Kgs 25:11. Cf. also Jer 52:15). Even if the seventy year period mentioned in the Bible clearly should not be taken as an exact reference to the duration of the “exile”, but must be understood as a round, or “symbolic”, figure for a certain period of great importance, and even if scholars now believe that the so-called “exilic period” lasted for approximately 48 rather than 70 years, the Chronicler’s concern to convince us of Palestine as a tabula rasa after 586 BCE, and of the greater importance of those who returned as against those who were left in the country, has, notwithstanding, turned out to be remarkably successful.

Apparently, it also represents a major over-simplification to say that “the exile was over” in 538 BCE. Considering the large number of Jews who continued to live in the Diaspora, such a statement could never be taken literally. In fact, the exile never “ended.” Thus, it remains a fact that Judeans living in the Diaspora, in Egypt and in Babylonia, basically continued to live there.

From the Chronicler’s version of “the last days of Judah” we may learn at least two things. We learn how the “history” of ancient Israel is produced (yet again) through the reuse of accumulated shared traditions which are adapted for contemporary needs. We also witness how in the days of the Chronicler a certain accentuation of the catastrophe represents yet


another step towards the final establishing of the myth of the empty land. So, history writing in ancient Israel was not at all a stable enterprise. Rather, what we are dealing with are both continuity and change at the same time.

Today, we are obviously still having problems with the after-effects of the former tabula rasa views. While many scholars now admit that “most of the population” apparently was left in Judah, they at the same time put forward the claim that this population possessed no culture, no religion, and no polity. Whilst admitting that the majority of the population in all likelihood was left in the country, the prevailing view today seems to imply that institutions were transferred to Babylonia.

The very idea that a social system could be completely drained in the very it is currently described in some scholarly works is impossible on any account. What we are here witnessing, once again, is how a strong conservatism in scholarly tradition has contributed to upholding preposterous views on how societies functioned in the ancient world, subsequently leading to the current consensus concerning life in Judah after 586 BCE.

Obviously, we should not make the Torreyan mistake of denying the fact that what happened in Judah in 586 BCE was a major disaster and a terrible blow to the country. The effects of the deportations, however, being the last in a series, can hardly have been equally momentous for contemporary Judah as they were to become in later history and tradition, subsequently developing into belief systems which were to be known as “exile”, “return” and “restoration”. However, with the great majority of the population still intact, life in Judah after 586 BCE in all probability before long went on very much in the same way that it had done before the catastrophe.

What kind of Judah was this? Here we must once and for all make a clear stand against the kind of misconceived “romanticism” which we sometimes find in scholarly books. A society is not a “subject”, but consists of social structures with social actors that are always performing in relation to each other and operating interdependently, each with their different needs and functions. With the majority of the people still left in the

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61 See also above.
62 Cf. above.
63 Cf. below.
64 Even if it is not unproblematic to make comparisons between the different empires, it is noteworthy that NA’AMAN has claimed that the Assyrian deportations, which, incidentally, were practised in various ways by different kings, had no negative influence on the material culture of Israel, and could even lead to economic growth. See NA’AMAN, “Population Changes in Palestine Following Assyrian Deportations”, TA 20 (1993) 104–124. On the economic implications of being part of a larger empire, see also below, as well as Chapter 7.
country, obviously all the basic organizations continued much in the same way as they had before the Babylonian destructions and deportations took place. We should keep in mind that we are dealing with a small, basically agricultural society, in a Mediterranean climate. With life going back to normal fairly soon, it would represent a fatal misunderstanding of how ancient agricultural societies functioned to perceive any fundamental changes in everyday life or culture.

The people who went back to their tasks “among the ruins” and in the towns and villages were basically the same people that they had always been. They harboured the same needs as before, they tilled the soil as before, they reaped their harvests as before, they worshipped as before, and they consulted their priests and prophets as before. The removal of the royal family, high officials, military leaders, etc. did not change the infrastructure that made it possible for society to function. It is even questionable whether the superstructure represented by the king and his hierarchy ever contributed very much towards the upholding of the average polity in peace time.65

Obviously, the prevailing view of the situation in Judah in the exilic period is also widely influenced by the biblical account of “the return from exile”. However, the problems connected with this event are too complicated to be dealt with here, except briefly.

Contrary to the views put forward by Torrey, there is no need to disbelieve that there was a certain return of exiled persons to Judah from Babylonia after 538 BCE. Wealthy landowners, exercising authority and influence, came back from Babylonia and played an important role in the formation and consolidation of Jewish institutions and beliefs. The significance of their return after 538 BCE, however, is hardly matched by that of their removal from Judah some 50 years earlier, at least not in the early phase.

What return took place after 538 BCE is reflected in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. These books, however, are much more to be regarded as religious and political propaganda than historical documents. Nevertheless the antagonism described in Ezra/Nehemiah between the returnees and those who had remained behind in the home land gives us further indication that life in Judah during the exile was not quite as non-existent as

65 For one view of the nature of the self-sufficient ancient Near Eastern village communities, and their relation to the palatial economy, applying a Marxist model, see ZACCAGNINI, “Asiatic Mode of Production”. *Production and Consumption* (1989) 49–51. The study is useful for paying necessary attention to important economic aspects of ancient Near Eastern society, but some of the theoretical claims must be used with caution.
6.3 The Archaeology of Judah During the “Exilic” Period

If the arguments concerning a continuing settlement in Judah during the “exilic” period presented above are correct, we should expect to find some evidence of material continuation resulting from archaeological excavations.

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66 The so-called “Samaritan question”, has, especially in the earlier days of biblical scholarship, sometimes obscured the problem of “the return”. This debate, however, has nothing whatsoever to do with our period, but represents a much later phenomenon. For bibliographies on the “Samaritan problem”, see the surveys in CROWN, A Bibliography of the Samaritans, 1984, and MARGAIN, “Bibliographie samaritaine”, JA 268 (1980) 441–49; and JA 271 (1983) 179–86.

67 NICHOLSON, “The Meaning of the Expression תָּלֹם מַעְרָבָה”, JSS 10 (1965) 59–66, attempts to demonstrate that the expression תָּלֹם מַעְרָבָה should not be taken as a technical term designating a special sociological group within the population of Judah, but rather as varying in meaning from context to context. Nicholson’s contribution has contributed much towards putting an end to some of the worst speculations in this area. Cf. also SEITZ, Theology in Conflict (1989) pp. 42–65.
Chapter 6: The Myth of the Empty Land

That Judah was not completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar has actually been known for quite a while now, even if it may seem to have taken some time for the fact to appear in the more easily accessible textbooks. Whereas the archaeological evidence from such sites as Jerusalem, Tel Beit-Mirsim, Beth-Shemesh, Lachish, and Ramat Rahel shows clear traces of the destruction brought about by Nebuchadnezzar’s campaigns in the west, settlements in the northern part of Judah and Benjamin were not affected by the event. Several cities lying north of Jerusalem, in the traditional area of Benjamin, were not destroyed at all. In contrast to sites excavated south of Jerusalem, these places in fact prospered in the later sixth century. Thus, it was mainly the hill country of Judah that suffered deportations and destructions under Nebuchadnezzar. The rest of the country left more or less intact.

Thus, at Tell el-Fül, after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the fortress, the site apparently continued to be occupied, and the population seems to have increased considerably. The 1964 campaign affirmed the earlier assumed extensive post-586 occupation (period IIIB). The excavator even suggested the possibility that “refugees from the capital fled to such nearby villages as Tell el-Fül, possibly intending to wait out the exile close at hand until they could return to Jerusalem”.


69 Apparently, not all archaeologists seem to share this revised and obviously more balanced view of the period of the “exile”. SHILOH, for instance, can still refer to the “almost total destruction of the towns of the Judean Kingdom in 586”. See SHILOH, “Judah and Jerusalem in the Eighth-Sixth Centuries B.C.E.”, Recent Excavations in Israel (1989) p. 102.

70 LAPPE, “The 7th-6th-Century Occupation: Period III", The Third Campaign at Tell el-Fül (1981) p. 39. The fact that the identification of Tell el-Fül with Gibeah has been challenged, needs not concern us here. See ARNOLD, Gibeah (1990) pp. 45–54. It is sufficient, for the present purpose, that we have evidence for occupation in Judah in the period between the fall of Jerusalem and the Persian period. It is of less importance whether or not we are able to link the various sites in question with biblical town-names. One
Among the other sites in the vicinity of Jerusalem which bear witness to continued occupation in the years after 586 BCE is Tell en-Nasbeh, traditionally identified with biblical Mizpah. The later phase of Stratum I at Tell en-Nasbeh has been dated to ca. 575 BCE - 450 BCE.\textsuperscript{71} What is of particular interest to us, of course, is that the archaeological evidence for occupation at Mizpah in this period lends credibility to claims that the Mizpah story(ies) found in 2 Kgs 25:22-25, and in a different and more extensive version in Jer 40:7–41:18, reflects historical events, and that we may assume that the Babylonians set up some kind of administrative centre at Mizpah,\textsuperscript{72} something, of course, they would never have done if there had been no population left in the country.

Further, at En-Gedi, one of the sites that was destroyed by the Babylonians, there appears to have been found some indication of occupation, or rather of re-occupation, after the destruction by the Babylonians of the Stratum V settlement.\textsuperscript{73}

Also at Gibeon (El-Jib) new evidence seems to change our picture of the settlement pattern. Whereas Pritchard himself apparently did not believe that the city itself was rebuilt after the Babylonian invasion,\textsuperscript{74} it has recently been suggested that the Gibeon tombs, dated to the 7th and 6th centuries, may have been in use also after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.\textsuperscript{75}

As further evidence in support of continued settlement at Gibeon in the years following the Babylonian invasion into Judah are also six inscribed handles from Gibeon. These handles are among the extremely rare epigraphic material to be dated to the Babylonian period.\textsuperscript{76} We should keep in mind, however, that the identification of archaeological sites with biblical towns or cities is not always as simple as some scholars apparently want it to be. Cf. the wise remarks by FRANKEN, "The Problem of Identification in Biblical Archaeology", \textit{PEQ} 108 (1976) 3–11.

\textsuperscript{71} WAMPLER, "The Stratification of Tell en-Nasbeh", \textit{Tell en-Nasbeh} (1947) p. 185.

\textsuperscript{72} On the Gedaliah problem, cf. above.

\textsuperscript{73} MAZAR and DUNAYEVSKY, "En-Gedi. 4. and 5. Seasons of Excavations", \textit{IEJ} 17 (1967) p. 138.

\textsuperscript{74} PRITCHARD, \textit{Gibeon. Where the Sun Stood Still}, 1962.

\textsuperscript{75} ESHEL, "The Late Iron Age Cemetery of Gibeon", \textit{IEJ} 37 (1987) p. 16.

\textsuperscript{76} PRITCHARD, \textit{Hebrew Inscriptions and Stamps from Gibeon} (1959) p. 15. The handles concerned are the ones containing the name \textit{dml}’ (numbers 21, 25–29). Whereas more and more material remains have become available, the written evidence found in Judah in the period immediately after 586 is extremely meagre, if existing at all. At least,
mind, however, that it is somewhat questionable whether these handles, found in unstratified debris, can be dated as precisely as has been claimed. The same applies for a similar handle from ha-Mosah, dated by Avigad to the same period on the basis of the Gibeon handles. On the basis of this evidence Avigad wants to see the village of ha-Mosah, situated approximately 7 km west of Jerusalem, as yet another town in the vicinity of Jerusalem that escaped destruction in 586 BCE, and where life went on as normal (together with Tell en-Nasbeh (Mizpah), Gibeon, Bethel, and Tell el-Fül (Gibeah)).

Obviously, it is not the purpose of the present study to attempt to belittle the destructions of Jerusalem and the Judean cities which took place in connection with Nebuchadnezzar’s invasions. The destruction layers found in major sites from this period clearly confirm the picture of violent devastations, demonstrating beyond doubt, for example, that Torrey’s more extreme views will have to be abandoned once and for all. In the present context, however, I am not so much concerned with the question of destruction layers, but rather with what remained after Nebuchadnezzar’s armies had left Judah. There has here, undoubtedly, been a tendency to make far too much out of the evidence in a negative way. Archaeologists working in Palestine, and later in Israel, have apparently committed the very same mistakes as their colleagues in biblical studies. By taking the information found in the Bible at face value, they have interpreted their archaeological finds uncritically in the light of the biblical texts.

As for Jerusalem, there can be little doubt that the city suffered heavy demolition. There is not much archaeological evidence, however, which has been discovered so far, that bears witness to the destructions. Even less certainty exists with regard to the extent of the destructions, and what im-

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we have nothing that may throw any light on the size of the population, or on the activity that went on in the period. For a survey of the epigraphic evidence from the Persian period, see further LEMAIRE, “Les inscriptions palestiniennes d’époque perse”, Trans (1989) 87-105, especially pp. 93-94.


78 Among the places believed to have been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in his 586 campaign are, in addition to Jerusalem, such sites as Én-Gedi, Lachish, Arad, and Ramat Rahel. See the chronological-stratigraphical chart in SHILOH, “Judah and Jerusalem in the Eighth-Sixth Centuries B.C.E.”, Recent Excavations in Israel (1989) p. 103. Again, however, there are some problems involved in the very interpretation of these destructions. Further, as we know that Nebuchadnezzar made several campaigns in the west, the actual dating of all of these destruction layers to the year 586 is not as unproblematic as one might think. See on this also below.

79 For a critique not exactly of the “biblicism” of much Palestinian archaeology, but of its “positivism”, see HANBURY-TENISON, “Hegel in Prehistory”, Antiquity 60 (1986) 108-114. It is only fair to mention that some of the worst exponents of “biblicism” or “positivism” working in this field are not mentioned in HANBURY-TENISON’s article.
portance we should attach to them in relation to the question of continued settlement in the area. Other significant questions concern the actual size of the city on the eve of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege, the number of its inhabitants, and the fate of the population.

For some time now discussions concerning the size of pre-exilic Jerusalem have been an issue of turbulent debate between the so-called “minimalists”, maintaining that the pre-exilic walled city of Jerusalem only comprised the eastern hill, and the “maximalists”, who want to include also the western hill. Apparently, as a result of recent excavations in Jerusalem, the minimalist view can no longer be upheld. Yet, the exact extent of the city is still a matter of fierce controversy, something, however, which need not concern us here only marginally.

Whether or not the late Yigael Shiloh, an archaeologist of the maximalist persuasion, was correct in his judgement that the fortified area of Jerusalem covered about 600 dunams (not including the suburbs), all of which, Shiloh claims, were densely populated, is problematic. Including also the suburbs (mainly to the north of the city), Shiloh estimated the population of the city towards the end of the 8th century to be between 25,000 and

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80 The thesis that the Western Hill was also settled before 586 was first proposed by ALT, and like so many of ALT’s early suggestions this assumption too has found support in recent archaeological excavations. One may here compare, for instance, the following articles by LAPERROUSAZ, “Quelques remarques sur le rempart de Jérusalem à l’époque de Néhémie”, Folia Orientalia 21 (1980) 179-85; “À propos du ‘Premier mur’ et du ‘Deuxième mur’ de Jérusalem”, Revue des Études Juives 138 (1979) 1-16, and “Jérusalem à l’époque perse”, Trans 1 (1989) 55-65. Apparently, it represented a monumental blow to the traditional “minimalist” view, particularly championed by KENYON, when AVIGAD during excavations of the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem discovered both settlements, and an installation which he thought to be an “Israelite tower”, which went back to the period of the First Temple. Cf. Discovering Jerusalem (1984) p. 54. AVIGAD also aimed to have come across evidence for the 586 B.C.E destruction of Jerusalem not far from the tower, the very first traces of Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign ever to have been found in the city itself. The assumption by AVIGAD, however, that Israelite houses were spread over “the entire plateau of the Western Hill”, with reference to TUSHINGHAM’s excavations in the Armenian Garden, apparently is not supported by the material that is being referred to. TUSHINGHAM has made it quite clear in his excavation report from the Armenian Garden that there was no occupation to speak of on the site in the late pre-exilic Iron Age (IA). See TUSHINGHAM, Excavations in 1961-1967 (1985) pp. 15-16. Rather, the area had been used as a quarry. On the basis of his own excavations, TUSHINGHAM has developed an intermediate position between the “minimalist” and the “maximalist” positions. See “The Western Hill of the Monarchy”, ZDPV 95 (1979) p. 44. For Jerusalem, see also below chapter 7.

81 That emotions have become more and more involved in the discussion of the size of pre-exilic Jerusalem may be witnessed in BROSHI’s review of TUSHINGHAM’s excavation report in IEJ 40 (1990) pp. 229-230.
40,000 inhabitants. Such an estimate, of course, can only be guesswork. It is, however, sufficient to know that we are dealing with a fairly large city at this time, with a population which we shall have to regard as considerable. The question is: What happened to Jerusalem and to all of these people? When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 it is more than unlikely that he went about demolishing all of the 600 dunams of the fortified city. Such a task would have been enormous and probably impossible, and on any account unnecessary. It is more likely that the wooden gates were burned, and breaches made in the walls, in order that the city could not be defended. Obviously, this would not make the whole of the city uninhabitable, and it would have been possible for those who escaped Nebuchadnezzar’s armies and fled into the countryside, at least to some extent, to return to Jerusalem at a later point. Apparently, the reference to those “who are living in these ruins” of Ezek 33:24 is a reflection of this situation. Taking the fair dimensions of Jerusalem into consideration, there are, therefore, good reasons to assume some continued settlement also in the city itself after the worst tumults had come to an end.

New evidence in support of this assumption has come from recent excavations in the Hinnom Valley, a site particularly rich in burial caves. Apparently, these caves continued to be in use even after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Thus, we have here for the first time evidence in support of the continuation of settlement in the city of Jerusalem itself during the “exilic” period.

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83 We may here refer to the remark by SHILOH on the destruction layer of Stratum 10 in the city of David, believed by SHILOH to go back to the 586 destruction: “No human remains were found trapped in the ruins”. SHILOH, Excavations at the City of David. I. 1978–1982 (1984) p. 29. On Stratum 10, see also in the same work, pp. 17–20. For what it is worth, this observation does not, of course, help us much in our discussion. We have no means of knowing if the people in this area fled to neighbouring villages, or whether they were deported.
84 It is not necessary in this connection to discuss any further whether this actually was the size of the city. For further references, see chapter 7 below.
85 The phenomenon is reflected in such biblical texts as Isaiah 58:12, and Amos 4:3.
86 For a similar view, see LAPERROUSAZ, “Jérusalem à l’époque perse”, Trans 1 (1989) p. 56. LAPERROUSAZ in fact argues in favour of a population of 12,000 in Jerusalem during the exile, before any return of exiles had taken place, claiming support from recent archaeological excavations in Jerusalem.
However, not everyone who had lost their homes as a result of the outrages of the Neo-Babylonian army, in Jerusalem or elsewhere in Judah, could return to their original dwellings. The question what happened to those who could not go back to their home towns and villages have now apparently been solved through recent surveys, undertaken by the Israel Department of Antiquities in the years 1967–1968. During these surveys a large number of sites with material remains from the 6th century, many of them new, were discovered in Judah. There can be little doubt that in these small towns and villages we have direct access to places where large numbers of the Judeans who survived Nebuchadnezzar’s invasions were living.88

6.4 The Evidence from Transjordan

Since the sources available to us when attempting to form an idea of Judah in the decades following 586 BCE are very meagre indeed, it may be of some importance to take into consideration also the evidence from Transjordan. Even if the biblical writers may give another impression, we have no reason to believe that Nebuchadnezzar would have treated the kingdom of Judah in any way differently from the kingdoms of Transjordan.90

at Tell el-Fül, north of Jerusalem, only much richer. As a result of his discoveries, BARKAY has also proposed a “supermaximalist” alternative to the classic maximalist/minimalist debate. See on this his response in Biblical Archaeology Today (1986) 476–77. Cf. also the literature listed after the comment by KLONER, op. cit. 478–79. See also chapter 7 below.


89 Cf. also above.

90 Clearly, “all” of the different city states in the Neo-Babylonian imperial system were treated, more or less, in a similar manner. For a Phoenician example, see DANDAMAEV, “A Governor of Byblos in Sippar”, in: Immigration and Emigration Within the Ancient Near East. Eds. VAN LERBERGHE and SCHOORS (1995) 29–31. It is commonly assumed that the Persians inherited the imperial policy of the Neo-Babylonian Empire that, again, had taken over its administrative system from the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Research in these areas, therefore, has contributed considerably towards a better understanding of the Neo-Babylonian imperial system. JOSETTE ELAYI has published widely on the Phoenician city states during the Neo-Assyrian and Persian periods. See the following works by ELAYI (some also dealing with the Neo-Babylonians): “The Phoenician Cities in the Persian Period”, JANES 12 (1980) 13–28; “The Relations between Tyre and Carthage during the Persian Period”, JANES 13 (1981) 15–29; “Les cités phéniciennes et l’Empire assyrien à l’époque d’Assurbanipal”, RA 77 (1983) 45–58; “Les symboles de la
this reason, we may assume that the history of the Transjordanian kingdoms in this period would be fairly analogous to that of Judah and, consequently, of a certain interest to us.

This view is also shared by Hadidi, who claims that when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the eastern Mediterranean area in the early part of the 6th century, “the Ammonites fell victim to his power and much of the population was carried off to Babylonia into exile.” 91 Obviously, it could well be that this is exactly what happened, but we should be aware of the fact that we have very little evidence in support of such an allegation. In fact, our only written source for postulating that the raids of Nebuchadnezzar into the west also comprised Transjordan is Josephus, who claims that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Ammon in 582/81 BCE. 92 However, recent archaeological finds may seem to lend some support to this claim. 93 This all the more likely when we take into consideration also the possibility that the Ammonites, under king Baalis, took part in Zedekiah’s anti-Babylonian rebellion in 589 BCE, leading to the final ruin of Judah. 94 The fate of the other Transjordanian kingdoms in the Neo-Babylonian period is even less certain, something, of course, which has not prevented scholars from making their own suppositions. 95

92 Josephus, Antiquities 10,9,9 §§ 181f.
93 Recent excavations carried out at Tell Safut, a site prospering in the Late Bronze and Late Iron periods, situated strategically on the northern edge of the present highwa to Jerash, approximately 12 km north-west of the centre of Amman, have, among other finds, yielded a burnt Late Babylonian seal impression from the very latest occupation (Iron IIC). Even if the evidence in itself is marginal, we may, in view of the total picture of Transjordanian archaeology that is beginning to emerge, here have evidence to support the claim that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the site. See WIMMER, “The Excavations at Tell Safut”, SHAJ 3 (1987) 279–82. No continuation into the Persian period has been discovered, but then only a very small part of the site has been excavated so far.
95 Thus, the fate of Edom is quite uncertain. For a survey of territory and sites in Edom, see MACDONALD, “East of the Jordan”. Territories and Sites of the Hebrew Scriptures, 2000. See further the brief discussion, with references, in PARR, “Contacts between North West Arabia and Jordan in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages”, SHAJ 1 (1982)
Glueck’s surveys in Transjordan and in the Jordan Valley in the thirties and forties have been extremely influential, leading to the depiction of Transjordan in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods as a more or less emptied area, where little or no activity took place. As we may well see, this is quite similar to the earlier prevalent view of Judah during the so-called “exilic period.” Glueck’s surveys clearly concluded with the general judgement that after a prosperous Iron Age with intensive occupation in Transjordan, there followed a period of decline. The occupational gap ended only with a new flourishing first in the Nabatean and later in the Hellenistic/Roman and Byzantine periods.96

Recent surveys and excavations in Transjordan have proved Glueck wrong in several of his assumptions.97 For instance, surveys undertaken in

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97 See in general (with literature): SAUER, “Transjordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages”, BASOR 263 (1986) 1–26. SAUER, however, may seem to go too far in his assessment of the cultures in Transjordan after the Babylonian invasion in the area, and claims that the occupation in the area in the period following the fall of Judah “flourished more than
the East Jordan Valley in 1975 and 1976 clearly indicate that the majority of the Persian sites reflect continuous occupation from the Iron II period. Not many excavations have been undertaken so far in Transjordan which throw any light upon the Iron IIC and Persian periods. The fact that there exists an unbroken continuity between the material culture of Iron IIC and the Babylonian period, and that something new first started with the Persian period, is, however, suggested beyond doubt also by the excavations at Tell el Mazar.

Despite the fact that altogether we have very little information on the history and archaeology of Transjordan in the Neo-Babylonian period, we are, nevertheless, beginning to obtain a certain broad picture of what was going on. Most important are recent surveys definitively pointing, rather than the settlement gap in Transjordan following the Babylonian invasions. The picture of a continuous Ammonite occupation and culture, suggested by the archaeological evidence, is clearly analogous to what we find in Judah, and we may consequently believe that the settlement history of the kingdom of Judah in the Neo-Babylonian period must have been fairly similar to that of the kingdom of Ammon, and vice versa.


99 YASSINE, Tell el Mazar, 1984.

100 For attempts to write synthesizing presentations of the “national” histories of Moab and Ammon see the studies by WORSCHECH, Die Beziehungen Moabs zu Israel und Ägypten in der Eisenzeit, 1990, and HÜBNER, Die Ammonitter, 1992.
6.5 The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Judah

When reviewing the plight of Judah during the so-called “exilic” period far too little attention has been paid hitherto to the other member of the “partnership”, namely the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The endeavour to study the fate of Judah in splendid isolation, without taking into consideration also the greater international context in which it abided, has encumbered the production of an accurate picture of what “actually happened.”

In view of the importance of Nebuchadnezzar’s military operations in the western Mediterranean area for the developments that took place in Judah, it is more than regrettable that we are so poorly furnished with extrabiblical sources. The little information that can be obtained from current Babylonian sources is very meagre indeed, and does not tell us much beyond the fact that Nebuchadnezzar apparently made a series of campaigns in the west (Hattu), following his victory over the Egyptian Army at Carchemish in 605 BCE and his succession to the throne in the same year, something which clearly bears witness to military unrest in the area.

From the biblical sources, referred to above, it may be implied that a few years after this decisive event, the king of Judah, Jehoiakim, submitted to Nebuchadrezzar, only to rebel against Babylonia around 600 BCE. This action, probably prompted by a renewed hope for Egyptian support, led to a Babylonian punitive campaign against Judah and the installation of Jehoiakim’s son, Jehoiachin as a king. In 597 Jerusalem was conquered, and Jehoiachin taken to Babylonia, together with a part of the population. Concerning this latter event we possess Babylonian evidence. In the Babylonian Chronicle we read how Nebuchadnezzar, in his seventh year, in the month of Kislev, mustered his army and marched to Hattu, where he laid siege to Jerusalem (“the city of Judah”), and seized it on the second day of the month of Adar. He then captured the king and appointed another king.

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101 As an example of a scholar who puts too much trust in the use of the Bible as a source for the reconstruction of the historical events of the exile we may mention Wiseman. Wiseman deals with the history of the early reign of Nebuchadnezzar in Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (1956) pp. 23–37. For a general survey of Nebuchadnezzar’s operations against the West see Wiseman, Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon (1985) pp. 21–39. On the Neo-Babylonian inscriptions in general, see Berger, Die neubabylonischen Königsschriften, 1973.

102 In a British Museum Tablet (BM 21946, 96–4–9,51), a chronicle concerning the early years of Nebuchadnezzar, there appears several times the geographical term Hattu as the destination of Nebuchadnezzar’s western campaigns. Apparently, Hattu is a general name for the whole of Syria and Palestine, and we do not know exactly which precise areas are referred to by the term hattu in this context.
of his own choice, bringing a vast tribute with him to Babylon.\textsuperscript{103} Even if the king he had installed had been “a king of his own choice”, this did not prevent Zedekiah from revolting against his Babylonian overlord. In 586 BCE Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, and further deportations took place. Of this final campaign of Nebuchadnezzar into Judah, leading to the fall of the city in 586 BCE, we have no record but the biblical.\textsuperscript{104} It is also unfortunate that we have very little evidence concerning the Judean population in the Diaspora from the Babylonian side.\textsuperscript{105}

When reading the commentators on the biblical texts relating to these events, one sometimes gets the Sunday school feeling that they regard the Babylonians as an evil people who came to destroy the true believers in

\textsuperscript{103} BM 21946, lines 11–13. See GRAYSON, Assyrian and Babylonian Chronic (1975) p. 102. The text, apparently, refers to the invasion in the year 597. We have, so far, no chronicles beyond the 10th year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (595 BCE).

\textsuperscript{104} On the other side, it is probably equally typical that the deportations following the invasion of 701 BCE, referred to in Assyrian sources, but not mentioned at all in the Hebrew Bible, may have been as extensive as those of 586. Cf. STOHLMANN, “The Judean Exile After 701 B.C.E.”, Scripture in Context 2 (1983) pp. 147–75.

\textsuperscript{105} As our sources are very scarce indeed, consisting basically of onomastic material, mostly from the Achaemenid period, we obviously cannot know very much about the Judean community in Babylonia (see for this also chapter 7 below). A scholar who has dealt extensively with these sources throughout his career is ZADOK. See already his work from 1979, The Jews in Babylonia During the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods. One text from Babylon itself, relating to the distribution of oil to certain foreign families during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, mentions king Jehoiachin and other Jewish names. See WEIDNER, “Jojachin, König von Juda in Babylonechen Keilinschriften”, Mélanges syriens (1939) 923–35. With this exception, we have almost no extra-biblical written documents related to the Jews in Babylonia before the 5th century. From this period, the so-called Murashu tablets, dating from the reigns of Artaxerxes I and Darius II, provide us with important indirect information on the prosperity of Jews at Nippur a hundred years or so “after the exile was over”. The wealthy Murashu family dynasty, engaged in agricultural management and banking business, has left us the largest private archives from the Achaemenid period. See CARDASCIA, Les archives des Murâšu, 1951; COOGA, West Semitic Personal Names, 1976; STOLPER, Entrepreneurs and Empire, 198 DONBAZ and STOLPER, Istanbul Murâšu Texts, 1997. See now also chapter 7 below for more recent works in this area.

The study of Jewish names in Mesopotamia, however, is problematic. Apparently, the names of Jews from the higher social ranks (as well as those of other nationalities in Babylonia) were changed into Akkadian names. See ZADOK, The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponomy (1988) pp. 18 and 175. Clearly, this makes the identification of Jewish persons very intricate. The usage is reflected in the Hebrew Bible in the names of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel in the Book of Ezra. It is interesting to note, though, that many of the Jews in Babylonia apparently belonged to the literate part of society. At Nippur we find a high percentage of scribes among the Jewish population. See ZADOK, “Onomastic, Prosopographic and Lexical Notes”, BN 65 (1992) pp. 52–53. This phenomenon is clearly reflected in the title of Ezra, who is called יְדֹד several times in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.
Judah out of sheer wickedness, and that the bringing of Judeans into exile was a mean punishment or base revenge following the uprising of the Judean king. It is high time that we start thinking about the whole matter from a rather different perspective.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire represented a highly developed civilization, with an advanced political and economic structure. When Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptian Army at Carchemish in 605 BCE, a new era had seen the light of dawn in the ancient Near East. From now on, until it was conquered by Cyrus in 539 BCE, the Babylonian Empire would experience perhaps the most brilliant decades in its whole history.

Nebuchadnezzar’s sovereignty was over an empire in the true Mesopotamian tradition. Having no natural resources of its own, the whole existence of the empire depended entirely upon the import of materials like metals, stone, and timber, and all sorts of food and luxury items. Already at an early stage the economy of the Mesopotamian countries had turned into an aggressive and expansionist one, soon to be followed also by territorial expansion. The conquest of the neighbouring countries became ne-

106 On the development of the Nebuchadnezzar legend, see also above.


109 For a survey of examples of the biltu ("tribute") and other forms of taxation in Mesopotamia, see CAD 2 (1965) pp. 224–236. For a survey of taxation and booty, metals, wood, wool, as well as other goods, with a weight on the Assyrian evidence, see Elat, Economic Relations in the Lands of the Bible (1977) pp. 15–97. On the interrelationship of the economy of the Mesopotamian empires with the conquered territories, against a weight on the Assyrians, see the same place, pp. 227–239. Also for Elat, however, who refers to Malamat, there is no Judah to speak of after 586 (p. 226). See also chapter 7 below.

110 The greed of the Neo-Babylonian Empire for metals is clearly reflected in the biblical stories of the destruction of Jerusalem. We note the striking preoccupation with the temple vessels in 2 Chr 36:18–19, and the detailed description of the removal from the temple of all objects made not only of silver and gold, but also of bronze (2 Kgs 25:13–17). On metals in the Neo-Babylonian Empire, see also below Chapter 7.

111 The voracity for timber should eventually contribute to the deforestation of the famous cedars of Phoenicia. From the Neo-Babylonian Wadi Brissa inscription we learn that there existed an annual biltu consisting of cedar trees. See Elayi, “L’exploitation des cèdres du Mont Liban par les rois assyriens et néobabyloniens”, JESHO 31 (1988) p. 24. See also chapter 7 below.
cessary in order to secure control of vital trade routes, and taxes and tribute were needed for the consolidation of the empire. It has been claimed, in fact, that the sole purpose of the enormous military and administrative system\textsuperscript{112} in Mesopotamia was to secure a constant flow of goods from the peripheral, conquered territories and into the centre of the empire.\textsuperscript{113}

Trade and imports constituted extremely important factors in the Neo-Babylonian economy. Even if the economy was still mostly in the hands of the royal palace and the temple\textsuperscript{114}, in the Neo-Babylonian period private families would come to contribute more and more to an increasingly prospering private economy,\textsuperscript{115} which, in the long run, would be to the benefit of “the whole” country.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{112} From the ever growing archaeological and written record we know that the great civilizations of the ancient Near East over the years developed very advanced administrative systems. One may here consult, for instance, The Organization of Power. Eds. Gibson and Biggs, 1991. For more comprehensive treatments, see chapter 7 below.

\textsuperscript{113} Larsen, “The Tradition of Empire in Mesopotamia”, in: Power and Propaganda (1979) pp. 98–100. “The fully developed Assyrian empire may somewhat flippantly be described as a vacuum cleaner, a huge military and administrative apparatus designed to secure a constant flow of goods from periphery to center” (op. cit., p. 100). The influence of the Marxist structuralist historian Wallerstein and his works on the transition from feudalism to capitalism is here evident. Even if the approach may be somewhat simplistic, or even anachronistic, it has clearly been useful in its stressing of the importance of economic structures in ancient societies. For a further attempt to use Wallerstein’s works for a better understanding of ancient states, see Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World, Eds. Rowlands, Larsen, and Kristiansen, 1987. For a succinct survey of the usefulness of Wallerstein’s “World system theory” for the study of our period, see also Olivier, “Money Matters: Some Remarks on the Economic Situation in the Kingdom of Judah During the Seventh Century”, BN 73 (1994) pp. 90–98. On “centre” and “periphery” in the power structure of the ancient Near East, see also the pertinent remarks by Liverani, Prestige and Interest (1990) pp. 44–50 and passim. Further on Mesopotamian economy and imperial policy, see chapter 7 below.

\textsuperscript{114} Dandamaev, “State and Temple in Babylonia in the First Millennium B.C.”, in: State and Temple Economy in the the Ancient Near East 2 (1979) 589–596. For a survey of the extant economic texts from the early Neo-Babylonian period till the time of Nebuchadnezzar, see the works by Brinkman and Kennedy referred to in chapter 7 below.

\textsuperscript{115} In particular, the importance of certain wealthy families like the Murashu family in Nippur, and the Egozi family in Babylon should be mentioned. Cf. Oelsner, “Die neunundspitthabylonische Zeit”, in: Circulation of Goods in Non-Palatial Context (1984) 221–240. The archives of the Murashu family, dating from Nippur in the 5th century, are important to us because of the many Jewish names that bear witness both to the continued existence of Jews in Babylonia long after the “return”, and also to the relative prosperity of at least some of them (cf. also above).

\textsuperscript{116} On the remarkably high standard of living in Babylon in the Neo-Babylonian period, see Dandamaev, “Free Hired Labor in Babylonia During the Sixth through Fourth Centuries BC”, in: Labor in the Ancient Near East (1987) 271–279. Even if, of course, the large groups of poor forced labourers and slaves could never take part in the economic “boom” of the time, debt slavery was virtually non-existent during the whole period
It is this kind of imperial structure that we must regard as the framework into which we must also attempt to fit the kingdom of Judah. The few Akkadian texts at our disposal for the period in question explicitly state the economic factor. The long series of campaigns waged in Hatti was apparently made to secure also the collection of tribute.\textsuperscript{117} It has been pointed out on several occasions that Judah functioned as a military buffer zone between Mesopotamia and Egypt.\textsuperscript{118} Important as this may have been, it was certainly above all for economic reasons that Nebuchadnezzar needed Judah.

Consequently, it would have been nonsensical of Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Judah. As his imperial system depended on the accumulation of wealth based on the production outside his own country,\textsuperscript{119} the total annihilation of a conquered territory would in fact be an act against his own interest. As his empire subsisted on already established forms of wealth pro-

\textsuperscript{117} The Akkadian word for tribute, \textit{hitu}, appears also in l. 13 of the Babylonian Chronicle, describing the conquest of Judah in 597. See Grayson, \textit{Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles} (1975) p. 102. In fact, the whole of Chronicle 5, of which "our" text forms but a small part, can be read as an illustration of how Nebuchadnezzar practised his "periphery/centre" imperial policy.

\textsuperscript{118} One scholar who has dedicated much effort to the stressing of this factor is Malamat (cf. the works of this author referred to above). The belief that Palestine interested the surrounding countries for strategic, and not for economic reasons, is widespread. In his review of the economic importance of Canaan for Egypt in the Late Bronze Age, Ahituv claims that the interest of Egypt is probably more of a geographical and strategic kind, rather than economic. See this author's "Economic Factors in the Egyptian Conquest of Canaan", \textit{IEJ} 28 (1978) p. 104. Yet, Ahituv is here clearly underestimating the economic aspect. The booty and tax from Canaan for one year, among which we find 103,000 litres of oil and 95,000 litres of wine (same place p. 99) represented a considerable economic value even to a rich country like Egypt. It is of particular interest that we find the two commodities oil and wine as typical products of Palestine (cf. further below). See also chapter 7 below.

\textsuperscript{119} See Ekholm and Friedman, "'Capital' Imperialism and Exploitation in Ancient Systems", in: \textit{Power and Propaganda}. Ed. Larsen (1979) p. 45. There are many good points in this article, attempting to explain Mesopotamian history as being based on a centre/periphery economic system, which is, "by definition, imperialistic insofar as the center of a system accumulates wealth based on the production of a wider area" (p. 45). The stressing of a fundamental continuity between ancient and modern world systems, however, is open to discussion. Compare also the statement by Funck: "Der neubabylonische Staat bildete in erster Linie wohl eine Art politische Überbau, den der König von Babylon zur Mehrung seiner Macht und seines Reichtums aufrechterhielt...". See also "Studien zur sozialökonomischen Situation Babylonien", in: \textit{Gesellschaft und Kultur im Alten Vorderasien} (1982) pp. 66–67. See also chapter 7 below.
duction and accumulation, it would rather be in his interest to maintain, or even increase, the existing modes of production.120

What probably happened in Judah in 586, to the best of our knowledge, was this: By bringing into exile the aristocracy of Judah Nebuchadnezzar in fact took away the state, which was identical with the royal family and the upper classes. In addition, a number of artisans were probably deported. We know that these were in great demand in Babylon, where the economy was booming, and artisans were needed for Nebuchadnezzar’s many building projects.121 The Judean state was then replaced with a Neo-Babylonian state. This would have no effect on the production of Judah, where life fairly soon would have “returned to normal.”

It is a mistake to believe that the upper classes were particularly important for the day to day running of a country in a basically agricultural society like Judah. To a certain extent, the overarching political institutions did provide the environment for the population within the borders of the country to function. The central organs, however, did not themselves participate in the actual production of food and other goods necessary for the people to have a satisfactory way of life. With non-functioning central organs, the stability necessary for a prospering economy and the social order that secured the quality of life for the population would suffer.122 In an imperial system, however, whenever the local jurisdiction was replaced with another by the occupying foreign power, this would clearly not be a problem.

Again, the destruction of the temple must also be viewed within this context. Far too often we find in current textbooks and introductions to ancient Israel a tendency to treat the temple as a religious institution somewhat isolated from the rest of the society. We must stop regarding the tem-

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120 EKHOLM and FRIEDMAN, “Capital’ Imperialism”, in: Power and Propaganda (1979) p. 52. To some degree this important point was made by GRAHAM, “‘Vinedressers and Ploughmen’. 2 Kings 25:12 and Jeremiah 52:16”, BA 47 (1984) p. 56, who claims that “Babylonian policy towards conquered territories, as with most imperial powers, to utilize their resources to the benefit of the state”. This fact is reflected in the text of the Hebrew Bible, where the references in 2 Kgs 25:12 and Jer 52:16 to “vine-dressers” (נעים וגרים) and “ploughmen” (זרעים) clearly allude to those left behind in Judah to till the soil for their Babylonian overlords.


122 KAUFRMAN, “The Collapse of Ancient States”, in: The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations (1991) p. 223. This whole volume, based on a seminar held in 1982 in Santa Fe which discussed sociocultural change and stability in ancient cultures, is useful for the present discussion as it shows that change, rather than collapse, appears to be very much the tendency in most places where the phenomenon has been studied.
ple in Jerusalem solely as a “religious institution”, and realize more clearly that we are in fact dealing with a major political and economic institution, as well as a religious one. Together with the Judean king and the aristocracy, the temple would have been a major landowner and an enormously important economic institution, similar to what we find also in other ancient Near Eastern cultures.123 Besides the symbol effect, and the undoubtedly strong damaging outcome on morale and national and religious pride, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar must also be viewed as a means of gaining economic and political control, and as part of Nebuchadnezzar’s programme of imposing his own superstructure on Judean economy and polity.

It has been claimed that Palestine was poor and Babylonia was rich.124 Is, however, is only a half truth.125 It remains a fact that ancient Israel was always producing more agricultural products than she herself could use. As we learn more about agriculture in ancient Israel, it is possible to evaluate it also from a broader socio-economic point of view. For the moment, we are only at the beginning of our knowledge of this important area. Far too little attention has been paid to the enormous economic importance of agricultural production in ancient Israel, even if, of course, some important work has been done.125 In the present context, I will only mention two products, both of which would be of the greatest economic value, and both of which did not exist in Mesopotamia, and, consequently, would have to be imported there: the grape vine (Vitis vinifera L.) and the olive (Olea europaea L.).126 In fact, the products of the very trees for

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124 A survey of economic relations in ancient Israel before 586 BCE is found in SILVER, Prophets and Markets, 1983. On the economic situation in Judah during “the exile”, see in particular KREISSIG, Die sozialökonomische Situation in Juda zur Achämenidenzeit (1973) passim. Cf. also the unpublished Master’s Thesis by GRAHAM, Palestine During the Period of the Exile (1977) pp. 35–55. See also chapter 7 below.

125 On agriculture in general, see the recent synthesis by BOROWSKI, Agriculture in Iron Age Israel, 1987. See also the excellent survey by STAGER, “The Firstfruits of Civilization”, in: Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages (1985) 172–187, with ample bibliography. See also chapter 7 below.

126 We are here dealing with an important aspect of biblical studies where we are at present only at the beginning. According to the classic “trade text” in Ezek 27:17, wheat, olives, early figs, honey, olive oil (תֹּבָא), and balm constituted the most important export products of Judah and Israel. Strangely, wine is not mentioned here. The products that are referred to in Ezekiel are economically highly interesting, and the manufacturing and trading of all of them in need of further research. Honey (תֹּבָא), for instance, is, in my view, a very important, but neglected product of ancient Palestine. We know that honey
which Judah was famous, the vine and the olive, were always imported to Mesopotamia.\(^\text{127}\)

The production of olive oil\(^\text{128}\) was of immense importance in ancient Israel, as well as in the rest of the Mediterranean countries in ancient times.\(^\text{129}\) In Mesopotamia proper, barley, beer, and sesame oil were produced, and only in its western parts was it possible to grow wine and olive oil.\(^\text{130}\) In Judah, there existed a major oil industry in the late Iron age. Re¬mains of industrial oil installations have been found at Tell en-Nasbeh, Tel Beiz-Mirsim, Tel Beit-Shemesh, Tel Gezer, Tel Batash, and Tel Mique.\(^\text{131}\)

was rare in Mesopotamia. See Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (1977) p. 44. Another interesting item on the list in Ezek 27 is balm (\textit{smn}). Here, archaeology has, to some degree, lent support to the text in Ezekiel. Apparently, at En-Gedi, Stratum V, one of very places where there appears to have been continued settlement in Judah after 586, and which therefore might be of interest to Neo-Babylonian economy (cf. above), there was a “factory” for the production of balsam oil. See for references Patrich and Aru¬bas, “A Juglet Containing Balsam Oil? From a Cave Near Qumran”, \textit{IJE} 39 (1989) p. 53, n. 27. See also chapter 7 below.


\(^{128}\) For a short survey of olive oil production in ancient Israel, see Borowski, *Agriculture* (1987) pp. 117–126. A recent, important work, with articles also on ancient Israel, is *La production du vin et de l’huile en Méditerranée*. Eds. Amouretti and Brl 1993. See also chapter 7 below.

\(^{129}\) Cf. Zohary and Hopf, *Domestication of Plants in the Old World* (1988) p. 131, referring to the olive as “the most prominent, and economically perhaps the most important classical fruit tree of the Mediterranean basin”. See also the first part of the survey article by Salles, “Du blé, de l’huile et du vin…” *Achaemenid History* 6 (1991) 207–36.


Special mention should be made of the Philistine site of Tel Miqne, ancient Ekron, in the Shephelah, where recent astonishing finds have brought to light 161 large Iron Age II B/C installations, capable of mass producing at least an average of 1000 tons of olive oil per year.\textsuperscript{132} When we realize that the annual yield of oil at Tel Miqne was one fifth of the national export of olive oil from Israel today, we may begin to appreciate the enormous economic significance of olive oil production in ancient Palestine.\textsuperscript{133} What is of particular interest to us, of course, is the fact that Tell en-Nasbeh, biblical Mizpah, was one of the places where olive oil was produced. As we have seen above, this was one of the sites where Judean settlements not only continued, but even flourished during the Neo-Babylonian period.

Of equally great importance was the wine production.\textsuperscript{134} The several hundred references to wine and the vine throughout the Hebrew Bible clearly reflect their significance for ancient Israelite life and society. Here particular mention should be made of the impressive installations for wine


\textsuperscript{133} That this goes back a long time can be seen from yet another olive oil factory discovered at Beth Yerah from EB III. See ESSE, \textit{Subsistence, Trade, and Social Change in Early Bronze Age Palestine} (1991) pp. 123–25. ESSE suggests that the installation at Beth Yerah gives good cause to believe that the similar construction discovered in the industrial area at Tel Yarmuth was also used for processing oil. See ESSE, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 123. If, as archaeology seems to indicate, we may assume that the residents of Jerusalem fled the surrounding villages to maintain a living after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, it is interesting to note that there exists a Talmudic tradition that mentions Tekoa as the place in Palestine where the best olive oil was produced. See BOHRMANN, “L’huile dans le judaïsme antique”, \textit{Dialogues d’histoire anciennes} 15 (1989) p. 65. That Tekoa was economically independent, may explain, as well as give credibility to, the tradition preserved in Neh 3:5, where we learn that even if the inhabitants from Tekoa helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, they were not too eager.

\textsuperscript{134} GOOR, “The History of the Grapevine in the Holy Land”, \textit{Economic Botany} 20 (1966) 46–64; BOROWSKI, \textit{Agriculture in Iron Age Israel} (1987) pp. 102–114. According to GOOR (\textit{op. cit.}, p. 64), the export of wine from Israel in 1962 amounted to 1,750,000 litres, and brandy and other spirits 78,000 litres. The importance of wine production in antiquity is put into perspective when we learn that the wine export from Palestine in the Byzantine period was almost as extensive as in the 20th century. See DAN, “The Foreign Trade of Palestine in the Byzantine Period”, \textit{Cathedra} 23 (1982) 17–24. See also chapter 7 below.
production discovered at Gibeon, yet another site where archaeologists now suspect continued settlement after 586 BCE. As Palestine always produced more than it could consume, wine represented a major export article and would, together with olive oil, be of considerable economic interest to the biltu-hungry Neo-Babylonian Empire.

The economically prospering Neo-Babylonian Empire provided the possibility for a high standard of living not only for the upper classes, but also for people in general. For this reason, we may assume that the Jewish community in Babylonia was also relatively prosperous. As economic conditions in Palestine were relatively poor for many, there is no reason to assume that the return from exile was extensive.

Concerning the actual conditions of the Jewish deportees in Babylonia we can only attempt to imagine what the situation was like indirectly from what we know in general of the conditions in Babylonia in the period in question. We do know, for instance, that the turning of prisoners of war into slaves was a widespread phenomenon. On the other hand, the treatment of slaves in the Neo-Babylonian period was not what one perchance might have suspected. Slaves were treated well, and allowed to live as families. Apparently, there was no difference between the rations for slaves and those for free persons. Slaves could even own their own houses. They could also act as witnesses in business transactions between free men, and have their own cylinder seals or seal rings. They could even marry free persons. Even if they were actually considered as

135 Pritchard, Winery, Defences, and Soundings at Gibeon (1964) 1–27. According to Pritchard, the 63 cellars found at Gibeon had a storage capacity of 25,000 gallons of wine (op. cit., p. 25). Pritchard further suggested that the similar cisterns which Albright discovered at Tell el-Fül, probably had a similar function. Since the latter site apparently prospered in the period following the fall of Jerusalem (see above), we may have important evidence for wine production being one of the major agricultural industries in that area also in the Neo-Babylonian period. We should bear in mind, however, that as no residue was found in the Gibeon cellars, we have no actual proof that they ever contained wine.

136 See above.

137 See above.


139 Dandamaev, Slavery in Babylonia, p. 107.

140 Dandamaev, Slavery in Babylonia, p. 241.

141 Dandamaev, Slavery in Babylonia, p. 242.

142 Dandamaev, Slavery in Babylonia, p. 399.

143 Dandamaev, Slavery in Babylonia, p. 401.

144 Dandamaev, Slavery in Babylonia, p. 412.
the property of their owners\textsuperscript{145}, they could pay their own pay taxes,\textsuperscript{146} give testimony in court,\textsuperscript{147} and even function as officials.\textsuperscript{148}

In all likelihood, however, the Judean deportees were not turned into slaves. Despite the fact that many skilled artisans were to be found among the Judean deportees, and our knowledge that there were many artisans among Neo-Babylonian slaves, Dandamaev has claimed that the forced labour section in Mesopotamia in this period was already considerable, and, as a consequence, probably unable to absorb masses of new captives.\textsuperscript{149}

In any case, the prosperity and relative high standard of living in the Neo-Babylonian Empire in general, even among slaves, clearly indicate that Babylonia was a “land of opportunity”, not likely to be left for the rsh reality of Judah. The only group of people who would gain anything on returning to their homeland, following the decree by Cyrus in 538 BCE, were the upper classes and the people who owned land in Judah. The majority, however, probably stayed behind and subsequently developed into the large and important Babylonian Diaspora. Moreover, we should also remember that the Jewish population in Babylonia was the result not only of one, but of several deportations (probably also of voluntary emigration). In time it should become one of the wealthiest and most important of the Diaspora communities.\textsuperscript{150} If a return from exile should really have taken place on a major scale the way the biblical sources seem to indicate, there would hardly have been such favourable conditions for the growing up of the large and influential Diaspora community in Babylonia.

6.6 Conclusions

In the present study I have discussed in some detail the problem of “exilic” Judah. In particular I have attempted to demonstrate that the belief that the land of Judah was in ruins and uninhabited, and that nothing much went on the country between 586 BCE and 538 BCE\textsuperscript{151} is highly improbable both on an archaeological as well as from a cultural and historical point of view. As we have seen,\textsuperscript{152} however, the notion of a \textit{tabula rasa}, inherent in 19th century scholarship, is unfortunately still looming in the scholarly rear garden.

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{145} DANDAMAEV, \textit{Slavery in Babylonia}, p. 648.
\item\textsuperscript{146} DANDAMAEV, \textit{Slavery in Babylonia}, p. 417.
\item\textsuperscript{147} DANDAMAEV, \textit{Slavery in Babylonia}, pp. 429–437.
\item\textsuperscript{148} DANDAMAEV, \textit{Slavery in Babylonia}, pp. 415–416.
\item\textsuperscript{149} DANDAMAEV, \textit{Slavery in Babylonia}, p. 652.
\item\textsuperscript{150} Cf. above.
\item\textsuperscript{151} On these dates, cf. above.
\item\textsuperscript{152} See above, pp. 16–19.
\end{itemize}
When the "Myth of the empty land", more or less, started to represent scholarly consensus already from the mid-19th century onwards, this was, implicitly or explicitly, very much the result of the then current belief in the historical reliability of the biblical sources, of the lack of any archaeological evidence, and of a basic ignorance of matters Mesopotamian.\textsuperscript{153}

Thus, when biblical researchers of today uncritically follow scholarly consensus concerning "exilic" Palestine, they adhere, willingly or unwillingly, to views and sentiments whose foundations were laid in early 19th century scholarship, and which still influence the interpretation of biblical texts long after the reasoning that once led to them has ceased to be valid.

The period following the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, commonly referred to as "the exile", is, and, even more, the so-called "post-exilic" epoch", are in several respects regarded as the most important periods the history of ancient Israel. Scholars regard this age, as well as the time which followed it, as "formative" periods in Israel's religious and cultural development.\textsuperscript{154}

Notwithstanding this, there has, with regard to the history and culture of the large majority of the population which actually remained in Judah, hardly been any interest among biblical scholars. The very sharp distinction made between "before and after 586 BCE", overshadowing the fact that we are dealing with a continuous culture, is inappropriate, and should be regarded as "mythical" rather than "historical". According to the sources that we do have access to, sources that are steadily growing in number and importance, there are clear indications of cultural and material continuity before and after 586 BCE, rather than any enormous gap. The gap is rather to be considered a construction of later tradition.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{153} In addition to the Bible, most of the information about Mesopotamia in the 19th century came from classical authors. As we get to know more about Mesopotamian history and culture due to the enormous progress of Assyriology, it appears that the information from the Greek and Latin sources, with a few exceptions, are basically with any historical value. Cf. KUHRT, "Assyrian and Babylonian Traditions in Classical Authors", in: Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn (1982) 539–553.

\textsuperscript{154} One may sometimes suspect that the scholarly community is so interested in the "exilic" and "post-exilic" (Persian) periods because they represent yet another "end" and yet another "beginning", i.e. the beginning of Judaism. However, the apparent obsession with the "origin" of this or that phenomenon, an evidently never failing evolutionist constituent of scholarly behaviour, is not always as prolific as one is sometimes led to believe. Despite the influence of a book like BLOCH, Apologie pour l'histoire, 1993, who already in the early forties warned against confusing ancestry with explanation (pp. 85–89), the "idole des origines" apparently is still with us, and may even have contributed to the scholarly stressing of discontinuity rather than continuity between the periods before and after the fall of Jerusalem.

\textsuperscript{155} One of the most fervent proponents of archaeological continuity between the Iron Age and the Neo-Babylonian periods is the Israeli archaeologist BARKAY. In addition to
the “exile” must on the whole be characterized as something of a “romanticist” idea which, to a large degree, has been detrimental to biblical scholarship.

Obviously, we should not deny that several deportations took place. What we must renounce, however, is the claim that these deportations affected life in Palestine in the way that much scholarly consensus appears to believe they did. The Judah left behind by the Babylonians was not a desolate and empty country lying in ruins until the Jews miraculously arrived back under Cyrus. Judah after the fall of Jerusalem constituted yet another wheel in the much bigger economic machinery of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and a society where life went on after 586 BCE pretty much in the me way as it did before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar’s armies, although at a much smaller scale.

Nor should we, with Torrey,\(^{156}\) deny that any return ever took place. However, such return as there was certainly was not the kind of large scale operation, following a decree by Cyrus, which the books of Ezra and Nehemiah wish us to believe. The “exile”, in fact, never “ended”. However, the extent and nature of the so-called “return”, as well as its impact on the “restoration”, are matters with which I am not concerned here.\(^{157}\) My sole interest has been with the question of continuity in Palestine.

The view that the Babylonians brought into exile “the whole of” the Judean people is preposterous on any account.\(^{158}\) On the whole, we must assume that the Babylonians treated the defeated Judeans very much in the same way that they treated other conquered peoples. In addition to the king and his family, high officials, and members of the upper classes, the Babylonians would bring with them skilled labour as prisoners of war that could be of service to them. In particular the removal of the officials that used to run the country’s central administration made a quick recovery of the macrostructure impossible, and also drastically reduced the chances of any national revolt in Judah. Obviously, this was a hard blow for the Judean state. We should not, however, think of a society in such a static way that through the removal of certain social strata a nation would simply cease to

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his works referred to above, see also his popular survey of Iron Age IIIb in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (1992) pp. 372–373. BARKAY claims that something new first comes with the Persians. A recent standard volume like WEIPPERT, *Palästina in vorhel lenistischer Zeit*, 1988, still adheres to the view that the Israelite Iron Age ended with the year 586 (p. 682). See also chapter 7 below.

\(^{156}\) See above.

\(^{157}\) Examples of studies of this difficult topic are ESKENAZI, *In An Age of Prose*, 1988 and HOGLUND, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine*, 1992. For more references, see above, as well as Chapter 5 above, and Chapter 7 below.

\(^{158}\) There is, however, little reason to deny that we know fairly little about the Neo-Babylonian deportation policy. See for this, also above and below.
exist. To some degree, those who stayed behind would have to take up the tasks of those who left, and life would go on, obviously under harsh circumstances and under new overlords.

As we have seen, archaeological excavations have demonstrated beyond doubt the continued existence of a considerable Israelite material culture in the Negev, and in particular in the area of Benjamin, but also in the Judean hills, and probably in Jerusalem. In other words, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the archaeological evidence once and for all has made any claim that "the centre of gravity was moved from Judah to Babylonia" preposterous. It would definitely be wrong to assume that whereas the "material" culture went on in the home country under difficult conditions, the "spiritual" culture moved to Babylonia. Any attempt to make sharp distinctions between the material remains of a culture and its intellectual activities fails to acknowledge the way in which societies basically constitute organic inherent structures which function in dynamic interrelationship. For instance, when we find that poetry of such high quality as that in the Book of Lamentations could actually be produced in Judah after the disaster of 586 BCE, it follows that other kinds of literary activity might also have taken place in Judah.

Also, far too much of the scholarly attention has been focusing on the population and the elite in Jerusalem. We have seen from the archaeological, as well from the biblical evidence, that there was a substantial continued settlement all over Judah, and we should, consequently, remind ourselves that Judah, with its cities and towns and villages, consisted of more than Jerusalem. These towns or villages, especially those at a certain distance from Jerusalem, were probably completely unaffected by "the exile" and life was allowed to go on in the same unruffled manner as before the upheavals in 586. To judge from what evidence we do have for continued settlement also in Jerusalem proper, we may even ask whether it was not possible that life in Jerusalem, too, went back to "normal" after a short while.
Chapter 7

Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period

7.1 Background

The idea of an uninhabited, and uninhabitable, Palestine, following the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE, was deeply rooted in the mentality of 19th century biblical scholarship. Inevitably, the notion of a total exile (with the carrying away of the entire population) also led to the belief that the centre of gravity for cultural and spiritual life was moved to Babylonia. The after effects on this “Myth of the empty land” may be felt also today. Even if the majority of the scholarly world does not quite believe anymore that life in Judah really ceased to exist completely during the “Exilic period”, there is still some way to go. When we read the most recent literature in this area, we see that there are as many different views as there are authors. Due to the lack of uniformity in debates and agendas, it is difficult to review these discussions in a satisfactory manner.

1 This chapter is based on my contribution in Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period. Eds. Lipschits and Blenkinsopp, 2003. It has, however, been updated bibliographically, and has, for that reason, also been revised not a little. The purpose of my 2003 contribution was to update my monograph The Myth of the Empty Land, now published as chapter 6 above, and to point to some important directions for future research. The present chapter, consequently, should still be read in connection with the preceding chapter 6.

By bringing into exile parts of the aristocracy of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar in fact took away the state, which was identical with the royal family and the upper classes. In addition, a number of artisans were probably deported. We know that these were in great demand in Babylon, where the economy was booming, and workers were needed for Nebuchadnezzar's many building projects.\(^3\)

That the Judean state was replaced with a Neo-Babylonian state, would have but little effect on the production in Judah, where life fairly soon would have "returned to normal."

It is a mistake to believe that the upper classes had much influence on the quality of subsistence in a Mediterranean agricultural society like Judah. The overarching political institutions did not themselves contribute to the actual production of food and other goods necessary for people to have a satisfactory way of life. With non-functioning central organs, the stability of the economy and the social order that secured the quality of life would suffer temporarily. However, when the local jurisdiction was replaced by that of an imperial system like the Neo-Babylonian or the Persian ones, there would hardly be any fundamental changes in everyday life.

Since, as the majority of scholars now assume, "most of the population" remained in Judah, this society would have consisted not only of peasants but also of priests, scribes, tradesmen, artisans, and workmen. In other words, what we are dealing with is a functioning society, with its different socio-economic institutions still intact.

One very important question is whether Neo-Babylonian and Persian Judah had sufficient population or infra-structure to produce the kind of literature that we now find in the Hebrew Bible. I certainly believe that this was the case. However, this problem cannot be dealt with here.\(^4\)

The fact that so little can be seen of the Neo-Babylonian administrative presence in Judah should not come as a surprise.\(^5\) The Persians, for instance, were able to maintain their vast empire for more than 200 years,
leaving almost no material remains. It is, therefore, impossible really to distinguish between Neo-Babylonian and Persian material remains in Judah. The lack of a distinct Persian material culture has been noted also in other territories under Persian rule.

In a very late biblical tradition, we may read:

"And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evilmerodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, graciously freed Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison; and he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table; and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, every day a portion, as long as he lived." (RSV. 2 Kings 25:27-30)

This text contains, as so many of the texts of the Hebrew Bible, historical facts. They cannot be taken at face value, however. The strong focus in biblical studies on the removal of the Judean elite to Babylon has hampered a normal view of the conditions.

To keep foreign kings and officials in Babylonia was a part of the system for controlling the empire, and not a pension retirement scheme for foreigners whom the Babylonian king liked. This is simply a part of the imperial policy. Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar, like his predecessors or successors, did not respect foreign royalty for their high standing.

The Babylonians deported other elites, too. If we, for instance, look at the fate of Tyre, the many similarities between Tyre and Jerusalem are striking. It has even been suggested that the Babylonians, like the Assyrians, carried out a systematic reallocation of populations in the

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6 On the Persian Empire in general, see above chapters 5 and 6, and below.
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subdued territories of Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine in order to control the empire.9

Likewise, we should not forget that “foreigners” in Mesopotamia was a quite common phenomenon, and that they were there for a multitude of purposes, not only as a means of imperial control.

We should appreciate fully the multi-ethnicity of Mesopotamian society at all times, starting already in the Old-Babylonian period. The position of these various international groups changed considerably over time. In the first millennium, however, incorporation into Mesopotamian society could hardly take place the way it had done in the early second millennium. This was due to the many Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian forced mass migrations. At the same time, the heterodox ethnic situation in Mesopotamia was not among the contributors to the decline of Mesopotamian civilization.10

Our main biblical sources for the events leading up to the exile are 2 Kings 24–25, 2 Chr 36, and the Book of Jeremiah.11 Akkadian sources tell us of Nebuchadnezzar’s wars in the west.12 Of the final campaign of Nebuchadnezzar into Judah, leading to the fall of the city in 586 BCE, we have no records but the biblical. The Hebrew Bible contains a lot of historical information. It must be utilized, however, with great care.13

The logic and truth values of the ancient narrator are different from those of the positivistically disposed western historicist reader. This is the reason why we today are struggling with the so-called “Myth of the empty land”. Too often, one gets the impression that modern scholars regard the biblical texts as “historical” documents that have been distorted or corrupted or become unreliable as a result of a long tradition process, and that

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11 For an evaluation of the biblical sources, see more in detail chapter 6 above.
these pre-modern, narrative texts, when treated with a proper dose of "historical-critical methods", may be restored to their original reliable status, and yield the kind of historical information scholars are looking for. However, any such approach to the biblical texts fails to do justice to the very nature of these texts.\(^{14}\)

It has also been claimed that the Chronicler is more "ideological", and the Deuteronomist more "historical". Such views, however, are, likewise, based upon a misunderstanding of biblical historiography.\(^{15}\) Thus, the description of "the last days of Judah", as it appears in the Chronicler's story in 2 Chr 36, is no more, or no less, "historical" than the corresponding stories of the same events described in the Deuteronomistic history, or in the Book of Jeremiah, for that matter.\(^{16}\) This implies that the amount of historical facts' which we may take out of these stories, from all the three different texts, would appear to be fairly similar, and not amount to very much more than that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and other cities in Judah, that he took a large booty, and that he deported parts of the population of Jerusalem, including members of the royal family, to Babylonia.

Beyond this we cannot really know much about details. We cannot say, for instance, how many deportations took place, nor can we know for certain the exact amount of people that was deported. As a general principle, we shall have to investigate each and every case independently before we make up our minds about which details are likely to be "true" in a positivistic fashion.

Also, considering the large amount of Jews that continued to live in the Diaspora, it would be meaningless to say that "the exile" came to an end in 538 BCE. Even if there was a certain return of wealthy families after 538, it is extremely difficult to evaluate properly the historical information found in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The antagonism described in these books between the returnees and those who had remained in Judah indi-

\(^{14}\) Here, it may, for comparative purposes, be useful to take into consideration also Mesopotamian historiography. Even if this has not been a very active field, recent contributions show that this relatively new area has become more and more relevant also for biblical historiography. An easily accessible survey (with literature) is found in VAN DE MIEROOP, Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History, 1999. For a discussion of the historicity of the Neo-Babylonian Chronicles in particular, see BRINKMAN, "The Babylonian Chronicle Revisited", in: Lingering Over Words. Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature (1990) 73–104. See "Index of Topics" for further discussions on Mesopotamian history throughout the present volume.

\(^{15}\) Compare The Chronicler As Historian. Eds. GRAHAM, HOGlund, and McKENZIE, 1997.

cates, on the other hand, that the land was not empty. In fact, the “exile” never ended. Judeans living in Egypt and in Babylonia continued to live there, developing gradually into the two major Jewish centres abroad in ancient times.\textsuperscript{17} However, it was only after 200 CE that a Judean spiritual centre really developed in the Persian satrapy of Babylon.

7.2 The Archaeology of Neo-Babylonian Judah

Recent, detailed accounts of the archaeology of Neo-Babylonian Judah have been published by Carter\textsuperscript{18} and Lipschits.\textsuperscript{19} The presentation below is based on my monograph from 1996.\textsuperscript{20} The way I see it, the studies by Carter and Lipschits support the views that I put forward in 1996 concerning the continued existence of Judah during the so-called “exilic” period.

\textsuperscript{17} Unfortunately, there are very few sources for the history of the Israelites in Babylonia proper from the earliest times. Two recently published texts are \textsc{joannes} and \textsc{lemaire}, “Trois tablettes cunéiformes” \textit{Trans} 17 (1996) 17–34, and \textsc{pearce}, “New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia”, in: \textit{Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period}. Eds. \textsc{lipschits} and \textsc{oeming} (2006) 399–411. One Akkadian source mentions the name of king Jehoiachin. See \textsc{weidner}, “Jojachin, König von Juda, in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten”, in: \textit{Mélanges syriens offerts à René Dussaud} (1939) pp. 925–26. Here, three different texts refer to “Jehoiachin, king of Judah”, and in a fourth text the king is called “the son of the king of Judah”. Other sources are purely of an onomastic nature. \textsc{zadok}, \textit{The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponymy and Prosopography}, 1988, deals both with the Egyptian (Elephantine) and the Persian evidence (mostly from the Murashu archives). Also, as \textsc{oded} has reminded us, it is often forgotten that there were Jewish settlements in several places (and during various epochs!) in Mesopotamia, and not only in Babylon. See \textsc{oded}, “The Settlements of the Israelite and the Judean Exiles in Mesopotamia in the 8th–6th Centuries BCE”, in: \textit{Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography} (2000) 91–103. See also \textsc{oded}, “Observations on the Israelite/Judean Exiles in Mesopotamia During the Eighth-Sixth Centuries BCE”, in: \textit{Immigration and Emigration Within the Ancient Near East} (1995) 205–212. The strong presence of Jewish populations in Mesopotamia should last for a very long time, indeed. In 1900, Jews made up one of the largest minorities in modern Iraq. Living in most of the urban centres and larger villages, they were spread over large areas of the country. The Jewish presence was particularly strong in Baghdad, a city of 50000 inhabitants. Here, the Jewish population was almost of the same size as the Sunni Arabs, and they outnumbered the Christian, Persian, and Turkish minorities combined. See \textsc{longrigg}, \textit{Iraq, 1900 to 1950. A political, Social, and Economic History}. London (1950) p. 10.

\textsuperscript{18} \textsc{carter} discusses Neo-Babylonian sites in \textit{The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period} (1999) pp. 119–135.

\textsuperscript{19} See \textsc{lipschits}, “The History of the Benjamin Region Under Babylonian Rule”, \textit{TA} 26 (1999) 165–180. This work has now been superceded by \textsc{lipschits}, \textit{The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem}, 2005.

\textsuperscript{20} Now chapter 6 of the present volume. For references relating to the survey, therefore, one should also consult chapter 6 above.
Whereas the archaeological evidence from such sites as e.g. Jerusalem, Tel Beit-Mirsim, Beth-Shemesh, Lachish, and Ramat Rahel shows clear evidence of the destructions following Nebuchadnezzar’s campaigns into the west, dwelling-places in the northern part of Judah and Benjamin were not affected. Towns and cities lying north of Jerusalem, in the Benjamin area, were not destroyed at all. In contrast to sites excavated south of Jerusalem, some of these places even prospered in the late sixth century. Thus, it was mainly the hill country of Judah that suffered destructions under Nebuchadnezzar. The rest of the country was left more or less intact.

At Tell el-Fül, after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the fortress, the site apparently continued to be occupied, and the population even seems to have increased. The 1964 campaign affirmed the earlier assumed extensive occupation. The excavator even suggested the possibility that refugees from the capital fled to nearby villages like Tell el-Fül, in order to wait for better times when they could return to Jerusalem.

Among other sites close to Jerusalem that show continued occupation after 586 BCE, is also Tell en-Nasbeh, traditionally identified with biblical Mizpah. The later phase of Stratum I at Tell en-Nasbeh has been dated to ca. 575–450 BCE. What is of particular interest to us, of course, is that the archaeological evidence for occupation at Mizpah in this period supports the Mizpah account found in 2 Kings 25:22–25 (and in a varied and more extensive version in Jer 40:7–41:18). These stories reflect historical events, and we may assume that the Babylonians established an administrative centre at Mizpah.

Particular mention should here be made of the studies of Zorn which have contributed considerably to our understanding of Tell en-Nasbeh in relation to the dating of destruction layers, many of them not taken into consideration. A suitable starting point for the discussion could be the interesting work by Forsberg, Near Eastern Destruction Datings as Sources for Greek and Near Eastern Iron Age Chronology, 1995.

21 When referring to the destructions of Nebuchadnezzar in this context, I am simply following common opinion. In my view, no one in antiquity could have destroyed as many sites as the large amount that has been attributed to Nebuchadnezzar all over Judaea/Palestine. I cannot go into this here, however. In the debate, which ought to come soon, each and every site should be evaluated independently, and not by referring simply to this or that scattered footnote in the previous literature. We should also realize the many difficulties in relation to the dating of destruction layers, many of them not taken into consideration. A suitable starting point for the discussion could be the interesting work by Forsberg, Near Eastern Destruction Datings as Sources for Greek and Near Eastern Iron Age Chronology, 1995.

22 Despite his weight on the destructions of Nebuchadnezzar, Machinist, too, basing his review on archaeological surveys and excavation reports, allows for a considerable activity in Benjamin, and even in Jerusalem herself after the fall of the city to the Babylonians. Machinist, “Palestine. Administration of. Assyrian and Babylonian Administration”, in: ABD 5 (1992) 69–81. Also, Machinist stresses one very important factor: “In establishing Gedaliah’s governorship, the Babylonians were determined not to allow the economy of the area to languish” (p. 79).
the Iron Age. According to Zorn, Stratum 2, which probably dates to the late Neo-Babylonian and early Persian periods, covers a larger area, and has larger buildings compared to the previous periods. This, again, supports the information found in the Bible that Mizpah became an administrative centre after 586. Zorn estimates the population in Stratum 2 to 400–500. However, since it is unlikely that peasants and herdsmen lived in the public buildings, one should look into the possibility that people also lived in villages outside the city. This would be how the walled city state system functioned. Thus, a population of 400–500 would, in antiquity, constitute a fairly large urban centre.

Further, at En-Gedi, one of the sites that was destroyed by the Babylonians, there are also some indications of occupation, or rather of reoccupation, after the destruction of the Stratum V settlement.

Also at Gibeon (El-Jib) new evidence seems to change our picture of the settlement pattern. Whereas Pritchard himself apparently did not believe that the city itself was rebuilt after the Babylonian invasion, it has recently been suggested that the Gibeon tombs, dated to the 7th and 6th centuries, may have been in use also after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

As further evidence in support of continued settlement at Gibeon in the years following the Babylonian invasion into Judah are also six inscribed handles from Gibeon. These handles are among the extremely rare epigraphic material that has been dated to the Neo-Babylonian period. We should keep in mind, however, that it is somewhat questionable whether these handles, found in non-stratified debris, can be dated as precisely as it has been done. The same applies for a similar handle from ha-Mosah, dated by Avigad to the same period on the basis of the Gibeon handles. On the basis of this evidence, Avigad wants to see the village of ha-Mosah, situated approximately 7 km west of Jerusalem, as still another town in the vicinity of Jerusalem that escaped destruction in 586, and where life went on as normal (together with Tell en-Nasbeh (Mizpah), Gibeon, Bethel, and Tell el-Fül (Giba)).

One particular problem concerns the question of what happened to inhabitants of Jerusalem. It is not likely that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed all of Jerusalem in 586. To demolish a big fortified city would have been an enormous task in antiquity, and also unnecessary. It is more likely that the

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25 For Mizpah as a religious centre during the Neo-Babylonian Period, see Blenkinsopp, "The Judean Priesthood During the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods", CBQ 60 (1998) 25–43.
wooden gates were burned, and breaches made in the walls. Obviously, this would not make the whole of the city uninhabitable, and it would have been possible for some of those who escaped Nebuchadnezzar's armies, fleeing into the countryside, at least to some extent, to return to Jerusalem at a later point. Apparently, the reference to those "who are living in these ruins" of Ezek 33:24 is a reflection of this situation.

Evidence in support of this assumption has come from recent excavations in the Hinnom Valley, a site particularly rich in burial caves. Apparently, some of these caves continued to be in use also after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Thus, we have here for the first time evidence in support of a continuation of settlement in Jerusalem itself during the "exil- period. 

However, not everyone who had to move as a result of the destructions in Jerusalem (or elsewhere in Judah), could return to their original homes, at least not straight away. The question of what happened to those people has now apparently been solved through surveys undertaken by Kallai for the Israel Department of Antiquities from 1967 to 1968, and by Finkelstein and Magen in the 1980's. During the surveys a large number of sites with material remains from the 6th century, many of them new, were discovered in Judah. There can be but little doubt that we in these small towns and villages, have direct access to places where large proportions of the Judeans who survived Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns were living. The surveys have been discussed by, among others, Carter, Lipschits, and Milevski. Also future discussions of these findings shall, hopefully, give us a better understanding of what Neo-Babylonian Judah looked like. Moreover, it is also important that unpublished archaeological materials (e.g. from Mozah and ha-Ramah) are made available.

26 An extensive report on the Hinnom Valley site (including also the caves) is found in Barkay, "The Priestly Benediction on Silver Plaques from Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem", TA 19 (1992) 139–192.
Of relevance to our topic is also the survey of the Judean highlands, directed by Avi Ofer. Ofer points to significant changes in the distribution of settlements during the transition period to the Persian era. The settlements in the south almost disappeared, those in the central part decreased, whereas, in the northern parts, settlements increased by as much as 65% (!). It is also of importance that these changes continued well into the following period, thus indicating a long term process rather than a single event. This change in the settlement pattern clearly indicates that people from Jerusalem fled to the neighbouring areas following the fall of the city in 586 BCE.

7.3 The Neo-Babylonian Empire

The Neo-Babylonian Empire represented a highly developed civilization, with an advanced political and economic structure. Nebuchadnezzar’s sovereignty was an empire in the true Mesopotamian tradition. Apparently, it was the genius of Nebuchadnezzar that made it possible to establish Babylonian military hegemony in the Near East for the next half-century. It is quite unlikely that the kings before him would have been able to achieve this.

Having few natural resources of its own, the existence of the Neo-Babylonian Empire depended upon the import of materials like metals, stone, timber, and all sorts of food and luxury items. Already at an early stage the economy of the Mesopotamian countries had turned into an aggressive and

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32 OFER, "All the Hill Country of Judah", in: From Nomadism to Monarchy (1994) 92-121. Ofer builds on earlier surveys by KOCHAVI and GUTMAN.
35 FRAME has pointed out that the fragmented nature of the Babylonian state in the period prior to Nabopolassar did not make it possible to act united or to have a common policy in military and foreign affairs before that time. FRAME, Babylonia 689-627 B.C. (1992) p. 247.
expansionist one, soon to be followed also by territorial expansion. It has been claimed, in fact, that the sole purpose of the enormous military and administrative system in Mesopotamia was to secure a constant flow of goods from the peripheral, conquered territories into the centre of the empire.36

The conquest of the neighbouring countries became necessary in order to secure control of tribute and of vital trade routes. There can be little doubt that trade and trade related activities in the Middle East go back a very long time. In Mesopotamia, trade with Syria and Anatolia may go as far back as the 8th millennium BCE.37

As more and more studies on the economy of the Neo-Babylonian Empire are available, we are, slowly, learning more about economic conditions in Neo-Babylonian Mesopotamia.38

The economy was above all agrarian. It is, therefore, necessary to have some knowledge of agricultural systems in various areas in order to understand the economy of the empire better.39 The most important commodities

36 See chapter 6 above. For Mesopotamian and Neo-Babylonian imperial policy, see further below.


39 For a variety of aspects of agriculture in Mesopotamia see: The Origins of Cities in Dry-Farming Syria and Mesopotamia in the Third Millennium B.C. Ed. WEISS, 1986;
throughout all periods were probably grain and wool, of which Mesopotamia “always” generated a great surplus, and could sell abroad.\textsuperscript{40}

The importance of the textile industry can hardly be exaggerated. This was an old industry in Mesopotamia. As a very early example, it can be mentioned that some 13,200 weavers operated around Ur in the late third millennium.\textsuperscript{41}

During the Neo-Babylonian Period, trade was as wide-reaching as ever before. Not much, however, has been published on Neo-Babylonian long distance trade up till now.\textsuperscript{42} International trade with Asia Minor, Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, and Elam flourished.\textsuperscript{43} Alum for bleaching textiles and for production of medical remedies was imported from Egypt. From Syria and Phoenicia came honey\textsuperscript{44}, aromatic materials, balsam, and perfumed oils.

\textsuperscript{40} SNELL, \textit{Life in the Ancient Near East} (1997) 9, 23, 40. This is not the same as to say that the textile industry of Mesopotamia was always self supplied with wool. According to some texts, also wool was imported (SNELL 106). If VARGYAS is right (see above), grain was, apparently, even more problematic.

\textsuperscript{41} VAN DE MIEROOP, \textit{The Ancient Mesopotamian City} (1997) p. 186.

\textsuperscript{42} This is why surveys on the topic, so far, leave out the Neo-Babylonian period. See, for instance, YOFFEE, “The Economy of Ancient Western Asia”, in: CANE 3–4 (2000) 1387–99, and ASTOUR, “Overland Trade Routes in Ancient Western Asia”, in: CANE 3–4 (2000) 1401–20. See also VAN DE MIEROOP, \textit{The Ancient Mesopotamian City} (1997) p. 196. There are some references in chapter 6 above. Since many more economic texts \textit{are} now available, and there is a widely increased knowledge and interest in this area, the shall, hopefully, soon be published a monograph on trade in the Neo-Babylonian period. On trade in the ancient Near East in general, see above.

\textsuperscript{43} This very short survey cannot go into many details. I have, therefore, for convenience, taken the following information from the easily accessible survey of DANDAMAYEV, “Neo-Babylonian Society and Economy”, in: \textit{CAH} 3.2 (2000) pp. 273–75. We should note, though, that texts yield various information about where goods come from. For an excellent road map of Assyria in the late 8th century BCE, see ROAF, \textit{Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia} (1990) p. 179. There is little reason to suspect that trade routes were much different in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

\textsuperscript{44} There is no evidence for apiculture in Mesopotamia. “Honey” was made from dates and figs, and from grapes by reducing the must to syrup through a slow heating process. See POWELL, “Wine and the Vine in Ancient Mesopotamia”, in: \textit{The Origins and Ancient History of Wine} (2000) pp. 103–104. There are good reasons to assume that honey from...
purple wool, spices, white wine, and timber. From Syria came also dyeing substances for the flourishing textile industry.

Export of textiles, always important in Mesopotamia, was thriving in Neo-Babylonian times. Grain, too, was exported, since crops were abundant. From the western coast of Asia Minor, from Cilicia (the eastern part of the south coast of Asia Minor), and from Lebanon came iron. From Cyprus came copper. Even through metals were almost exclusively imported, they appear to have been relatively inexpensive.

In addition to agriculture, the most important industries were handicrafts in various forms. Neo-Babylonian texts refer to weavers, smiths, jewelers, builders, coppersmiths, carpenters, launderers, bakers, brewers, potters and jewelers, builders, coppersmiths, carpenters, launderers, bakers, brewers, launderers, shoemakers, dyers.

Despite all of this, we do not have so many studies dealing specifically with material remains from the Neo-Babylonian periods. Most of the craftsmanship has been lost due to the perishableness of the materials from...
which they were made. As for furniture, very few items are known. We do know, though, from Assyrian sources, that Babylonian furniture was held in very high esteem.\textsuperscript{53} But even when metals are involved, there are really very few remains to be seen.\textsuperscript{54} Among the reasons for this are that all metals were reused by subsequent generations, or taken as booty.

The progress of business during the Neo-Babylonian period demanded a vast array of different documents.\textsuperscript{55} The flourishing business is also reflected in the changed role of the professional merchants, the \textit{tamkārū}. During the 3rd and 2nd millennia, this professional group was exclusively employed by palace or temple. In the Neo-Babylonian period, most of them became economically independent, and self-employed. Following the strong competition from numerous family businesses, not least from the famous Egibi and Murashu firms, the importance of the \textit{tamkārū} diminished.\textsuperscript{56}

The economic importance of these family businesses can hardly be exaggerated. Whereas earlier studies concentrated on the archives of the Achaemenid Murashu, a family firm specializing in finance, commerce, and agriculture\textsuperscript{57}, recent studies have above all dealt with the Egibi family.

The members of this family were not locally based, like the Murashu at Nippur, but they were active all over Babylonia, and even abroad. They also had close relations with the royal family.\textsuperscript{58} The Egibi family archives, dating not only from Achaemenid, but also from Neo-Babylonian times, contain a wealth of information.\textsuperscript{59}


The economic importance of the Neo-Babylonian temples should also be underlined. Recent studies deal with the wealthy Ebabbar temple of Sippar, and of Uruk. The temple archives of Ebabbar provide us, among other things, with the most comprehensive records so far about the oil industry of Mesopotamia. Again, we are reminded of how sesame seeds, not olives, provided the raw material for the Mesopotamian oil presses.

7.4 Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Economy

It remains a weakness of much biblical scholarship that historians of ancient Israel are depending so much on philological studies alone. Textual studies, clearly, must always form the sound basis of all research. They are, however, not sufficient when it comes to getting insights into ancient Israelite, or Mesopotamian history and society.

Above, I have pointed to the importance of agriculture and economy. However, also other issues need to be taken into consideration if we want to understand the role of Judah within a larger international context. Among such extended concerns is increased theoretical and methodological awareness of how city states and empires functioned in antiquity.

I feel that the debates about the relative size of Judah and Jerusalem before and after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians have been hampered by the influence of monarchic categories stemming from 19th century Eu-
rope. Since ancient Judah was a city state, and belonged within a city states system, future studies should also have to take more fully into consideration our knowledge of ancient city state systems.\textsuperscript{66} For, instance, some of the discussions concerning the size of Judah and Jerusalem, occasionally unnecessary heated, appear not to realize that city-states do not have to be large at all.\textsuperscript{67}

In a similar manner way, it is important to understand the nature of empires in antiquity, and how they operated.\textsuperscript{68} Clearly, yet again, discussions about life and politics in Neo-Babylonian Judah have been disadvantaged by not seeing the role of the city state of Jerusalem in an imperial context.

As Nebuchadnezzar’s empire depended on the accumulation of wealth based on production outside his own country, the total destruction of conquered territory would constitute an act against his own interest, would, in the light of this, be damaging to his economy to destroy Judah.

In fact, continuity and consolidation were key factors in all periods of the history of the empires of Mesopotamia during the 1st millennium.\textsuperscript{69} Also, we should not forget that the imperial structure in itself led to con-

\textsuperscript{66} HERZOG, \textit{Archaeology of the City}, 1997, deals usefully with the urban archaeology of ancient Palestine from the Natufian and Pre-Pottery Neolithic periods to Iron Age IIC (7th to 6th centuries BCE).

\textsuperscript{67} A \textit{Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures}. Ed. HANSEN, 2000, contains a wealth of information that may be utilized for comparative purposes. For instance, it follows from some of the studies that city states can be quite small. Another useful collection is \textit{The Archaeology of City-States}, eds. NICHOLS and CHARLTON, 1997. This work gives not only archaeological information, but contains also many useful discussions on the “mechanics” of city states systems.


\textsuperscript{69} In fact, an early example of continuity appears to have taken place already under Tiglath-pileser III (744-705 BCE). Through a series of campaigns of exceptional intensity, this king extended Assyrian domination over a vast territory, and divided the land into provinces. However, this administrative division into provinces appears to have been a result of Tiglath-pileser’s building upon the ideas of his predecessors. See GARELLI, “The Achievement of Tiglath-Pileser III”, in: \textit{Ah, Assyria ...} (1991) p. 46.
solidation and economic prosperity also in the conquered city states that formed part of the empire.70

Likewise, sufficient rations of food had to be made available to the soldiers wherever they marched. The success of the campaigns made by the Mesopotamian armies, with the moving of large groups of peoples, depended largely upon skilful logistics. Anyone who has read Xenophon’s Expedition of Cyrus will understand the problems relating to lack of food in warfare.71

It is difficult to see that the views of Gil Stein, and others, concerning the earliest Mesopotamian states (if at all correct) should apply also for the 1st millennium BCE. Stein supports a kind of imperial “chaos model”, and regards

... Mesopotamian states as generally operating sub-optimally, unable to attain or maintain their desired levels of power, authority, legitimacy, and control over the wider society around them. When Mesopotamian states pursued maximizing strategies aimed at extracting large, consistent surpluses from the countryside, these attempts tended to be short-lived, unstable, and vulnerable to collapse from both internal and external stresses. In particular, they often resulted in environmental damage that limited the very agricultural potential they wished to enhance.”72


72 STEIN, “The Organizational Dynamics of Complexity in Greater Mesopotamia”, in: Chiefdoms and Early States in the near East (1994) p. 13. STEIN is, among others, building on the work of R. MCC.ADAMS, T. JACOBSON, T. H. SIMON, and E. STONE. On Neo-Babylonian imperial policy, see chapter 6 above, and below in this chapter. See also ARCARI, “La politica estera di Nabucodonosor in Siria-Palestina”, RSIfen 17 (1989) 159–71; VANDERHOOFT, The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon (1999) pp. 81–114. For the moment, we know more about the organization of the Persian Empire than we know about the Neo-Babylonian. This, however, is quite useful to us since it is commonly held that the Persians inherited the organization of the empire from their Neo-Babylonian predecessors. For some important works on the Persian Empire, see FRYE, The History of Ancient Iran (1984) pp. 106–120; BRIANT, “Pouvoir central et polycentrisme culturel dans l’Empire achéménide”, in: Achaemenid History 1 (1987) 1–31; Achaemenid History 4. Eds. SANCISI-WEERDENBURG and KUHRT, 1990; VOGELSANG, The Rise and Organization of the Achaemenid Empire, 1992; BRIANT, Histoire de l’Empire perse de Cyrus à l’Alexandre (1996) pp. 461–87 and passim. On the Neo-Babylonian Empire, see above, as well as Chapter 6, passim. On the Persian Empire, see also above, as well as Chapter 5 passim.
As Nebuchadnezzar’s empire subsisted on already established forms of wealth production and accumulation, it would rather be in his interest to maintain, or even to increase, the existing modes of production.\textsuperscript{73}

We note with interest the behaviour of Nebuchadnezzar in Phoenicia. Here, we may learn how the Neo-Babylonian king, in order to secure the import of cedars into Babylonia, not only constructs a road for transportation, but also appoints himself the fierce defender of the inhabitants of Lebanon against their enemies. Even if one has to take away something because of the stereotyped and highly propagandistic language, it follows from this text that the king clearly understood that unless he made the necessary arrangements, there would be no annual tribute of trees. Phoenicia, consequently, represents here a typical example of a long-term imperial perspective.\textsuperscript{74}

It is this kind of imperial structure we must regard as the framework into which we have to fit also the kingdom of Judah. Knowing how the imperial system worked, makes it easier to understand what happened when Nebuchadnezzar simply inherited an already existing, successful organism.\textsuperscript{75}

The long series of campaigns waged in Hattu, was apparently made in order to secure trade routes, and the collection of tribute. It has been pointed out, on several occasions, that Judah functioned as a military buffer zone between Mesopotamia and Egypt. However, military action cannot be separated from economical systems, and it was certainly also for economical reasons that Nebuchadnezzar needed Judah.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{73}See also Chapter 6 above.

\textsuperscript{74}For the Wadi-Brisa Inscription, see Langdon, \textit{Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften} (1912), pp. 174–175. This text is also in ANET (1950) p. 307. For details, see Berger, \textit{Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften. Königsinschriften des ausgehenden babylonischen Reiches} (1973) pp. 64–67, and pp. 316–18. On the cedar biltu, see further Elayi, “L’exploitation des cédres”, \textit{JESHO} 31 (1988), 14–41. It is a point in Elayi (p 24) that even if Nebuchadnezzar continues the former Assyrian practice of exploiting th cedars, Nebuchadnezzar is the first to institute an annual tribute.


\textsuperscript{76}See also chapter 6 above. One major issue of the discussions has been whether one should look for continuity in the way the Neo-Babylonian kings administered their empire, or whether their imperial policy made them behave differently or very differently from their predecessors. The latter claim has in principle been a view adopted by some biblical scholars whereas most Assyriologists working in this area (for instance, Dalley, Joannes, Sack) all regard continuity as the key to understanding the mechanics of these
It remains a fact that ancient Israel always produced more agricultural products than she herself could use. As we learn more about agriculture in Judah, it is possible to evaluate it also from a broader socio-economic point of view. For the moment, we are only at the beginning of our knowledge of this important area. Far too little attention has been paid to the economic importance of agricultural production in ancient Israel, even though, of course, some important work has been done.77

In the present context, I shall only mention two agricultural products for which Judah was famous: the vine and the olive.78 Both of these would be


78 See Chapter 6 above. On the high antiquity of wine production, see Badler, “The archaeological evidence for Winemaking”, in: The Origins and Ancient History of Wine. Eds. McGovern, Fleming, Katz, (2000) 45–56. Among the contestants for being the earliest producers of wine are Syria, Anatolia and Iran. For Anatolia, see, Gorny, “Viticulture and Ancient Anatolia”, in: The Origins and Ancient History of Wine. (2000) 133–74. Incidentally, all of these areas were connected to Mesopotamia through trade routes. As for Palestine, one important general survey is Frankel, Wine and Oil Production in Antiquity in Israel and in Other Mediterranean Countries, 1999. See also Frankel.
of the greatest economic value in ancient times. None of these produces could grow in Mesopotamia, and would, consequently, have to be imported there.

The production of olive oil was at all times of immense importance in ancient Israel, as well as in the rest of the Mediterranean. In Mesopotamia proper, barley, beer, and sesame oil was produced, and only toward the west and the north was it possible to grow wine and olive oil. In Judah, the oil industry prospered in the late Iron Age. Remains of industrial installations have been found at Tell en-Nasbeh, Tel Beit-Mirsim, Tel Beit-Shemesh, Tel Gezer, Tel Batash, and Tel Miqne.

Special mention should be made of the Philistine site Tell Miqne, ancient Ekron, in the Shephelah, where astonishing finds have brought to light of day 161 large Iron Age II B/C installations, capable of mass producing at least an average of 1000 tons of olive oil a year.79 When we consider that the annual yield of oil at Tel Miqne was one fifth of the national export of olive oil from Israel today, we may only start to learn to appreciate the enormous economic significance of wine and olive oil production in ancient Palestine and in the Mediterranean countries. More important in our connection is it that the enormous quantities of olives necessary to keep up the production at Philistine Ekron most likely came from the Judean hill country!80 When Ekron was destroyed, possibly during Nebuchadnezzar's campaign to Philistia in 603 BCE,81 oil presses elsewhere would have had to take over the production of the invaluable oil.


80 GITIN, “Tel Miqne-Ekron”, in: Recent Excavations in Israel (1989) p. 49. The view that the olives for Ekron were produced in the Judean hill country is supported also by FINKELSTEIN, “The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh”, in: Scripture and Other Artifacts (1994) p. 180.
81 DOTAN and GITIN, “Miqne, Tel”, in: OEANE 4 (1997) p. 33. From reading schoolarly surveys, one may sometimes get the impression that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed “most of” the fortified cities of the Levant during his campaigns. In addition to Ekron, another, well known case at hand is Ashkelon. See SCHLOEN, “Ashkelon”, in: OEANE 1 (1997) 220–23, and MASTER, “Trade and Politics: Ashkelon’s Balancing Act in the Seventh Century B.C.E.”, BASOR 330 (2003) 47–64. However, both SCHLOEN and MASTER are only following common opinion. Even if the sites in question could theoretically (or accidentally) have been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, this act would certainly not have
Tell en-Nasbeh, biblical Mizpah, was one of the places where olive oil was produced. As we have seen above, this was one of the sites where Judean settlements not only continued to exist, but it even flourished during the Neo-Babylonian period. It will be the task of archaeology in the future to look for other oil installations that were prospering during the Neo-Babylonian period.

Of great importance was also wine production. The several hundred references to the vine and to wine throughout the Hebrew Bible clearly reflect their significance for ancient Israelite life and society. Again, there is a tendency among some biblical scholars to ignore the massive economic implications of the agricultural surplus. Here, particular mention should be made of the impressive installations for wine production discovered at Gibeon, another site where there was a continued settlement also after 586. It is in the light of this that the information in 2 Kings 25:12 that Nebuzar-adan left vine-dressers (דָּרִים) and ploughmen (לחם) to work in the vineyards and on the soil really becomes meaningful. The economic importance of Gibeon should be appreciated more fully. As Palestine always produced more wine than could be consumed locally, wine must have been a major export article and would, together with olive oil, be of considerable economic interest to the bilu-hungry Neo-Babylonian Empire.

In the 6th century BCE, Babylon was prospering, and there was no shortage of food from the countryside to feed the large urban population. Wine and olive oil, on the other hand, were much sought after luxury goods, available only to the very rich. Since wine was not produced in

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82 On the economic importance of wine, see also chapter 6 above.
83 The storing capacity of the hitherto known 63 wine cellars has been estimated to approx. 95,000 litres! Not everyone agrees that the cellars were used for wine. Since there is no residue, there is no way of knowing for certain what kind of agricultural products were stored at Gibeon. This, however, is not so important. The main point is that we are dealing with some sort of crash crop agriculture. The most recent survey of the wine production at Gibeon is found in WALSH, The Fruit of the Vine. Viticulture in Ancient Israel (2000) pp. 158–162.
Babylonia, it would have to be imported from outside of "Mesopotamia". Yet, we cannot know for certain whether wine and oil were actually brought to Mesopotamia from Judah. Judean agricultural products were used to feed the Babylonian army, and to uphold the local administration. Any surplus would probably be sold for profit, forming a part of the normal distribution channels, temporarily ending up at one of the great merchant centres like (say) inland Damascus or seaside Tyre.

In the so-called Wadi-Brisa inscriptions, written to commemorate the conquest of Lebanon and the victory over Pharaoh Necho in 586 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar refers to several different places from which wine was imported to Babylon. The editio princeps refers to the following geographical names: Izallu, Tuimmu, Siminu, Hilbunu, Arnabanu, Suhu, B'B'kubati, Opis, and Bitati. It is commonly thought that these places are in the North, and in Syria. Obviously, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to identify all of these locations with certainty. There is some literature on these toponyms, but I shall here only discuss some of them.

Oppenheim has claimed that the place name Simmini (from where both iron and wine were imported) in our and other texts should be read Simir. Zadok does not follow this actual emendation, but suggests that Simyra in Lebanon is referred to by both Simmini and Simiri. He further holds Tell Kazel on the Akkar plain to be the most likely localization. There is now some interesting archaeological evidence from Tell al-Kazel, which is also relevant to the present discussion.

Zadok has a long discussion on Tuimmu, and concludes that this place should be identified with modern Tawami, near Aleppo in Syria, once part


86 See N. 74 above.


89 “Concentrations of metal scoriae found in Area I bring to mind the Neo-Babylonian references to iron from Simir under Nebuchadnezzar, an industry which flourished together with the export of oil, wine and agricultural surpluses during the Persian period.” CAPET and GUBEL, “Tell Kazel”, in: Essays on Syria in the Iron Age (2000) p. 433. Unfortunately, the site has not yielded any ironware to speak of. Same place, p. 451.
of the ancient territory of Arpad. This fits well with the information that we have, indicating that Syria was a main area for wine trade and wine production both in the 2nd and the 1st millenniums BCE. We also know that Syria continued to be a major producer and exporter of wine and olive oil during late Roman and early Byzantine times. It is important to note the trade routes here. All overland trade from central and northern Syria passed through Aleppo. From Aleppo, there was either a northern route, with a connection to Carchemish, or an eastward road to the Euphrates. From southern Syria the main inland road went from Damascus to Palmyra. At Palmyra, the road divided into a northern and an eastern route, both of them crossing the Euphrates. Since the purpose of this study is to see Palestine into perspective, I do not discuss trade routes to and from abia, Anatolia, Media, Persia, or the Gulf.

Opis/upi may be a reference to a city on the Tigris. As an important commercial centre on the Tigris, this city was ideally situated for wine import from Anatolia and Persia. We do not know exactly the location of Opis, but there are some good suggestions. If Opis was situated just north

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93 ROAF, Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia (1990) p. 98. ASTOUR has suggested that the eastern route from Aleppo to the Euphrates was in disuse after the fall of Emar at the end of the Bronze Age, and was not used again till Byzantine times. I am not sure that the evidence for this is so clear. However, there can be little doubt about the great importance of Carchemish as a centre for trade. See ASTOUR, "Overland Trade Routes", in: CANE 3–4 (2000) p. 1416.
94 On long distance trade, see also above.
95 For this city, see GRAYSON, Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles (2000) pp. 261 and 294.
of Sippar, for instance, it would also have had access to goods that were imported from the west, and transported on the canal that connected Tigris with the Euphrates. Nebuchadnezzar even built an artificial dam in this area as part of his defence system.

One of the other names mentioned in Nebuchadnezzar’s “wine import list” is Hilbunu. This toponym has been identified with Halbun near Damascus in modern Syria. Since Damascus was also a centre for wine trade, it is not unlikely that the wine produced in Halbun (and Judah!) was sent here for marketing. The importance of a commercial city like Damascus, situated along one of the main trade routes, can hardly be exaggerated. Wine of Helbon is also mentioned in Ezek 27:18. The same applies for wine of Izalla (Ezek 27:19), another geographic name mentioned in Nebuchadnezzar’s list. But again, Izalla could be a commercial centre, and a place for agricultural production (or maybe both?). Clearly, it was not necessary for trade centres to produce their own commodities. For instance, there is evidence that large quantities of iron was paid in tribute to Assyria by Damascus in the first millennium. Since iron was not produced in the Damascus area, it must, consequently, have been a centre for iron trade, but not for production.

7.5 Conclusions

Scholars have hardly shown any interest in the history and culture of the large majority of the population that actually remained in Judah after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. The sharp distinction made between “before and after 586” has overshadowed the fact that we are dealing with a continuous culture.

Obviously, we should not belittle the several deportations. What we must renounce, however, is the claim that these deportations affected life in Palestine the way earlier generations of scholars believed. The Jud
left behind by the Babylonians was not a desolate and empty country lying in ruins until the Jews miraculously arrived back under Cyrus. After the fall of Jerusalem, Judah made up yet another, albeit small, wheel in the big economic machinery of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Life went on after 586 pretty much in the same way as it did before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar’s armies, possibly, but not necessarily, on a reduced scale.

Archaeological excavations and surveys support beyond doubt the continued existence of a considerable Israelite material culture in the Negev, and in particular in the area of Benjamin, but also in the Judean Hills, and probably even in Jerusalem.

One major challenge that we are facing now is to compare the most recent archaeological studies on changes in settlement patterns during the illsic period, in order to try to create a broader picture. Another important task would be to look into the agricultural and industrial production of the period in order to understand better the macro-economics of Judah within the larger system of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. A third challenge concerns the evaluation of the biblical sources. The historiographic sources of the Hebrew Bible are narrative and pre-modern, yet they do contain a lot of valuable historical information. In the future, we shall have to deal more adequately with the question of how the texts of Jeremiah, the Deuteronomist, the Chronicler, and Ezra and Nehemiah can be used for historical reconstructions.

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100 See the works by Barkay, Lipschits, Milevski, Ofer, Zorn, and others referred to in this chapter.
Sources and Acknowledgements

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THE MYTH OF THE EMPTY LAND
Dedicated to the Memory of Arvid S. Kapelrud
14.5.1912 - 23.10.1994
Teacher and Friend
THE MYTH OF THE EMPTY LAND

A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the "Exilic" Period

HANS M. BARSTAD

SCANDINAVIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS
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The present, small monograph on Judah during the Babylonian period grew out of my interest in the question of the Babylonian provenance of chapters 40–55 in the Book of Isaiah and the fairly negative view of biblical scholars concerning life in Judah in the years following the Babylonian conquest in 586 B.C. A short, preliminary study of some of the ideas discussed in this monograph was presented at the International meeting of the Society Biblical Literature in Heidelberg in 1987, and appeared in print as “On the History and Archaeology of Judah During the Exilic Period,” OLP 19 (1988) 25–36. I am grateful to those of my colleagues who heard my paper and made sufficient comments on it for me to think that the topic was worthwhile to treat in somewhat greater detail.

When I was granted a sabbatical from my own university in 1992, I was able to spend Hilary and Trinity Terms in Oriel College, Oxford and do further research on the topic. I am grateful to the Provost of Oriel, Dr. Ernest W. Nicholson, FBA and to the members of the Senior Common Room, especially to Professor John Barton, who was most helpful during my visit to Oxford.

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Hans M. Barstad
Hokksund
Autumn 1995
Abbreviations

AASOR  Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AB    Anchor Bible
AOAT  Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS   American Oriental Series
BA    Biblical Archaeologist
BARev Biblical Archaeology Review
BASOR Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BeO   Bibbia e oriente
Bib   Biblica
BM    British Museum Tablet
BN    Biblische Notizen
BO    Bibliotheca Orientalis
BZAW  Beihefte zur ZAW
CAD   The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
CBQ   Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CHJ   The Cambridge History of Judaism. Ed. by W. D. Davies [and] L. Finkelstein
FRLANT Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HdA   Handbuch der Archäologie
HdO   Handbuch der Orientalistik
"SM  Harvard Semitic Monographs
.ÆJ  Israel Exploration Journal
JA    Journal asiatique
JBL   Journal of Biblical Literature
The Myth of the Empty Land

JCS  Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JESHO  Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JNES  Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JNSL  Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JSOT  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series
JSS  Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS  Journal of Theological Studies
KAT  Kommentar zum Alten Testament
OLA  Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLP  Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica
Or  Orientalia
OTL  Old Testament Library
PEQ  Palestine Exploration Quarterly
RB  Revue Biblique
RHPR  Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuses
RHR  Revue d’histoire des religions
RivB  Rivista Biblica
RLA  Reallexikon der Assyriologie
SAOC  The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
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<td>Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan</td>
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<td>SJOT</td>
<td>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</td>
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<td>SBLDS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature. Dissertation Series</td>
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<td>SBLMS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature. Monograph Series</td>
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<td>³B</td>
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<td>Theologische Literaturzeitung</td>
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Preliminary Remarks

I am not, in the present context, going to treat the period of the exile (586–538 B.C.) in any compendious way, but I shall rather occupy myself with the widespread belief that Judah during this period was a tabula rasa where no activity to speak of took place. Even if the exilic epoch has, indubitably, had its share of the scholarly literature, it is, however, in particular the Persian period that has attracted the mind of the researchers during recent years, embodying above all such ideological historical characteristics as the “return from exile” and the “restoration.” Far less attention has been paid to the Babylonian period, the very period of the “exile” itself, the half century or so following the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

1 See, for instance, the recent bibliography by P. E. Dion, The Jews During the Persian Period. Toronto 1990.

2 In the literature one will meet with the years 587, 587/586, and 586 for the time of the fall of Jerusalem. In particular A. Malamat is argued that the year 586 is the correct one. Among his many publications on the last years of Judah one may note inter alia “A New Record of Nebuchadrezzar’s Palestinian Campaigns,” IEJ 6 (1956) pp. 246–56, “The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem”, IEJ 18 (1968) 137–56, “The Twilight of Judah”, Congress Volume, Edinburgh 1974 (1975) 123–45, “The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah”, The World History of the Jewish People. 1. Jerusalem (1979) 205–21). The most recent discussion of the exact dating of the fall of Jerusalem is that of O. Edwards, (“The Year of Jerusalem’s Destruction”, ZAW 104 (1992) 101–106), who also believes that the correct date is 586. I do not at all believe that we can decide upon this matter with any degree of certainty, and when I use the year 586 for the last year of the kingdom of Judah, this is purely for conventional reasons. In addition to the works by Malamat mentioned above, the literature on our topic is fairly substantial. See, for instance
The reasons for this apparent lack of interest in the Babylonian period may be of various kinds. For one thing, the period is notoriously poor with regard to sources. Also, the period certainly was not regarded as a glorious one in the later tradition. To those Hebrew scribes who were later to write the history of Judah during the time following Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem the period could only be felt as one of national humiliation, filled with gloom and despair. No wonder that later on, in the Persian period, the interest of the chroniclers and the theologians was not so much concerned with Judah proper, or with her inhabitants, a symbol of YHWH’s punishment for the transgressions of his chosen people, as with those families who returned from


3 In the course of the present work, I am, in one connection or another, referring to most of the relevant sources. For various recent attempts to synthesize the results of the archaeology of the Babylonian and Persian periods see H. Weippert, *Palästina in vorhellenistischer Zeit*. München (1988) pp. 682-718. For an attempt to combine history and archaeology, see the short review of the “Exilic” period in G. W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine*. Minneapolis (1993) pp. 804-811. An example of a presentation of the exilic period which puts much confidence in the historical reliability of the biblical stories as well as on empathy is found in J. D. Newsome, *By the Waters of Babylon*. Edinburgh (1980) pp. 45-109.
Babylonia, and with whom, in their view, the future was.⁴ It was in particular this inherent biblical mentality that soon led to the belief that Palestine was completely depopulated and in ruins after 586 B.C. In later Jewish culture this view of the Babylonian period subsequently developed into a kind of “national symbol”, and the exiled people who suffered “by the waters of Babylon” became a well-known Jewish motif.⁵ This idea of an uninhabited and uninhabitable Palestine, following the subjugation by Nebuchadnezzar, was deeply rooted also in the mentality of 19th century scholarship, and its after effects may be felt strongly even today. The notion of a total exile, with the carrying away of the entire population, inevitably also led to the belief that the centre of gravity for cultural and spiritual life was moved away from the uninhabitable and ruined Jerusalem and Judah to Babylonia. The myth of the empty land was complete.

Today, after a hundred years or so of so-called “historical-critical” research, the majority of the scholarly world apparently does not quite believe anymore that life in Judah really ceased to exist completely during the “Exilic period”. When browsing through a fairly representative selection of handbooks and introductions, as, for instance, those of Oded,⁶ Ackroyd,⁷ Herrmann,⁸ Soggin,⁹ Miller and Hayes,¹⁰ some

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⁴ This point is particularly well argued by R. P. Carroll (cf. below 21 n. 25).
of them influenced by the research of Kittel, Noth, Bucellati, and others, it appears that scholarly consensus today has become more and more aware of the fact that life must have gone on in Palestine also after 586.

There is, however, still a long way to go. What we may witness today with regard to post–586 Palestine is a kind of "middle-position", combined with a certain aporia. The new consensus which is emerging regarding life in Palestine after 586, and which seems to be replacing, at least to some degree, the former idea of a *tabula rasa*, is that whereas "exilic" Judah is now at last awarded the right to exist, she is still not entitled to any economic, cultural or religious activity during this period. Thus, our problem today seems to lie with the fact that the *after effects* of the former utterly negative view of life in Judah during the exilic period still dominate the schol-

320–50.


10 J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. London, 1986, has a more up to date view of the archaeology of the period (p. 417), and a good section on the problems related to Gedaliah (pp. 421–424), as well as some reflections on the continuation of cultic life (p. 426).


12 M. Noth maintained on several occasions the view that Palestine should *not* be regarded as a *tabula rasa* after 586. See, for instance, "La Catastrophe de Jérusalem en l'an 587 avant Jésus–Christ," *RHPR* 33 (1953) pp. 81–102. In a dissertation by A. Eitz, *Studien zum Verhältnis von Priesterschrift und Deuterojesaja*. Heidelberg (1969), we find the claim that the deportees were not very important, either politically nor religiously, because they were so few in number, and that what influence that did come from the Diaspora was the result of a few men in later times (pp. 3–4) What Eitz does here is to draw the full consequences of Noth’s view.

Preliminary Remarks

ary scene.

Thus, even if most scholars, apparently more or less vaguely, admit that “most of’ the population was left in the country, the following quotations from a few, but representative researchers may well illustrate our present situation. A scholar like Oded can write: “The dearth of information about the Jewish community which remained in Judah is not an accident, since the centre of gravity in the events which influenced the nation’s historical development moved from Judah to the Diaspora.” And Soggin states: “The spiritual centre of Jerusalem and Judah was transferred to Babylon, and there it remained for some decades, until the first of the exiles returned home.” And Bright: “... but though there were doubtless godly people in Judah who, like their brothers far away, mourned over Zion and longed for its restoration [referring to texts like Pss 74 and 79, Isa 63:7–64:12, and Lam], they were too leaderless and helpless to do more than

14 Less representative is Thomas, who still adheres to the 19th century view on the situation in Palestine after 586. If Torrey is found to be extreme (see below pp. 21–23), Thomas is no less so, but at the opposite end. Believing that the whole of the population, but for the peasantry, was deported, and that most of the Hebrew Bible was written in Babylon, he can write “While the people of Israel yet lived in their own country, their creative genius never grew to full growth. On foreign soil, in Babylon, this genius flowered gloriously” (D. W Thomas, “The Sixth Century B.C.: A Creative Epoch in the History of Israel,” JSS 6 (1961) pp. 33–34).

15 Compare also D. L. Smith, The Religion of the Landless. Bloomington, (1989) pp. 32–35, who refers to much of the available evidence for continued settlement in Judah, but appears to be somewhat undecided as to what conclusions to draw from it. Also, he appears not to be too well informed on the archaeological evidence.

16 I am not claiming that other scholars do not hold more adequate views, but the bulk of scholarship is most certainly still to be found along these lines.


The impulse to restoration, when it came, did not come from them. It is probable, indeed, that the religious loyalty of many of these people had been seriously undermined, and that theirs was a Yahwism in no very pure form [referring to texts like Ezek 33:24–29, Isa 57:3–15, 65:1–5, 11f.].

"Though Israelites in Palestine were still the numerical majority, Israel's future scarcely lay with them. Israel's true centre of gravity had temporarily shifted from the homeland."19 And Weinberg declares: "It is highly unlikely that material culture of any degree of sophistication could have been maintained during these centuries in Jerusalem without leaving more substantial remains than have been found so far; we must think more in terms first of squatters and then of people able to maintain only a mere subsistence level."20

What Jewish21 culture there was, was in Babylonia, not in Judah! What a very strange idea indeed! If, in fact, "most of the population" remained in Judah, as it must have done, and as the majority of scholars now actually admits, this society must have consisted not only of peasants (even if these would have made up the vast majority of the population in an

19 J. Bright, A History of Israel. London (1980) p. 345. Also Bright admits that "the popular notion of a total deportation which left the land empty and void is erroneous and to be discarded" (pp. 343–344, referring to the works by Janssen and Ackroyd).


21 There appears to be a confusion in terminology in the scholarly literature with regard to such terms as Jewish, Judaic, Judahite, and Judaean. Quite obviously these are very imprecise words and cannot be used with any degree of precision at all. Today most scholars use "Jews" and "Jewish" for the period from the exile onwards, when the people were no longer an independent state, but a religious community. However, as it may appear somewhat anacronistic to use the terms "Jewish" or "Judaic" of the culture and inhabitants of Judah in biblical times, one should in the future discuss whether it may be more correct to reserve the terms "Jews" and "Jewish" for the post-biblical period.
agrarian society), but also of artisans, traders, village and town elders, scribes, priests and prophets. In other words, what we are dealing with is not some picturesque idea of a bunch of illiterate peasants, but a functioning society, with many of its different political institutions still intact. What is actually represented in the scholarly writings from which we have just been quoting, are fairly antiquated views on the nature and function of ancient societies, deriving from some romanticist notion of the last century, and now deeply rooted in our scholarly tradition. We simply cannot allow ourselves any more to think of Judaean society after 586 as a community where no culture existed, or where scribes, priests, and prophets were no longer active. On the contrary! The services of (say) priests and prophets must have been equally essential to the Judaean society after 586 as it was before the disaster. A prophet, for instance, was basically an intermediary and an intercessor between the deity and the people, and the population of Judah after 586 needed more than ever before to know the will of the deity and their future destiny.

It is the merit of Janssen\textsuperscript{22} for example, to have argued convincingly that the people who were left in Judah after 586 must in fact have been responsible for a fairly large amount of the literature which we find in the Hebrew Bible,

\textsuperscript{22} E. Janssen, \textit{Juda in der Exilzeit}. Göttingen 1956. In his underlining of the important role of those who were left behind in Judah for the development of Israelite religion, Janssen points in particular to texts like Lam (pp. 9–12), Isa 21 (pp. 12–19), Obad (pp. 18–19), exilic psalms (pp. 19–10), Jer, Ezra and Neh, Zech 1–8, Hag, and Trito–Isa (pp. 22–23). Despite the great merit of Janssen’s work, however, it should be kept in mind that it is clearly a product of the 1950s, and sometimes also methodologically flawed. Thus, it is not always possible to read actual historical information out of the biblical texts the in way Janssen does. This applies not least to poetical texts (see, for instance, his use of Lam 1:6 and 2:2.6 (p. 45), 2:2.5 (p. 42), 3:34–36 (p. 63), and 5:9 (p. 43). This, of course, does not imply that we may not find reflections of historical situations in these texts, only that we have to be very careful.
and that, consequently, poetic texts of a very high literary quality actually were produced in Judah in the "exilic period." It is not possible to take up this discussion here, but it would be sufficient to refer to the Book of Lamentations. No one, to my knowledge, has ever disputed either the fact that Lamentations represents outstanding literary quality, or that it is a product of Palestine. When we find that poetry of such high quality as Lamentations was actually produced in Judah after the disaster of 586, there is no reason whatsoever why similar poetry or other kinds of texts could not likewise have been written during the "exilic" period.

Consequently, if one as a historian wants to acquaint oneself with that period of ancient Jewish history commonly referred to as "the exile," one soon meets with apparently insurmountable difficulties. Not only are the sources apparently too meagre to draw any decisive conclusions, but there are also certain developments within the field, ultimately going back to the Bible itself, which have resulted in an untenably biased view of the period. Against such a background it is nevertheless quite necessary to ask the question again: What was life in Judah really like in the years following Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, the period between 586 and 538, the exilic era properly so called? It should be stressed once again that it is solely for conventional reasons that I here refer to the

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23 When Janssen's book was first published, it made little or no impact on the scholarly community. Among the rather few reviewers of Janssen, we find some who were reasonably satisfied, and others who were dissatisfied. None, however, seems to be altogether convinced, and there is certainly no enthusiasm to be found (see C. Kuhl in BO 15 (1958) pp. 255-56, M. Stenzel in TRev 54 (1958) p. 20, F. Maas in TLZ 82 (1957) cols. 685-86, R. de Vaux in RB 65 (1958) pp. 130-31, O. Plöger in ZDPV 72 (1956) pp. 186-87. Too critical of Janssen is E. Hammershaimb, Some Aspects of Old Testament Prophecy from Isaiah to Malachi. København (1966) pp. 96-100. Apparently, it is only quite recently that the scholarly world has started to appreciate more fully the important contribution of Janssen.

24 On this dating, cf. above n. 2.
periods between the years 586 and 538 as the era of the "exile." To say that the "exile" lasted from 586 to 538 is, in fact, rather meaningless, and if there ever was an area of biblical research that could do with some reassessment it is certainly to be found in connection with such scholarly misconceptions as "exile", "return" and "restoration," areas in which theological ideas and historical events are constantly being confused.

With this somewhat categorical statement, I do not imply that the use of such terms as "exile", "return" and "restoration" is altogether unfounded, and I do not support the more extreme views of Torrey, for example. In Torrey's view the whole matter of the exile is widely overestimated, and he claims that a return never took place. During his long and distinguished career Torrey campaigned fervently in favour of the Palestinian origin of all of the Hebrew Bible, and it is


26 See above all C. C. Torrey, The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra–Nehemiah. Giessen, 1892 (concluding that Ezra and Nehemiah are completely without any historical value and throw no light on the history of the Jews in the Persian period whatsoever), and Ezra Studies, Chicago (1910) 285–289 ("... nor is it intrinsically likely that any such return took place," p. 288). Several years later, he claims, more categorically and without any argumentation, that there was no return whatsoever (The Chronicler's History of Israel. New Haven (1954) pp. XXVII–XXVIII).

27 Thus, in his Pseudo–Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy. New Haven, 1930, Torrey also claimed that the Book of Ezekiel contained
within this wider context that his works and theories must be placed. This led Torrey to the extreme view that there was hardly any such thing as an exile, and consequently no such thing as a return from exile. The whole matter was a fiction, created by the Chronicler. In evaluating the views of Torrey, we shall have to be very careful. Even if he was certainly not correct in every respect, for instance in his dating of Isa 40–55 and in his claim that there was hardly any exile to speak of, or any return whatsoever, he did make several important points which cannot easily be dismissed. Among these are the stress on the importance of those who were left behind in Judah, and an awareness of the exaggerated importance generally attached to such ideological strategies as “exile” and “return”.

It is unfortunate that scholars have shown a tendency to neglect Torrey because of his more extreme views. As we shall see below, much recent scholarship has proved Torrey right with regard to the necessity of stressing continuity rather than a complete break in Judean archaeology, history and tradition between the period prior to Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion and the period following the disastrous events of 586. However, in producing a major ideological barrier before and after 586, commonly referred to as “the exilic period,” biblical scholarship has created a problem for itself. The ideological “exile,” which formed a natural part of the biblical tradition, later became an inherent part our scholarly historical tradition, from which we now are having great difficulties freeing ourselves.

In sum, even if we should consequently not subscribe

prophecies originally composed in the city of Jerusalem and addressed to its inhabitants, and that these prophecies had later been worked over (in an easily detectable manner) to fit into the concept of the Chronicler’s “Babylonian exile” (cf. also his article “Certainly Pseudo–Ezekiel”, JBL 53 (1934) 293–95).

28 See his book The Second Isaiah, Edinburgh, 1928, where he dates these prophecies to the Persian period.
to the more extreme views put forward by Torrey, denying that there ever was an exile or return, we should not dispute that Torrey made some very strong points. What I want to claim is merely that the use of much current terminology is very problematic, and that the importance that has been attached to such ideas as “exile”, “return” and “restoration” has come to be exceedingly overstated as a result of scholarly readings of the texts of the Bible as more or less accurate descriptions of what actually happened in 6th century Judah. I am, in other words, concerned with what the exile was rather than with what it became in later tradition. Indeed, the problem of what the exile became is also a very legitimate scholarly project, not least because this is mainly the description of the phenomenon which we may find in the Bible itself and, which, consequently, has constituted a part of our common cultural heritage to this very day. My own interest, however, is much more narrow and concerned primarily with the question of what was actually going on in Judah during the period commonly referred to as the “Exile”.
TWO

The Biblical Evidence

When the prevailing 19th century view of "exilic" Judah came into existence, scholars had no access to archaeology or to Mesopotamian texts that could throw any light upon the period of the "Babylonian exile". Besides Josephus, the Bible constituted the only source of information. When viewing the quantity of scholarly literature which has emerged on the topic since then, it is difficult for us really to fathom the far-reaching consequences of the fact that practically everything we believe that we know about the period of the "exile" is ultimately based on the biblical texts, without which we would "know" as little about conditions in "exilic" or "post-exilic" Palestine as we know (say) about the history of the Moabites, or the Ammonites, or the Edomites during the same period. For this reason, it is maybe somewhat unfortunate that the Bible cannot (and should not) be read as a history book, a fact that certainly takes some time to dawn upon the scholarly world. No matter how "historical-critical" practitioners of that particular scholarly genre referred to as "the history of ancient Israel" regard themselves, their efforts so far have hardly ever amounted to

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1 Cf. below n. 14.

2 Incidentally, when we today are just starting to know a little more about the different peoples surrounding ancient Israel, this is mainly a result of recent developments in archaeology and of the new understanding that these cultures must be studied in their own right, and not only as a background for ancient Israelite history. Cf. below pp. 57ff.
much more than a paraphrastic recapitulating of the biblical stories themselves.3

Our main biblical source for the events leading up to the exile is the account in 2 Kgs 24–25. In 2 Kgs 24:1–6 we read how Judah in the days of Jehoiakim (who had for three years been a Babylonian puppet, but had revolted) was attacked by a joint army of Babylonians, Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites. Jehoiakim’s son, Jehoiachin, is made king in his place. He is besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, who carries off all the treasures of the temple as well as those of Jehoiachin’s palace and cuts in pieces all the gold vessels from the time of Solomon (24:6–13). “He carried away all Jerusalem (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained (לֹא נִשְׂרָא), except the poor people of the land (והלְה דָּמִים) (24:14).

3 Apparently, this would apply also for some of the more reflective scholars in this field. We have, however, especially in recent years, also been witnessing a small group of scholars pushing the limits for what is considered to be “historically reliable” in the Hebrew Bible. Having in turn successively abolished the “historicity” of the patriarchal stories, and more recently of the stories of the exodus from Egypt, and the settlement stories, one recent trend appears to hold the view that a proper history writing can only start from the time of the Israelite kingdom. It is quite wrong, however, to think that the Books of Kings are radically more “historical” than (say) the Book of Joshua. Quite recently, scholars like T. L. Thompson (Early History of the Israelite People. Leiden, 1992) and P. R. Davies (In Search of “Ancient Israel”. Sheffield, 1992) have also claimed that the biblical texts do not yield any historical information at all. This, however, is to go too far. Even if these texts cannot be treated as historical sources, the way that most scholars have done over the years, this is not to say that they are completely without any historical value. Among the various attempts to discuss historiography in the Hebrew Bible in a more general sense, see most recently, for example, J. Van Seters, In Search of History. New Haven (1983) 237-248, G. Garbini, History and Ideology in Ancient Israel. London (1988) 1-20, B. Halpern, The First Historians. San Francisco (1988) 3-35. Cf. also the interesting remarks in K. L. Younger, Ancient Conquest Accounts. Sheffield (1990) 25-58.
Then there follows the “duplicate,” vv. 15–16, where the contents of vv. 12–14 are repeated in a somewhat different form. Among the differences of some interest to us is that the number of exiles in v. 16 is given as 7000 plus 1000, as against the 10,000 of v.14, and that the carrying away of Jehoiachin to Babylon, with his mother, his wives and his “officials” and the “chief people of the land,” is now mentioned specifically (in v. 15). The reference to the people rought into exile in v. 16 represents a variant of v. 14.

Nebuchadnezzar replaced Jehoiachin with his uncle Mattaniah, who was given the name Zedekiah. Zedekiah, in turn, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, an event which led to another Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in Zedekiah’s eleventh year (2 Kgs 25:1–2). Following a famine in the besieged city, a breach was made in the wall, and king Zedekiah escaped with his army. He was, however, followed by the Babylonians, who captured Zedekiah and took him to Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah, where he was blinded, and taken prisoner to Babylon (25:4–7).

Following this event, the “captain of the bodyguard” (רברב בורבון), a high ranking Neo-Babylonian official by the name of Nebuzaradan (cf. v. 11) came to Jerusalem, “and he burned the house of YHWH, and the king’s palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the palaces he burned down” (25:9). The Babylonian army then broke down the city wall (25:10), and the rest of the people who were left in the city, and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the “rest of the multitude” (מריאל הרוסין), were all carried into exile (v. 11). “But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land (מריאל הרוסין) to be vine-dressers (רברב) and ploughmen (כר”) (v. 12).

In 25:13–17 there follows a list of metal object (bronze, silver and gold) which were taken away from the temple and brought to Babylon.

Vv. 18–21 relate an incident, where a number of twelve high Judaean officials, including the chief priest Ser-
The Myth of the Empty Land

...aiah, as well as “sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city,” were taken to Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah where they were killed. “So Judah was taken into exile out of its land (גהל יהודה משל אברם).”

In v. 22 we may read how a certain Gedaliah was appointed governor (רמך שלדוה) of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, of “the people who were left in the country” (הנה הלאים), and of how, when approached in Mizpah by sever...
When reading the above story of the last days of Judah, it soon becomes apparent that we simply cannot read these texts as we read "historical documents." The very logic of the ancient narrator is different from that of the western, historically disposed reader, who indeed has lost his innocence, in particular following the breakthrough of historical thinking in Germany in the early 19th century. The mentality of the biblical writer is primarily that of an oriental storyteller. Too often, one gets the impression that the majority of modern scholars regard the biblical texts as historical documents that have been distorted or corrupted or become unreliable as a result of a long tradition process, and that these texts, when treated with a proper dose of "historical critical methods," may be restored to their original reliable status, and yield the kind of historical information

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literary genre, see L. M. Wills, The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King. Minneapolis, 1990. Even if Wills is well aware of the existence of such genres also in the Deuteronomistic history, the obvious relevance of 2 Kgs 25:27-30 appears to have escaped him.

Nor can we, in fact, read any kind of "historical document" the way we once thought we could. The apparent striking lack of engagement of historians of ancient Israel in the intellectual discussion in general, and in the epistemology and methodology of history studies in particular, is not wholly ascribable to the fact that the majority of these scholars were trained as theologians and not as historians. A similar lack of interest in history theory appears sometimes to be prevailing also among professional historians. For a short, but most readable survey of historical research in the 20th century, see G. G. Iggers, Geschichtswissenschaft im 20. Jahrhundert. Göttingen, 1993. For a rare attempt to reflect upon the ideological presuppositions of scholars working with ancient Near Eastern history, see O. Carena, History of the Near Eastern Historiography and its Problems: 1852–1985. Part One: 1852–1945. Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1989. Unfortunately, only vol. 1 of this work is available so far, and this does not deal with biblical studies. The up-to-date list of literature on pp. 15-17 gives one an insight into the rather small bibliography in this important area.

For an interesting study of also of historical consciousness from Augustinian times to the present day, see A. Kemp, The Estrangement of the Past. New York 1991.
scholars are looking for.9 For this reason, one will also frequently find the same scholars approaching the three different biblical sources for “the last days of Judah,” to be found in Kings, Chronicles and Jeremiah,10 with the intent of finding out which is the more reliable source, or to compare them in order to attempt to reconstruct “what really happened.” However, any such approach to the biblical texts fails to do justice to the very nature of these texts, all of which, as sources for the historian, no matter whether he of a somewhat positivistic, or of a more relativistic persuasion,11 are equally “reliable,” or “unreliable.”

To us the story in Kgs 24–25 may not be “logical” or “coherent,” but this obviously did not worry the ancient writer. Thus, we may read in 2 Kgs 24:14, in connection with the deportations under Jehoiachin, that “all of Jerusalem” were taken into exile, with the exception of “the poor people of the land.” Despite for the fact that “everyone” was taken into exile, however, there are still enough people around for a new contingent, as well as for the “rest of the masses of the people” to be taken to Babylon in connection with the deportations under Zedekiah (25:11). As we

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9 One example which would illustrate my point here, may be found in the attempt by D. Jones to argue from the biblical texts that there were no sacrifices in Judah between 586 and 520 (“The Cessation of Sacrifice after the Destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.,” JTS (n.s.) 14 (1963) 12–31.


11 When there is, occasionally, more “historical” information to be found in Kings than in Chronicles, this has basically to do with the fact that the former has more material, and not with the fact the author of Kings is more “reliable”. For a pertinent critique of some of the research that has been done in this area see H. C. Brichto, Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics. New York (1992) p. 284 n. 14.
may read, this time too the Babylonians leave “some of the poorest of the land, to be vine-dressers and ploughmen.”

When the country has been completely emptied twice, the Babylonians appointed Gedaliah as governor of the “people who were left in the country.” So, despite the fact that it has been stated twice that “all” were deported, there were apparently people still left in Judah. That those who were left not only consisted of “the poor people of the land” may be learnt from the episode of the killing of Gedaliah, where names of well-known families are mentioned in connection with the meeting in Mizpah, and the killing of Gedaliah. And then, when, according to our story, “all the people” had already been taken to Babylon, we read about how, after the killing of Gedaliah, “all the people” went to Egypt. We might wonder: who are all these people who seem to surface all the time, when, allegedly, there is no one left in the country? The answer to this question is simple enough. When the ancient writer says “all the people” he does not mean “all the people,” but a large number. And when he refers to a large number, this may simply be because he wants to make a point with regard the the importance of what had happened. This does not necessarily imply that the number is large in itself. Also, we should keep in mind that members of the peasant proletariat, the non-landowning families, despite being a majority, probably did not count as “people” at all.

What we are facing here is a prime piece of ancient Hebrew storytelling, and not an historical account of what actually happened in Judah “when Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem.” Several attempts to come to grips with this text

12 In the Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian periods one often comes across the Akkadian word šaknu used of a governor of the territories of the Mesopotamian empire (see CAD 17 1989 183). This word appears in the Hebrew Bible as an Akkadian loanword יְשָׁנָה (e.g. Jer 51:23.28.57). Even if the word is not mentioned explicitly in connection with the appointment of Gedaliah, it is highly likely that his title was יְשָׁנָה.
have been unsuccessful simply because we are not dealing with an historical “source” at all. When the Deuteronomist tells his story he can say that “all of Jerusalem” were taken into exile on several different occasions, and there is nothing “wrong” with this. It is, furthermore, a cultural misapprehension to call this exaggeration for emphasis or hyperbolical expression for rhetorical effect (or whatever one chooses to call it). This is simply the way the ancient Hebrews told the story. This kind of story-telling lacks what Western readers would call logic, something which is quite common not only in biblical, poetical texts, but also in so-called prose texts, and should not be read with a rational mind. This, however, is exactly what has normally been done in biblical scholarship over the years, and it is, among other things, to such a misreading of an ancient oriental narrative that we owe that picture of non-existent life in Judah after 586. Of this one may easily acquaint oneself by browsing through the secondary literature on the “exilic period”.13 At the same time,

of course, this is not the same as saying that these texts do not reflect history or contain any historical information at all.

A similar attitude must also be taken with regard to the actual figures for the deportations mentioned in our texts. Thus, the Book of Jeremiah (Jer 52:28–30) indicates a three-fold deportation, totalling 4,600 persons. 2 Kgs, on the other hand, mentions two different figures for the deportation in 17: 10,000 in 2 Kgs 24:14 and 8,000 in 2 Kgs 24:16. For the major deportation eleven years later no figures are given. It is here simply stated that “the rest of the people” were taken into exile. The third deportation mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah (Jer 52:30) is not mentioned by the Deuteronomists. Also Josephus seems to know only of two deportations. His figure for the total number of deportees is approximately 13,000.14

have to combine insights from both the historian and the literary critic in order to understand better how we may, if possible, extract historical knowledge from these texts. There are some good points to be found in J. van Seters, In Search of History. New Haven, 1983, but I feel that we still have a long way to go.

14 Josephus’ writings represent, in several respects, an important source for the history of the Jewish people in antiquity, as well as for our knowledge of Palestinian matters in general. When I do not bring Josephus into the discussion in the present context, this is not because I consider him to be generally unreliable or irrelevant. There are probably few sources which have, in a similar manner to Josephus, been un-arrantly attacked for being notoriously unreliable. Fortunately, we have been witnessing a rehabilitation of Josephus in recent years. Again and again archaeology has proved Josephus right over against the prejudices of modern scholarship. For only one, more recent example, one may compare E. Will, “The Recent French Work at Araq el-Emir”, The Excavations at Araq el-Emir. Vol. I. Winona Lake (1983) p. 151. At Araq el-Emir, however, we are dealing with monuments from the 2nd century B.C., to which Josephus had direct access. It is quite a different matter when Josephus refers to historical events that took place several hundred years before his own time. In such cases we would have to enter into a discussion concerning Josephus’ sources. The very same principle would have to apply to the matter of Josephus’ population and deporta-
The only conclusion that we may draw from these rather bewildering figures is that we cannot trust any of them to be "exact". When scholars have been left with the feeling that the number of deportees referred to in the Book of Jeremiah is the more trustworthy one, this is probably because it is the lowest, and subsequently "appears to be" more "authentic." There are, however, no grounds for any such assumption. Again, when the ancient writers used figures the way they do in the story of "the last days of Judah", the were not concerned with numerical accuracy in any way. Large, round figures are more likely to indicate the momentousness of events, rather than forming substance for statistics. Consequently, all attempts to evaluate such figures, and to compare them in order to find out what is the "correct" number of deportees on the basis of these figures, is unprolific in the first place, and bound to end up in sheer speculation. And even if some of these figures should be "correct", which they are not, they would not be of much help to us as long as we are unaware what percentage of the whole population they represent.

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16 The problems concerning the population of Jerusalem during the exilic period are particularly difficult. With the introduction of palaeodemography as an academic discipline many of the earlier, totally unfounded speculations concerning the population of ancient Palestine have fortunately left us. Recent works dealing with the population of ancient Jerusalem are M. Broshi, "La population de l'ancienne Jérusalem", RB 82 (1975) 5–14 (see also by the same author; "Estimating the Population of Ancient Jerusalem", BARev 4 (1978) 10–15), J. Wilkinson,
In the more critical debate\(^\text{17}\) it has been claimed that the biblical stories contain ideology and not history. As all "history writing" contains elements of ideology,\(^\text{18}\) this is not

\[\text{"Ancient Jerusalem", PEQ 104–105 (1972–1973) 51–60. See also for the later period J. P. Weinberg, "Demographische Notizen zur Geschichte der nachexilischen Gemeinde in Juda", Klio 54 (1972) 45–59. The works of J. P. Weinberg are important, but not so well known,}\]

\[\text{\textcopyright Evaluating the history and archaeology of post-exilic Palestine. For a survey of his contributions, see now P. E. Dion, "The Civic-and-Temple Community of Persian Period Judea", JNES 50 (1991) 281–287. Dealing with the population of Palestine in the early period is Y. Shiloh, "The Population of Iron Age Palestine in the Light of a Sample Analysis of Urban Plans, Areas, and Population Density", BASOR 239 (1980) 25–35. Cf. also S. Geva, "Population Changes as Reflected in Pottery Types", PEQ 111 (1979) 109–112. Also concerned with the population of ancient Palestine in the late periods are M. Broshi, "The Population of Western Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine Period", BASOR 236 (1979) 1–10, C. Dauphin, "Chronique archéologique", RB 85 (1978) 429–32 (Byzantine), and R. Reich, "Archaeological Evidence of the Jewish Population at Hasmonean Gezer", IEJ 31 (1981) 48–52. Of a more general and theoretical character are M. N. Heicksen, "Archaeological Light on Population Problems", Bulletin of the Near Eastern Archaeological Society 6 (1975) 31–39, and J. Carothers and W. A. McDonald, "Size and Distribution of the Population in Late Bronze Age Messina", Journal of Field Archaeology 6 (1979) 433–54. In particular the above mentioned works by Broshi have brought some common sense into the speculations concerning the population of ancient Jerusalem. Building his theories upon similar works by scholars in related areas, Broshi takes his starting point how many people could survive per dunam (= 1000 m\(^2\)) in ancient Palestine. With regard to Jerusalem, Broshi claims that he can tell how many inhabitants it had at different periods according to the size of the city in a given period. Estimating a range in population density from 40 to 50, Broshi calculates the population of Jerusalem under king Josiah an approximately 20,000. As there are too many unknown factors involved here, such estimates, of course, should only be regarded as recommendations.}\]

\(^{17}\) Cf. the works by Carroll referred to on p. 21, n. 25 above.

\(^{18}\) The very word "ideology", also a creation of the intellectuals of the modern, western, European world (see A. Swingewood, A Short History of Sociological Thought. London (1991) pp. 275ff. Cf. also D. Walsh, "The Role of Ideology in Cultural Reproduction", Cultural Re-
so surprising. What we really have to take into consideration is rather the inner logic and mentality of the biblical stories. Already the way the author19 presents his story should give us a good indication that neither accuracy nor a highly developed critical attitude to the sources, nor any striving for inner coherence are to be found among the issues that mattered to this writer, whose sole concern it was simply to tell the story of the “last days of Judah” – in his own way. On the other hand, the fact that story writing, from our particular point of view, makes a sloppy background for history production. London, (1993) 228–249) is equally problematic as the word “history”. It is, therefore, only with the greatest impreciseness that we can use such anachronistic conceptual apparatus on biblical narratives at all. The distinction made between “history” on the one side and “ideology” on the other is equally problematic. “Bias”, “preconceived opinions”, “underlying motifs”, or whatever one chooses to call it, has formed a “natural” part of historiography at all times and the current distinction between “history” and “ideology” must be judged as rather artificial. The word ideology in our context, then, is best used in a very general, descriptive sense, as the value system of a certain group (cf. R. Geuss, The Idea of a Critical Theory. Cambridge (1989) p. 5). Even if the historiographers of the Hebrew Bible have as their prime aim the production of “ideology” and the reuse the ancient traditions in order to demonstrate something for contemporary society, rather than attempting to find out “what happened” in the past, this does not imply that these texts do not yield a lot of historical information. We do know, however, far less than we thought we knew, and, for instance, such a scholarly genre as the one that goes by the name of “History of Ancient Israel” probably has no future to speak of. Nevertheless, despite the scepticism of some recent scholarship, somewhere in the cognitive “force field” between “what happened”, and the “ideology” of the sources, and the “ideology” of the modern scholars, there are some “facts” to be learned.

19 It is quite common to use the term “editor(s)” rather than “author(s)” for the person(s) behind the biblical stories. This is not a good term, not only because it reflects the terminology, as well as the mentality, of classical German source criticism, but also because it represents a misunderstanding of what authorship was like in the Ancient Near East.
writing,\textsuperscript{20} does not of course imply that there is no history whatsoever to be learnt from the biblical stories. It would, for instance, be hypercritical, or even ridiculous, to claim that Nebuchadnezzar did not lay siege to Jerusalem or that no deportations took place whatsoever.

The conclusions which we shall have to draw from these biblical texts should be simple enough. Only the most nihilistic relativist would claim that no deportations took place at all. Thus, we know from many different sources that deportations formed a common element in the political history of the ancient Near East.\textsuperscript{21} Akkadian sources tell us of Nebuchadnezzar’s wars in the west.\textsuperscript{22} Also, it remains a fact that the Babylonian onomastic evidence from the Neo-Babylonian period contains Jewish names.\textsuperscript{23} One Babylonian source even mentions the name of king Jehoiachin.\textsuperscript{24} Archaeology also bears witness to the destructions following the campaign of Nebuchadnezzar in Judah.\textsuperscript{25} Beyond this, however, we really cannot know very much about details.

\textsuperscript{20} For instance, it is very likely that the stories of the Hebrew Bible were not written down immediately, but circulated orally for a certain period of time. It should be regarded as somewhat of a certainty today that oral history is not a sound base on which to reconstruct the given history of ancient cultures (cf. J. Fentress and C. Wickham, \textit{Social Memory} Oxford (1994) p. 76 n. 7.

\textsuperscript{21} Cf. B. Oded, \textit{Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire}. Wiesbaden 1979, and more recently, N. Na’aman and R. Zadok, “Sargon II’s Deportations to Israel and Philistia,” \textit{JCS} (1988) pp. 36–46. However, deportations in the ancient Near East are a problematic topic, and we certainly cannot treat the phenomenon as homogeneous. Also, we know much less about the Neo-Babylonian deportation policy than we do about that of the Assyrians. For an attempt to discuss some of the problems involved from the biblical point of view, see S. Herrmann, “Prophetie und Wirklichkeit”, \textit{Gesammelte Studien}. München (1986) pp. 183–187.

\textsuperscript{22} See below p. 62.

\textsuperscript{23} See below p. 63 n. 5.

\textsuperscript{24} See below p. 63 n. 5.

\textsuperscript{25} See below pp. 47ff.
We cannot say, for instance, how many deportations took place, nor can we know for certain the precise number of people who were deported.

In Chronicles we read about how the people of the land (עַרְצֵם) after king Josiah's death made his son Jehoahaz king. After three months, however, Pharaoh Necho brought Jehoahaz to Egypt and replaced him with his brother Eliakim, to whom he gave the name Jehoiakim (2 Chr 36:1-4). When Jehoiakim had reigned for eleven years he was brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar together with “some of the temple vessels” (מִכְךָ הַבַּיִת הַיּוֹדֵה), which the Babylonian king brought to his own palace. Jehoiakim was replaced by his son Jehoiachin (36:5-8), who, in turn, had only reigned for three months when he was taken to Babylon, with the “precious vessels of the temple” (מִכְךָ הַמִּבְדָּלִים הָיוֹדֵה), and his brother Zedekiah was made king of Judah in his place (36:9-10).

Zedekiah had reigned for eleven years when he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. When the Babylonians came to conquer Jerusalem, the Babylonian army killed without mercy, young men and young women, old and very old, “everyone was killed” (הָכֹל מְנַת בְּיֹודֵה), and the Babylonians brought a rich booty, including “all the vessels of the temple, great and small” (כָּל מִכְךָ מִכְּלֵי הַאֲדָמָה הַחֲלוֹמָה הַקְּרַבּוֹת), back to Babylon (36:11-18). Nebuchadnezzar burnt down the temple and the palaces of Jerusalem, broke down the wall of the city and destroyed all its precious vessels. All the survivors were taken to Babylon to become the slaves of Nebuchadnezzar, and the land lay desolate for seventy years (36:19-21).

There has been a tendency in biblical scholarship to make the claim that the Chronicler is more “ideological”, and the Deuteronomist more “historical”. Such a view, however, is based upon a misunderstanding of the biblical narratives. Thus, the description of “the last days of Judah,” as it appears in the Chronicler’s story in 2 Chr 36, is no more, and no less, “historical” than the corresponding stories of the
analogous events depicted in the Deuteronomistic history, or in the Book of Jeremiah, for that matter. This implies that the amount of "historical informations" which we may extract from these stories, from all three texts, would appear to be fairly similar, and not amount to much more than the knowledge that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and other big cities in Judah, that he took a large booty, and that he deported some of the population of Jerusalem, including the royal family, to Babylonia. Further bits of information are of course available, but as we have no means of controlling them, we are hardly allowed to read much more out of these stories.

As we may see, the story of Chronicles is nevertheless different in several respects from that of 2 Kings. Not only is the text shorter and more coherently built up, but its "exaggerations" are not so much "rhetorical" or "argumentative" but rather "ideological", making the claim that the whole country lay desolate for seventy years, a view strongly related to the one we find in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Life in Judah during the "exilic" period is virtually non-existent. The whole country lies in ruins. The whole population, except for the odd, half wild, peasant, trying to

26 The literature on the relationship between the Chronicler and the Deuteronomistic history is enormous, and it is not necessary to cite it here. For just one example, which is of relevance also to the present discussion, see the recent contribution by I. Kalimi and J. D. Purvis, "King Jehoiachin and the Vessels of the Lord’s House in Biblical Literature", CBQ 56 (1994) 449–457, where it is claimed that when the Chronicler contended that the vessels of the Temple were brought to Babylonia intact, opposing the Deuteronomistic story in 2 Kgs 24:13 about how the Babylonians cut the precious metals to pieces, this was in order to underscore the continuity of holiness between the worship in the second Temple and the Temple of Solomon.

27 The discussion on whether or not we have to reckon with a common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah is irrelevant in this connection. Both of these texts share a common interest in their stressing of Judah as a desolate country after 586.
The Myth of the Empty Land

... eke out a living in the hill side, has been taken away to Babylon. The future of YHWH’s people lies not with these insignificant peasants within the borders of Judah, but with the return of exiles from Babylonia.

According to the Chronicler, the land of Judah was veritably depopulated for seventy years. As we have seen, the impression that the deportations were total, is given also by other sources (2 Kgs 25:11. Cf. also Jer 52:15). Even the seventy year period mentioned in the Bible clear should not be taken as an exact reference to the duration of the “exile,” but must be understood as a round, or “symbolic”, figure for a certain period of great importance, and even if scholars now believe that the so-called “exilic period” lasted for approximately 48 rather than 70 years, the Chronicler’s concern to convince us of Palestine as a tabula rasa after 586, and of the greater importance of those who returned as against those who were left in the country, has, notwithstanding, turned out to be remarkably successful.

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Apparently, it also represents a major over-simplification to say that “the exile was over” in 538. Considering the large number of Jews who continued to live in the Diaspora, such a statement could never be taken literally. In fact, the exile never “ended.” Thus, it remains a fact that Judeans living in the Diaspora, in Egypt and in Babylonia, basically continued to live there.30

From the Chronicler’s version of “the last days of Ju-
h” we may learn at least two things. We learn how the “history” of ancient Israel is produced (yet again) through the reuse of accumulated shared traditions which are adapted for contemporary needs. We also witness how in the days of the Chronicler a certain accentuation of the catastrophe represents yet another step towards the final establishing of the myth of the empty land. So, history writing in ancient Israel was not at all a stable enterprise. Rather, what we are dealing with are both continuity and change at the same time.

Today, we are obviously still having problems with the aftereffects of the former tabula rasa views. While many scholars now admit that “most of the population” apparently was left in Judah, they at the same time put forward the claim that this population possessed no culture, no religion, and no polity.31 Whilst admitting that the majority of the population in all likelihood was left in the country, the prevailing view today seems to imply that the whole infrastruc-

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31 See above pp. 15ff.
ture relating to religion, culture, as well as other social institutions was transferred to Babylonia.

The very idea that a social system could be completely drained in the way it is currently described in some scholarly works is impossible on any account. What we are here witnessing, once again, is how a strong conservatism in scholarly tradition has contributed to upholding preposterous views on how societies functioned in the ancient world, subsequently leading to the current consensus concerning life Judah after 586 B.C.

Obviously, we should not make the Torreyan mistake of denying the fact that what happened in Judah in 586 was a major disaster and a terrible blow to the country. The effects of the deportations, however, being the last in a series, can hardly have been equally momentous for contemporary Judah as they were to become in later history and tradition, subsequently developing into belief systems which were to be known as “exile,” “return” and “restoration”. However, with the great majority of the population still intact, life in Judah after 586 in all probability before long went on very much in the same way that it had done before the catastrophe.

What kind of Judah was this? Here we must once and for all make a clear stand against the kind of misconceived “romanticism” which we sometimes find in scholarly books. A society is not a “subject”, but consists of social structu with social actors that are always performing in relation to each other and operating interdependently, each with their

32 Cf. above pp. 21–23.
33 Cf. below p. 62, n.4.
34 Even if it is difficult to make comparisons, it is noteworthy that N. Na’aman has claimed that the Assyrian deportations, which, incidentally, were practised in various ways by different kings, had no negative influence on the material culture of Israel, and could even lead to economic growth (“Population Changes in Palestine Following Following Assyrian Deportations”, Tel Aviv 20 (1993) 104–124.
different needs and functions. With the majority of the people still left in the country, obviously all the basic organizations continued *much in the same way* as they had before the Babylonian destructions and deportations took place. We should keep in mind that we are dealing with a small, basically agricultural society, in a Mediterranean climate. With life going back to normal fairly soon, it would represent a *fatal* misunderstanding of how ancient agricultural societies functioned to perceive any fundamental changes in everyday life or culture.

The people who went back to their tasks “among the ruins” and in the towns and villages were basically the same people that they had always been. They harboured the same needs as before, they tilled the soil as before, they reaped their harvests as before, they worshipped as before, and they consulted their priests and prophets as before. The removal of the royal family, high officials, military leaders, etc. did not change the infrastructure that made it possible for society to function. It is even questionable whether the superstructure represented by the king and his hierarchy ever contributed very much towards the upholding of the average polity in peace time.\(^{35}\)

Obviously, the prevailing view of the situation in Judah in the exilic period is also widely influenced by the biblical account of “the return from exile”. However, the problems connected with this event are too complicated to be dealt with here, except briefly.

Contrary to the views put forward by Torrey, there is no need to disbelieve that there was a certain return of exiled

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\(^{35}\) For a view of the nature of the self-sufficient ancient Near Eastern villages communities and their relation to the palatial economy, applying a Marxist model, see C. Zaccagnini, “Asiatic Mode of Production”, *Production and Consumption*. Budapest (1989) 49–51 and *passim*. The study is very useful for paying necessary attention to important economic aspects of ancient Near Eastern society, but some of the theoretical claims must be used with caution.
persons to Judah from Babylonia after 538 B.C. Wealthy landowners, exercising authority and influence, came back from Babylonia and played an important role in the formation and consolidation of Jewish institutions and beliefs. The significance of their return after 538, however, is hardly matched by that of their removal from Judah some 50 years earlier, at least not in the early phase.

What return took place after 538 is reflected in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. These books, however, a much more to be regarded as religious and political propaganda than historical documents. Nevertheless, the antagonism described in Ezra/Nehemiah between the returnees and those who had remained behind in the home land gives us further indication that life in Judah during the exile was not quite as non-existent as some scholars have assumed. The unhappy Samaritan discussion,36 as well as the discussion concerning the Īḏā ʿamūm37 has here unfortunately encumbered the proper evaluation of this important biblical period, in which we find the beginnings of Judaism.

The remarkable thing is really how very little we can actually know for certain about the “exile” from the biblical

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36 The so-called “Samaritan question”, has, especially in the earlier days of biblical scholarship, despite the fact that it has nothing whatsoever to do with our period, but represents a much later phenomenon, sometimes obscured the problem of “the return” (see the surveys A. D. Crown, A Bibliography of the Samaritans. Metuchen, 1984 and J. Margain, “Bibliographie samaritaine”, JA 268 (1980) 441–49, and JA 271 (1983) 179–86).

37 See for this otherwise important discussion most recently C. R. Seitz, Theology in Conflict. Berlin (1989) pp. 42–65. In the view of the present writer, the article by E. W. Nicholson, “The Meaning of the Expression Īḏā ʿamūm”, JSS 10 (1965) pp. 59–66, attempting to demonstrate that the expression Īḏā ʿamūm should not be taken as a technical term designating a special sociological group within the population of Judah, but rather as varying in meaning from context to context, has contributed much towards putting an end to some of the worst speculations in this area.
sources, and *how much* biblical scholarship apparently does know about this period based on these same sources. Again we should remind ourselves that what we find in surveys and textbooks on this period represents little more than a scholarly paraphrase of the stories found in the Bible. It does create considerable problems for us once we realize that it is this kind of “history writing” that has produced the current picture of a *tabula rasa* Palestine in the years following the Babylonian invasion and the fall of Jerusalem in 586.

My present interest in the exilic period was caused primarily by the claim, originating in the 19th century, that no economic, cultural or religious activity could have taken place in Judah during this period because the country simply ceased to exist. From what evidence we do possess, however, there are absolutely no reasons whatsoever to assume that Judean society after 586 could not have been able to foster a strong cultural activity, or bring forth literature of the kind which we may encounter in the historical, prophetic or poetical parts of the Hebrew Bible.
THREE

The Archaeology of Judah During the "Exilic" Period

If the arguments concerning a continuing settlement in Judah during the "exilic" period presented above are correct, we should expect to find some evidence of material continuation resulting from archaeological excavations.

That Judah was not completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar has actually been known for quite a while now,1 even if it may seem to have taken some time for the fact to appear in the more easily accessible textbooks. Whereas the archaeological evidence from such sites as Jerusalem, Tell Beit Mirsim, Beth-Shemesh, Lachish, and Ramat Rachel shows clear traces of the destruction brought about by Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns in the west, settlements in the northern part of Judah and Benjamin were not affected by

the event. Several cities lying north of Jerusalem, in the traditional area of Benjamin, were not destroyed at all. In contrast to sites excavated south of Jerusalem, these places in fact prospered in the later sixth century. Thus, it was mainly the hill country of Judah that suffered deportations and destructions under Nebuchadnezzar. The rest of the country was left more or less intact.²

Thus, at Tell el-Fül, after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the fortress, the site apparently continued to be occupied, and the population seems to have increased considerably. The 1964 campaign affirmed the earlier assumed extensive post-586 occupation (period IIIIB). The excavator even suggested the possibility that “refugees from the capital fled to such nearby villages as Tell el-Fül, possibly intending to wait out the exile close at hand until they could return to Jerusalem”.³

Among the other sites in the vicinity of Jerusalem which bear witness to continued occupation in the years after 586 is Tell en-Nasbeh, traditionally identified with biblical Mizpah. The later phase of Stratum I at Tell en-

² Apparently, not all archaeologists seem to share this revised and obviously more balanced view of the period of the “exile”. Y. Shiloh, for instance, can still refer to the “almost total destruction of the towns of the Judean Kingdom in 586” (“Judah and Jerusalem in the Eighth–Sixth Centuries B.C.E.”, Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology. Winona Lake (1989) p. 102).

³ N. L. Lapp, “The 7th–6th-Century Occupation: Period III”, The Third Campaign at Tell el-Fül. Cambridge (1981) p. 39. The fact that the identification of Tell el-Fül with Gibeah has been challenged recently need not concern us here (P. M. Arnold, Gibeah. Sheffield (1990) pp. 45–54). One should bear in mind, however, that the identification of archaeological sites with biblical towns or cities is not always as simple as some scholars apparently want it to be (see the wise remarks by Franken, “The Problem of Identification in Biblical Archaeology”, PEQ 108 (1976) 3–11). What matters in the present context, is the fact that we have evidence for occupation in Judah in the period between the fall of Jerusalem and the Persian period. It is of little importance whether or not we are able to link the site in question with a biblical town-name.
Nasbeh has been dated to ca. 575–450. What is of particular interest to us, of course, is that the archaeological evidence for occupation at Mizpah in this period lends credibility to claims that the Mizpah story(ies) found in 2 Kgs 25:22–25, and in a different and more extensive version in Jer 40:7–41:18, reflects historical events, and that we may assume that the Babylonians set up some kind of administrative centre at Mizpah, something, of course, they would never have done if there had been no population left in the country.

Further, at En-Gedi, one of the sites that was destroyed by the Babylonians, there appears to have been found some indication of occupation, or rather of re-occupation, after the destruction by the Babylonians of the Stratum V settlement.

Also at Gibeon (El-Jib) new evidence seems to change our picture of the settlement pattern. Whereas Pritchard himself apparently did not believe that the city itself was rebuilt after the Babylonian invasion, it has recently been suggested that the Gibeon tombs, dated to the 7th and 6th centuries, may have been in use also after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

As further evidence in support of continued settlement at Gibeon in the years following the Babylonian invasion into Judah are also six inscribed handles from Gibeon. These

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handles are among the extremely rare epigraphic material to be dated to the Babylonian period.\(^9\) We should keep in mind, however, that it is somewhat questionable whether these handles, found in unstratified debris, can be dated as precisely as has been claimed. The same applies for a similar handle from ha-Mosah, dated by Avigad to the same period on the basis of the Gibeon handles.\(^{10}\) On the basis of this evidence Avigad wants to see the village of ha-Mosah, situated approximately 7 km west of Jerusalem, as yet another town in the vicinity of Jerusalem that escaped destruction in 586, and where life went on as normal (together with Tell en-Nasbeh (Mizpah), Gibeon, Bethel, and Tell el-Fül (Gibeah)).

Obviously, it is not the purpose of the present study to attempt to belittle the destructions of Jerusalem and the Judean cities which took place in connection with Nebuchadnezzar’s invasions. The destruction layers found in major sites from this period clearly confirm the picture of violent devastations,\(^{11}\) demonstrating beyond doubt, for example

\(^9\) J. B. Pritchard, *Hebrew Inscriptions and Stamps from Gibeon*. Philadelphia (1959) p. 15. The handles concerned are the ones containing the name \(dm\)P (nos. 21, 25–29). Whereas more and more material remains have become available, the written evidence found in Judah in the period immediately after 586 is extremely meagre, if existing at all. At least, we have nothing which may throw any light on the size of the population, or on the activity that went on in the period. For a survey of the epigraphic evidence from the Persian period, see further A. Lemaire, “Les inscriptions palestiniennes d’époque perse”, *Transeuphratène* 1 (1989) 87–105, especially 93–94.


\(^{11}\) Among the places believed to have been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in his 586 campaign are, in addition to Jerusalem, such sites as En–Gedi, Lachish, Arad, and Ramat Rahel. (See the chronological–stratigraphical chart in Y. Shiloh, “Judah and Jerusalem in the Eighth–Sixth Centuries B.C.E.”, *Recent Excavations in Israel*. Winona Lake (1989) p. 103.) Again, however, there are some problems involved in the very interpretation of these destructions. Further, as we know that Nebu-
ple, that Torrey’s more extreme views will have to be abandoned once and for all. In the present context, however, I am not so much concerned with the question of destruction layers, but rather with what remained after Nebuchadnezzar’s armies had left Judah. It has here, undoubtedly, been a tendency to make far too much out of the evidence in a negative way. Archaeologists working in Palestine, and later in Israel, have apparently committed the very same mistakes as their colleagues in biblical studies. By taking the information found in the Bible at face value, they have interpreted their archaeological finds uncritically in the light of the biblical texts.\textsuperscript{12}

As for Jerusalem, there can be little doubt that the city suffered heavy demolition. There is not much archaeological evidence, however, which has been discovered so far, that bears witness to the destructions. Even less certainty exists with regard to the extent of the destructions, and what importance we should attach to them in relation to the question of continued settlement in the area. Other significant questions concern the actual size of the city on the eve of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege, the number of its inhabitants, and the fate of the population.

For some time now discussions concerning the size of pre-exilic Jerusalem have been an issue of turbulent debate between the so-called “minimalists,” maintaining that the pre-exilic walled city of Jerusalem only comprised the eastern hill, and the “maximalists,” who want to include also the western hill. Apparently, as a result of of recent excavations that Nebuchadnezzar made several campaigns in the west, the actual dating of all of these these destruction layers to the year 586 is not as unproblematic as one might think.

\textsuperscript{12} For a critique not exactly of the “biblicism” of much Palestinian archaeology, but of its “positivism”, see J. Hanbury-Tenison, “Hegel in Prehistory”, \textit{Antiquity} 60 (1986) pp. 108–114. It is only fair to mention that some of the worst exponents of “biblicism” or “positivism” working in this field are not mentioned in Hanbury-Tenison’s article.
in Jerusalem, the minimalist view can no longer be upheld. Yet, the exact extent of the city is still a matter of fierce controversy, something, however, which need concern us here only marginally.

Whether or not the late Yigael Shiloh, an archaeologist of the maximalist persuasion, was correct in his judgement that the fortified area of Jerusalem covered about 600

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13 The thesis that the Western Hill was also settled before 586 was first suggested by A. Alt, and like so many of Alt’s early suggestions this assumption too has found support in recent archaeological excavations (see, for instance, the articles by E. M. Laperrousaz, “Quelques remarques sur le rempart de Jérusalem à l’époque de Néhémie”, *Folia Orientalia* 21 (1980) pp. 179–85, “À propos du ‘Premier mur’ et du ‘Deuxième mur’ de Jérusalem”. *Revue des Études Juives* 138 (1979) pp. 1–16, and, most recently, “Jérusalem à l’époque perse”, *Transeuphratène* 1 (1989) pp. 55–65). Apparently, it represented a monumental blow to the traditional “minimalist” view, particularly championed by K. Kenyon, when Avigad discovered in the excavations of the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem both settlements and an installation which he thought to be an “Israelite tower”, which went back to the period of the First Temple (*Discovering Jerusalem*. Oxford (1984) p. 54). Avigad also claims to have come across evidence for the 586 destruction of Jerusalem not far from the tower, the very first traces of Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign ever to have been found in the city itself. The assumption by Avigad, however, that Israelite houses were spread over “the entire plateau of the Western Hill”, with reference int. al. to Tushingham’s excavations in the Armenian Garden, apparently is not supported by the material that is being referred to. Tushingham has made it quite clear in his excavation report from the Armenian Garden (A. D. Tushingham, *Excavations in 1961–1967*. Vol. I. Toronto (1985) pp. 15–16) that there was no occupation to speak of on the site in the late pre-exilic Iron Age (IA), but rather the place had been used as a quarry. On the basis of his own excavations, Tushingham has developed an intermediate position between the “minimalist” and the “maximalist” positions (see his article, “The Western Hill of the Monarchy”, *ZDPV* 95 (1979) p. 44).

14 That emotions have become more and more involved in the discussion of the size of pre-exilic Jerusalem may be witnessed in M. Broshi’s review of Tushingham’s excavation report in *IEJ* 40 (1990) pp. 229–230, the tone and attitude of which is less scholarly than one might have expected.
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dunams (not including the suburbs), all of which, Shiloh claims, were densely populated, is problematic. Including also the suburbs (mainly to the north of the city), Shiloh estimated the population of the city towards the end of the 8th century to be between 25,000 and 40,000 inhabitants.\textsuperscript{15} Such an estimate, of course, can only be guesswork. It is, however, sufficient to know that we are dealing with a fairly large city at this time, with a population which we shall have regard as considerable. The question is: What happened to Jerusalem and to all of these people?\textsuperscript{16}

When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 it is more than unlikely that he went about demolishing all of the 600\textsuperscript{17} dunams of the fortified city. Such a task would have been enormous and probably impossible, and on any account unnecessary. It is more likely that the wooden gates were burned, and breaches made in the walls, in order that the city could not be defended.\textsuperscript{18} Obviously, this would not make the whole of the city uninhabitable, and it would have been possible for those who escaped Nebuchadnezzar’s armies\textsuperscript{19} and fled into the countryside, at least to some ex-

\textsuperscript{15} “Judah and Jerusalem in the Eighth–Sixth Centuries B. C. E.”, \textit{Recent Excavations in Israel}. Winona Lake (1989) p. 98.

\textsuperscript{16} We may here refer to the remark by Shiloh on the destruction layer of Stratum 10 in the city of David, believed by Shiloh to go back to the 586 destruction: “No human remains were found trapped in the ruins” (Y. Shiloh, \textit{Excavations at the City of David}. I. 1978–1982. Jerusalem (1984) p. 29. On Stratum 10, see also in the same work, pp. 17–20). For what it is worth, this observation does not, of course, help us much. We have no means of knowing if the people in this area fled to neighbouring villages, or whether they were deported.

\textsuperscript{17} It is not necessary in this connection to discuss any further whether this actually was the size of the city.

\textsuperscript{18} The phenomenon is reflected in such biblical texts as Isa 58:12, and Amos 4:3.

\textsuperscript{19} For a similar view, see E.-M. Laperrousaz, “Jérusalem à l’époque perse”, \textit{Transeuphratène} 1 (1989) p. 56. Laperrousaz in fact argues in favour of a population of 12,000 in Jerusalem \textit{during the exile},
tent, to return to Jerusalem at a later point. Apparently, the reference to those “who are living in these ruins” of Ezek 33:24 is a reflection of this situation. Taking the fair dimensions of Jerusalem into consideration, there are, therefore, good reasons to assume some continued settlement also in the city itself after the worst tumults had come to an end.

New evidence in support of this assumption has come from recent excavations in the Hinnom Valley, a site particularly rich in burial caves. Apparently, these caves continued to be in use even after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Thus, we have here for the first time evidence in support of the continuation of settlement in the city of Jerusalem itself during the “exilic” period.20

However, not everyone who had lost their homes as a result of the outrages of the Neo-Babylonian army, in Jerusalem or elsewhere in Judah, could return to their original dwellings. The question what happened to those who could not go back to their home towns and villages have now apparently been solved through recent surveys, undertaken by the Israel Department of Antiquities in the years 1967–1968. During these surveys a large number of sites with material remains from the 6th century, many of them new, were discovered in Judah. There can be little doubt that in these

before any return of exiles had taken place, claiming support from recent archaeological excavations in Jerusalem.

small towns and villages we have direct access to places where large numbers of the Judeans who survived Nebuchadnezzar's invasions were living.  

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FOUR

The Evidence from Transjordan

Since the sources available to us when attempting to form an idea of Judah in the decades following 586 are very meagre indeed, it may be of some importance to take into consideration also the evidence from Transjordan. Even if the biblical writers may give another impression,¹ we have no reason to believe that Nebuchadnezzar would have treated the kingdom of Judah in any way differently from the kingdoms of Transjordan. For this reason, we may assume that the history of the Transjordanian kingdoms in this period would be fairly analogous to that of Judah and, consequently, of a certain interest to us.

This view is also shared by Hadidi, who claims that when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the eastern Mediterranean area in the early part of the 6th century, "the Ammonites fell victim to his power and much of the population was carried off to Babylonia into exile."² Obviously, it could well be that this is exactly what happened, but we should be aware of the fact that we have very little evidence in support of such an allegation. In fact, our only written source for postulating that the raids of Nebuchadnezzar into the west also comprised Transjordan is Josephus, who claims that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Ammon in 582/81.³ However, recent archaeological finds may seem to lend some support to this

¹ Cf. above p. 28, n. 6.
³ Josephus, Antiquities 10,9,9 §§ 181f.
claim. This is all the more likely when we take into consideration also the possibility that the Ammonites, under king Baalis, took part in Zedekiah’s anti-Babylonian rebellion in 589, leading to the final ruin of Judah. The fate of the other Transjordanian kingdoms in the Neo-Babylonian period is even less certain, something, of course, which has not prevented scholars from making their own suppositions.

Glueck’s surveys in Transjordan and in the Jordan Valley in the thirties and forties have been extremely influential, leading to the depiction of Transjordan in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods as a more or less emptied area, where little or no activity took place. As we may well see, this is quite similar to the earlier prevalent view of Judah during the so-called “exilic period.” Glueck’s surveys clearly concluded with the general judgement that after a prosperous Iron Age with intensive occupation in Transjor-

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4 Recent excavations carried out at Tell Safut, a site prospering in the Late Bronze and Late Iron periods, situated strategically on the northern edge of the present highway to Jerash, approximately 12 km north–west of the centre of Amman, have, among other finds, yielded a burnt Late Babylonian seal impression from the very latest occupation (Iron IIC). Even if the evidence in itself is marginal, we may, in view of the total picture of Transjordanian archaeology that is beginning to emerge, here have evidence to support the claim that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the site (D. H. Wimmer, “The Excavations at Tell Safut”, SHAJ III (1987) pp. 279–282). No continuation into the Persian period has been discovered, but then only a very small part of the site has been excavated so far.


6 Thus, the fate of Edom is quite uncertain. See the brief discussion, with references, in P. Parr, “Contacts between North West Arabia and Jordan in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages”, SHAJ I (1982) pp. 131–132. Glueck, on the other hand, stated rather categorically: “The Babylonian conquest brought an end to the independence not only of Judah, but also of Edom and to Edomite rule over Elath...” (N. Glueck, “Transjordan”, Archaeology and Old Testament Study. Oxford (1967) p. 442.)
The Evidence from Transjordan

dan, there followed a period of decline. The occupational gap ended only with a new flourishing first in the Nabatean and later in the Hellenistic/Roman and Byzantine periods.  

Recent surveys and excavations in Transjordan have proved Glueck wrong in several of his assumptions. For instance, surveys undertaken in the East Jordan Valley in 1975 and 1976 clearly indicate that the majority of the Persian sites reflect continuous occupation from the Iron II period. 

lot many excavations have been undertaken so far in Transjordan which throw any light upon the Iron IIC and Persian periods. The fact that there exists an unbroken continuity between the material culture of Iron IIC and the Babylonian period, and that something new first started with the Persian

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8 See in general (with literature): J. A. Sauer, “Transjordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages”, BASOR 263 (1986) pp. 1–26. Sauer, however, seems to go too far in his assessment of the cultures in Transjordan after the Babylonian invasion in the area, and claims that the occupation in the area in the period following the fall of Judah “flourished more than ever before.” On the other hand, he seems to have little understanding of any continued occupation in Cisjordan (pp. 16–18). 

9 P. E. McGovern, The Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages of Central Transjordan. Philadelphia (1986) pp. 8–9 and 17, Kh. Yassine, Archaeology of Jordan. Amman (1988) pp. 175 and 199, J. M. Miller, Recent Archaeological Exploration on the El–Kerak Plateau”, JNSL 15 (1989) p. 149. The total picture, however, is more complex, and a site like Tell el–Kheleifeh clearly has very few data indicating a post-sixth century occupation (G. D. Pratico, Nelson Glueck’s 1938–1940 Excavations at Tell el–Kheleifeh. Atlanta, 1993). Nevertheless, recent surveys of Transjordan not only show continuity in the settlements from late Iron to the Persian period, but they tell us clearly that the “kingdoms” of Ammon, Moab and Edom were prosperous and highly civilized throughout their existence, and that they were not inferior to the “kingdoms” of Israel and Judah. Yet, they are today almost forgotten, and we know practically nothing about them, except for a few inscriptions. Their whole national literature, which may in many respects have been similar to that of their neighbours in west, is totally lost to us.
period, is, however, suggested beyond doubt also by the excavations at Tell el Mazar.10

Despite the fact that altogether we have very little information on the history and archaeology of Transjordan in the Neo-Babylonian period, we are, nevertheless, beginning to obtain a certain broad picture of what was going on.11 Most important are recent surveys definitively pointing, rather contrary to what was assumed not long ago, toward continuity rather than any settlement gap in Transjordan following the Babylonian invasions. The picture of a continuous Ammonite occupation and culture, suggested by the archaeological evidence, is clearly analogous to what we find in Judah, and we may consequently believe that the settlement history of the kingdom of Judah in the Neo-Babylonian period must have been fairly similar to that of the kingdom of Ammon, and vice versa.


The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Judah

When reviewing the plight of Judah during the so-called "exilic" period far too little attention has been paid hitherto to the other member of the "partnership," namely the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The endeavour to study the fate of Judah in splendid isolation, without taking into consideration also the greater international context in which it abided, has encumbered the production of an accurate picture of what "actually happened."

In view of the importance of Nebuchadnezzar's military operations in the western Mediterranean area¹ for the developments that took place in Judah, it is more than regrettable that we are so poorly furnished with extra-biblical sources. The little information that can be obtained from current Babylonian sources is very meagre indeed, and does not tell us much beyond the fact that Nebuchadnezzar apparently made a series of campaigns in the west (Hattu), following his victory over the Egyptian Army at Carchemish in 605 B.C. and his succession to the throne in the same year,² something which clearly bears witness to military unrest in the area.

¹ For a history of the early reign of Nebuchadnezzar, see D. J. Wiseman, Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings. London (1956) pp. 23–37. For a general survey of Nebuchadnezzar's operations against the West see also D. J. Wiseman, Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. Oxford (1985) pp. 21–39. Wiseman, however, seems to be somewhat over-confident when it comes to the use of the Bible as a source for the reconstruction of the historical events of the exile.

² In BM 21946 (96–4–9,51), a chronicle concerning the early years of Nebuchadnezzar, there appears several times the geographical term Hattu as the destination of Nebuchadnezzar's western campaigns.
From the biblical sources, referred to above, it may be implied that a few years after this decisive event, the king of Judah, Jehoiakim, submitted to Nebuchadrezzar, only to rebel again against Babylonia around 600 B.C. This action, probably prompted by a renewed hope for Egyptian support, led to a Babylonian punitive campaign against Judah and the installation of Jehoiakim’s son, Jehoiachin as a king. In 597 Jerusalem was conquered, and Jehoiachin taken to Babylonia, together with a part of the population. Concerning this latter event we possess Babylonian evidence. In the Babylonian Chronicle we read how Nebuchadnezzar, in his seventh year, in the month of Kislev, mustered his army and marched to Hattu, where he laid siege to Jerusalem (“the city of Judah”), and seized it on the second day of the month of Adar. He then captured the king and appointed another king of his own choice, bringing a vast tribute with him to Babylon.\(^3\) Even if the king he had installed had been “a king of his own choice,” this did not prevent Zedekiah from revolting against his Babylonian overlord. In 586 Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, and further deportations took place. Of this final campaign of Nebuchadnezzar into Judah, leading to the fall of the city in 586, we have no record but the biblical.\(^4\) It is also unfortunate that we have very little

Apparently, Hattu is a general name for the whole of Syria and Palestine, and we do not know exactly which precise areas are referred to by the term *hattu* in this context.

\(^3\) BM 21946, lines 11–13 (see A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*. Locust Valley (1975) p. 102). The text, apparently, refers to the invasion in the year 597. We have, so far, no chronicles beyond the 10th year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (595 B.C.).

\(^4\) On the other side, it is probably equally typical that the deportations following the invasion of 701 B.C., mentioned in Assyrian sources, but not mentioned at all in the Hebrew Bible, may have been as extensive as those of 586 (cf. S. Stohlmann, “The Judean Exile After 701 B. C. E.”, *Scripture in Context II*. Winona Lake (1983) pp. 147–75).
evidence concerning the Judean population in the Diaspora from the Babylonian side.\textsuperscript{5}

When reading the commentators on the biblical texts relating to these events, one sometimes gets the Sunday school feeling that they regard the Babylonians as an evil people who came to destroy the true believers in Judah out of sheer wickedness, and that the bringing of Judeans into exile was a mean punishment or base revenge following the

\textsuperscript{5} As our sources are very scarce indeed, consisting basically of onomastic material, mostly from the Achaemenid period, we obviously cannot know very much about the Judean community in Babylonia (see, in addition to works listed below also R. Zadok, \textit{The Jews in Babylonia During the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods}. Haifa, 1979). One text from Babylon itself, relating to the distribution of oil to certain foreign families during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, mentions king Jehoiachin and other Jewish names (see E. F. Weidner, "Jojachin, König von Juda in Babylonischen Keilschriften", \textit{Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud}. T. 2. Paris (1939) pp. 923–35. With this exception, we have no extra-biblical written documents related to the Jews in Babylonia before the 5th century, when the so-called Murashu tablets, dating from the reigns of Artaxerxes I and Darius II, provide us with important indirect information on the prosperity of Jews at Nippur a hundred years or so “after the exile was over”. The wealthy Murashu family dynasty, engaged in agricultural management and banking business, has left us the largest private archives from the Achaemenid period (see M. D. Coogan, \textit{West Semitic Personal Names}. Missoula (1976), and M. W. Stolper, \textit{Entrepreneurs and Empire}. Istanbul (1985).) The study of Jewish names Mesopotamia, however, is problematic. Apparently, the names of Jews from the higher social ranks (as well as those of other nationalities in Babylonia) were changed into Akkadian names (R. Zadok, \textit{The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponomy and Prosopography}. Leuven (1988) pp. 18 and 175), something which makes the identification of Jewish persons very intricate indeed. This usage is reflected in the Hebrew Bible in the names of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel in the Book of Ezra. It is interesting to note, though, that many of the Jews in Babylonia apparently belonged to the literate part of society. At Nippur we find a high percentage of scribes among the Jewish population (R. Zadok, "Onomastic, Prosopographic and Lexical Notes", \textit{BN} 65 (1992) pp. 52–53). This phenomenon is clearly reflected in the title of Ezra, who is called \textit{עֵץ} several times in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.
uprising of the Judean king. It is high time that we start thinking about the whole matter from a rather different perspective.

The Neo-Babylonian empire represented a highly developed civilization, with an advanced political and economic structure. When Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptian Army at Carchemish in 605 B.C., a new era had seen the light of dawn in the ancient Near East. From now on, until it was conquered by Cyrus in 539 B.C., the Babylonian empire would experience perhaps the most brilliant decades in its whole history.

Nebuchadnezzar's sovereignty was over an empire in the true Mesopotamian tradition. Having no natural resources of its own, the whole existence of the empire depended entirely upon the import of materials like metals.
stone, and timber,\textsuperscript{11} and all sorts of food and luxury items. Already at an early stage the economy of the Mesopotamian countries had turned into an aggressive and expansionist one, soon to be followed also by territorial expansion. The conquest of the neighbouring countries became necessary in order to secure control of vital trade routes, and taxes and tribute were needed for the consolidation of the empire. It has been claimed, in fact, that the sole purpose of the enormous military and administrative system\textsuperscript{12} in Mesopotamia was to secure a constant flow of goods from the peripheral, conquered territories and into the centre of the empire.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} The greed of the Neo-Babylonian empire for metals is clearly reflected in the the biblical stories of the destruction of Jerusalem, in the striking preoccupation with the temple vessels in 2 Chr 36:18–19, and the detailed description of the removal from the temple of all objects made not only of silver and gold, but also of bronze (2 Kgs 25:13–17).

\textsuperscript{11} The voracity for timber should eventually contribute to the deforestation of the famous cedars of Phoenicia. From the Neo-Babylonian Wadi Brissa inscription we learn for the first time that there also existed an annual \textit{biltu} consisting of cedar trees (see J. Elayi, "L’expolitaiton des cèdres du Mont Liban par les rois assyriens et néobabyloniens", \textit{JESHO} 31 (1988) p. 24.

\textsuperscript{12} From the ever growing archaeological and written record we know that the great civilizations of the ancient Near East over the years developed very advanced administrative systems. One may here consult, for instance, \textit{The Organization of Power}. Ed. by M. Gibson and R. D. Biggs. Chicago, 1991.

\textsuperscript{13} M. T. Larsen, "The Tradition of Empire in Mesopotamia", \textit{PaP} (1979) pp. 98–100. "The fully developed Assyrian empire may somewhat flippantly be described as a vacuum cleaner, a huge military and administrative apparatus designed to secure a constant flow of goods from periphery to center" (\textit{op. cit.}, p. 100). The influence of the Marxist structuralist historian I. Wallerstein and his works on the transition from feudalism to capitalism is here evident. Even if the approach may be somewhat simplistic, or even anachronistic, it has clearly been useful in its stressing of the importance of economic structures in ancient societies. For a further attempt to use Wallerstein’s works for a better under-
Trade and imports constituted extremely important factors in the Neo-Babylonian economy. Even if the economy was still mostly in the hands of the royal palace and the temple, in the Neo-Babylonian period private families would come to contribute more and more to an increasingly prospering private economy, which, in the long run, would be to benefit of “the whole” country.


15 In particular, the importance of certain wealthy families like the Murashu family in Nippur, and the Egibi family in Babylon should be mentioned (cf. J. Oelsner, “Die neu- und spätbabylonische Zeit,” Circulation of Goods in Non-Palatial Context. Roma (1984) pp. 221–240.) The archives of the Murashu family, dating from Nippur in the 5th century, are important to us because the many Jewish names, which bear witness both to the continued existence of Jews in Babylonia long after the “return”, and also to the relative prosperity of at least some of them (cf. also above p. 63, n. 5).

16 On the remarkably high standard of living in Babylon in the Neo-Babylonian period see M. A. Dandamaev, “Free Hired Labor in Babylonia During the Sixth through Fourth Centuries BC,” Labor in the Ancient Near East. New Haven (1987) pp. 271–279. Even if, of course, the large groups of poor forced labourers and slaves could never take part in the economic “boom” of the time, debt slavery was virtually non-existent during the whole period. Occasionally there was a lack of workers, and then very high wages had to be paid.
It is this kind of imperial structure that we must regard as the framework into which we must also attempt to fit the kingdom of Judah. The few Akkadian texts at our disposal for the period in question explicitly state the economic factor. The long series of campaigns waged in Hattu was apparently made to secure also the collection of tribute. It has been pointed out on several occasions that Judah functioned as a military buffer zone between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Important as this may have been, it was certainly above all for economic reasons that Nebuchadnezzar needed Judah.

Consequently, it would have been nonsensical of Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Judah. As his imperial system depended on the accumulation of wealth based on the production outside his own country, the total annihilation of a

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17 The Akkadian word for tribute, biltu, appears also in l. 13 of the Babylonian Chronicle describing the conquest of Judah in 597 (A. K. Grayson, Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles (1975) p. 102). In fact, the whole of Chronicle 5, of which “our” text forms but a small part, can be read as an illustration of how Nebuchadnezzar practised his “periphery/centre” imperial policy.

18 One scholar who has dedicated much effort to the stressing of this factor is Malamat (cf. the works of this author referred to on p. 13, n. 2 above). The belief that Palestine was of interest to the surrounding countries for strategic, and not for economic reasons, is widespread, and applies also for earlier times. In his review of the economic importance of Canaan for Egypt in the Late Bronze Age, S. Ahituv claims that the interest of Egypt is probably more of a geographical and strategic kind, rather than economic (“Economic Factors in the Egyptian Conquest of Canaan”, IEJ 28 (1978) pp. 93–108, p. 104.). Yet, Ahituv is here underestimating the economic aspect. The booty and tax from Canaan for one year, among which we find also 30,000 litres of oil and 95,000 litres of wine (same place p. 99) represented a considerable economic value even to a rich country like Egypt. It is of particular interest that we find the two commodities oil and wine as typical products of Palestine (see below pp. 71ff.).

19 See K. Ekholm and J. Friedman, “‘Capital’ Imperialism and Exploitation in Ancient Systems”, PaP (1979) p. 45. There are many good points in this article, attempting to explain Mesopotamian history as being based on a centre/periphery economic system, which is, “by
conquered territory would in fact be an act against his own interest. As his empire subsisted on already established forms of wealth production and accumulation, it would rather be in his interest to maintain, or even increase, the existing modes of production.²⁰

What probably happened in Judah in 586, to the best of our knowledge, was this: By bringing into exile the aristocracy of Judah Nebuchadnezzar in fact took away the state, which was identical with the royal family and the upper classes. In addition, a number of artisans were probably deported. We know that these were in great demand in Babylon, where the economy was booming, and artisans were needed for Nebuchadnezzar’s many building projects.²¹ The Judean state was then replaced with a Neo-Babylonian state. This would have no effect on the produc-


²⁰ K. Ekholm and J. Friedman, Power and Propaganda. (1979) p. 52. To some degree this important point was made by J. N. Grahan “Vinedressers and Ploughmen”. 2 Kings 25:12 and Jeremiah 52:16”, B., 47 (1984) p. 56, who claims that “Babylonian policy towards conquered territories, as with most imperial powers, was to utilize their resources to the benefit of the state”. This fact is reflected in the text of the Hebrew Bible, where the references in 2 Kgs 25:12 and Jer 52:12 to “vinedressers” (כרמים) and “ploughmen” (рабים) clearly allude to those left behind in Judah to till the soil for their Babylonian overlords.

tion of Judah, where life fairly soon would have "returned to normal."

It is a mistake to believe that the upper classes were particularly important for the day to day running of a country in a basically agricultural society like Judah. To a certain extent, the overarching political institutions did provide the environment for the population within the borders of the country to function. The central organs, however, did themselves participate in the actual production of food and other goods necessary for the people to have a satisfactory way of life. With non-functioning central organs, the stability necessary for a prospering economy and the social order that secured the quality of life for the population would suffer. In an imperial system, however, whenever the local jurisdiction was replaced with another by the occupying foreign power, this would clearly not be a problem.

Again, the destruction of the temple must also be viewed within this context. Far too often we find in current textbooks and introductions to ancient Israel a tendency to treat the temple as a religious institution somewhat isolated from the rest of the society. We must stop regarding the temple in Jerusalem solely as a "religious institution," and realize more clearly that we are in fact dealing with a major political and economic institution, as well as a religious one. Together with the Judean king and the aristocracy, the temple would have been a major landowner and an enormously important economic institution, similar to what we find also

22 H. Kaufman, "The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations as an Organizational Problem", The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations. Tucson (1991) 223. This whole volume, based on a seminar held in 1982 in Santa Fe which discussed sociocultural change and stability in ancient cultures, is useful for the present discussion as it shows that change, rather than collapse, appears to be very much the tendency in most places where the phenomenon has been studied.
in other ancient Near Eastern cultures.23 Besides the symbol effect, and the undoubtedly strong damaging outcome on morale and national and religious pride, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar must also be viewed as a means of gaining economic and political control, and as part of Nebuchadnezzar’s programme of imposing his own superstructure on Judean economy and polity.

It has been claimed that Palestine was poor and Babylon was rich. This, however, is only a half truth.24 It remains a fact that ancient Israel was always producing more agricultural products than she herself could use. As we learn more about agriculture in ancient Israel, it is possible to evaluate it also from a broader socio-economic point of view. For the moment, we are only at the beginning of our knowledge of this important area. Far too little attention has been paid to the enormous economic importance of agricultural production in ancient Israel, even if, of course, some important work has been done.25 In the present context, I will only mention two products, both of which would be of the greatest economic value, and both of which did not exist in Mesopotamia, and, consequently, would have to be im-

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ported there: the grape vine (*Vitis vinifera L.*) and the olive (*Olea europaea L.*). In fact, the products of the very trees for which Judah was famous, the vine and the olive, were always imported to Mesopotamia.27

26 We are here dealing with an important aspect of biblical studies of which we are at present only at the beginning. According to the classic "trade text" in Ezek 27:17, wheat, olives, early figs, honey, olive oil (תָּם), and balm constituted the most important export products of Judah and Israel. Strangely, wine is not mentioned here. The products here referred to are very interesting, and all in need of further research. In particular honey (תָּם) is, in my view, a very important, but neglected product of ancient Palestine, the manufacturing and trade of which need to be further studied. We know that honey was rare in Mesopotamia (A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*. Chicago (1977) 44). Another interesting item on the list in Ezek 27 is balm (תָּם). Here, archaeology has, to some degree, lent support to the text in Ezekiel. Apparently, at En-Gedi, Stratum V, one of the very places where there appears to have been continued settlement in Judah after 586, and which therefore might be of interest to the neo-Babylonian economy (cf. above p. 49), there was a "factory" for the production of balsam oil (see for references J. Patrich and B. Arubas, "A Juglet Containing Balsam Oil? From a Cave Near Qumran", *IEJ* 39 (1989) p. 53, n. 27).

The production of olive oil\textsuperscript{28} was of immense importance in ancient Israel, as well as in the rest of the Mediterranean countries in ancient times.\textsuperscript{29} In Mesopotamia proper, barley, beer, and sesame oil were produced, and only in its western parts was it possible to grow wine and olive oil.\textsuperscript{30} In Judah, there existed a major oil industry in the late Iron age. Remains of industrial oil installations have been found at Tell en-Nasbeh, Tel Beit-Mirsim, Tel Beit-Shemesh, Tel Gezer, Tel Batash, and Tel Miqne.\textsuperscript{31} Special mention should be made of the Philistine site of Tell Miqne, ancient Ekron, in the Shephelah, where recent astonishing finds have brought to light 161 large Iron Age II B/C installations, capable of mass producing at least an average of 1000 tons of

\textsuperscript{28} For a short survey of olive oil production in ancient Israel, see O. Borowski, \textit{Agriculture} (1987) pp. 117-126. A recent, important work, with articles also on ancient Israel, is \textit{La production du vin et de l'huile en Méditerranée}. Ed. par M. C. Amouretti et J.-P. Brun. Athènes, 1993.

\textsuperscript{29} Cf. D. Zohary and M. Hopf, \textit{Domestication of Plants in the Old World}. Oxford (1988) p. 131, referring to the olive as "the most prominent, and economically perhaps the most important classical fruit tree of the Mediterranean basin". See also the first part of the survey article by J.-F. Salles, "Du blé, de l'huile et du vin..." \textit{Achaemenid History VI}. Leiden (1991) 207-36.


olive oil per year.\(^{32}\) When we realize that the annual yield of oil at Tell Miqne was one fifth of the national export of olive oil from Israel today, we may begin to appreciate the enormous economic significance of olive oil production in ancient Palestine.\(^ {33}\) What is of particular interest to us, of course, is the fact that Tell en-Nasbeh, biblical Mizpah, was one of the places where olive oil was produced. As we have seen above, this was one of the sites where Judean settlements not only continued, but even flourished during the Neo-Babylonian period.

Of equally great importance was the wine production.\(^ {34}\) The several hundred references to wine and the vine


\(^{33}\) That this goes back a long time can be seen from yet another olive oil factory discovered at Beth Yerah from EBIII (D. L. Esse, Subsistence, Trade, and Social Change in Early Bronze Age Palestine, Chicago (1991)123–25. Esse suggests that the installation at Beth Yerah gives good cause to believe that the similar construction discovered in the industrial area at Tel Yarmuth was also used for processing oil (Esse, op. cit., p. 123). If, as archaeology seems to indicate, we may assume that the residents of Jerusalem fled to the surrounding villages to maintain a living after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., it is interesting to note that there exists a Talmudic tradition which mentions Tekoa as the place in Palestine where the best olive oil was produced (M. Bohrmann, “L’huile dans le judaïsme antique”, Dialogues d’histoire anciennes 15 (1989) p. 65. That Tekoa was economically independent, may explain, as well as give credibility to, the tradition preserved in Neh 3:5, where we learn that even if the inhabitants from Tekoa helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, they were not too eager.

\(^{34}\) A. Goor, “The History of the Grapevine in the Holy Land”, Economic Botany 20 (1966) pp. 46–64, O. Borowski, Agriculture in Iron Age Israel (1987) pp. 102–114. According to Goor (same place p. 64), the export of wine from Israel in 1962 amounted to 1,750,000 litres, and brandy and other spirits 78,000 litres. The importance of wine production in antiquity is put into perspective when we learn that the wine export from Palestine in the Byzantine period was almost as extensive as in the 20th century (see Y. Dan, “The Foreign Trade of Palestine in the Byzantine Period”, Cathedra 23 (1982) pp. 17–24.
throughout the Hebrew Bible clearly reflect their significance for ancient Israelite life and society. Here particular mention should be made of the impressive installations for wine production discovered at Gibeon, yet another site where archaeologists now suspect continued settlement after 586. As Palestine always produced more than it could consume, wine represented a major export article and would, together with olive oil, be of considerable economic interest to the biltu–hungry Neo–Babylonian empire.

The economically prospering Neo–Babylonian empire provided the possibility for a high standard of living not only for the upper classes, but also for people in general. For this reason, we may assume that the Jewish community in Babylonia was also relatively prosperous. As economic conditions in Palestine were relatively poor, there is no reason to assume that the return from exile was extensive.

Concerning the actual conditions of the Jewish deportees in Babylonia, we can only attempt to imagine what the situation was like indirectly from what we know in general of the conditions in Babylonia in the period in question. We do know, for instance, that the turning of prisoners of war into slaves was a widespread phenomenon. On the other

35 J. B. Pritchard, *Winery, Defences, and Soundings at Gibeon*. Philadelphia (1964) pp. 1–27. According to Pritchard, the 63 cellars found at Gibeon had a storage capacity of 25,000 gallons of wine (op. cit., p. 25). Pritchard further suggested that the similar cisterns which Albright discovered at Tell el–Fül, probably had a similar function. Since the latter site apparently prospered in the period following the fall of Jerusalem (see above), we may here have important evidence for wine production being one of the major agricultural industries in that area also in the Neo–Babylonian period. We should bear in mind, however, that as no residue was found in the Gibeon cellars, we have no actual proof that they ever contained wine.

36 See above pp. 49–50.

37 See above p. 66, n. 16.

hand, the treatment of slaves in the Neo-Babylonian period was not what one perchance might have suspected. Slaves were treated well, and allowed to live as families.\textsuperscript{39} Apparently, there was no difference between the rations for slaves and those for free persons.\textsuperscript{40} Slaves could even own their own houses.\textsuperscript{41} They could also act as witnesses in business transactions between free men,\textsuperscript{42} and have their own cylinder seals or seal rings.\textsuperscript{43} They could even marry free persons.\textsuperscript{44} Even if they were actually considered as the property of their owners,\textsuperscript{45} they could pay their own pay taxes,\textsuperscript{46} give testimony in court,\textsuperscript{47} and even function as officials.\textsuperscript{48}

In all likelihood, however, the Judean deportees were not turned into slaves. Despite the fact that many skilled artisans were to be found among the Judean deportees, and our knowledge that there were many artisans among Neo-Babylonian slaves, Dandamaev has claimed that the forced labour section in Mesopotamia in this period was already considerable, and, as a consequence, probably unable to absorb masses of new captives.\textsuperscript{49}

In any case, the prosperity and relative high standard of living in the Neo-Babylonian empire in general, even among slaves, clearly indicate that Babylonia was a “land of opportunity,” not likely to be left for the harsh reality of Judah. The only group of people who would gain anything from returning to their homeland, following the decree by Cyrus in 538, were the upper classes and the people who

\textsuperscript{40} Op. cit., p. 241.  
\textsuperscript{43} Op. cit., p. 401.  
\textsuperscript{44} Op. cit., p. 412.  
owned land in Judah. The majority, however, probably stayed behind and subsequently developed into the large and important Babylonian Diaspora. Moreover, we should also remember that the Jewish population in Babylonia was the result not only of one, but of several deportations (probably also of voluntary emigration). In time it should become one of the wealthiest and most important of the Diaspora communities. If a return from exile should really have taken place at a major scale the way the biblical sources seem to indicate, there would hardly have been such favourable conditions for the growing up of the large and influential Diaspora community in Babylonia.

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50 Cf. above p. 41, n. 30.
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Conclusions

In the present study I have discussed in some detail the problem of “exilic” Judah. In particular I have attempted to demonstrate that the belief that the land of Judah was in ruins and uninhabited, and that nothing much went on in the country between 586 and 538\(^1\) is highly improbable both from an archaeological as well as from a cultural and historical point of view. As we have seen,\(^2\) however, the notion of a *tabula rasa*, inherent in 19th century scholarship, is unfortunately still looming in the scholarly rear garden.

When the “Myth of the empty land”, more or less, started to represent scholarly consensus already from the mid-19th century onwards, this was, implicitly or explicitly, very much the result of the then current belief in the historical reliability of the biblical sources, of the lack of any archaeological evidence, and of a basic ignorance of matters Mesopotamian.\(^3\)

Thus, when biblical researchers of today uncritically follow scholarly consensus concerning “exilic” Palestine, they adhere, willingly or unwillingly, to views and senti-

\(^{1}\) On these dates, cf. above p. 13, n. 2.

\(^{2}\) See above pp. 16–19.

\(^{3}\) In addition to the Bible, most of the information about Mesopotamia in the last century came from classical authors. As we get to know more about Mesopotamian history and culture due to the enormous progress of Assyriology, it appears that the information from the Greek and Latin sources, with a few exceptions, are basically without any historical value (cf. A. Kuhrt, “Assyrian and Babylonian Traditions in Classical Authors”, *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn*. Berlin (1982) 539–553.
ments whose foundations were laid in early 19th century scholarship, and which still influence the interpretation of biblical texts long after the reasoning that once led to them has ceased to be valid.

The period following the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., commonly referred to as “the exile,” is, and, even more, the so-called “post-exilic epoch”, are in several respects regarded as the most important periods in the history of ancient Israel. Scholars regard this age, as well as the tin which followed it, as “formative” periods in Israel’s religious and cultural development.4

Notwithstanding this, there has, with regard to the history and culture of the large majority of the population which actually remained in Judah, hardly been any interest among biblical scholars. The very sharp distinction made between “before and after 586”, overshadowing the fact that we are dealing with a continuous culture, is inappropriate, and should be regarded as “mythical” rather than “historical”. According to the sources that we do have access to, sources that are steadily growing in number and importance, there are clear indications of cultural and material continuity before and after 586, rather than any enormous gap. The gap is rather to be considered a construction of later tradition.5

4 “Off the record”, one may sometimes suspect that the scholarly community is so interested in the “exilic” and “post-exilic” (Persia periods because they represent yet another “end” and yet another “beginning”, i.e. the beginning of Judaism. However, the apparent obsession with the “origin” of this or that phenomenon, an evidently never failing evolutionist constituent of scholarly behaviour, is not always as prolific as one is sometimes led to believe. Despite the influence of a book like M. Bloch, Apologie pour l’histoire. Paris, 1993, who already in the early forties warned against confusing ancestry with explanation (pp. 85–89), the “idole des origines” apparently is still with us and may have contributed to the scholarly stressing of discontinuity rather that continuity between the periods before and after the fall of Jerusalem.

5 One of the most fervent proponents of archaeological continuity between the Iron Age and the Neo–Babylonian periods is the Israeli
The whole matter of the “exile” must on the whole be characterized as something of a “romanticist” idea which, to a large degree, has been detrimental to biblical scholarship.

Obviously, we should not deny that several deportations took place. What we must renounce, however, is the claim that these deportations affected life in Palestine in the way that much scholarly consensus appears to believe they did. The Judah left behind by the Babylonians was not a solate and empty country lying in ruins until the Jews miraculously arrived back under Cyrus. Judah after the fall of Jerusalem constituted yet another wheel in the much bigger economic machinery of the Neo-Babylonian empire, and a society where life went on after 586 B.C. pretty much in the same way as it did before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar’s armies.

Nor should we, with Torrey, 6 deny that any return ever took place. However, such return as there was certainly was not the kind of large scale operation, following a decree by Cyrus, that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah wish us to believe. The “exile”, in fact, never “ended”. However, the extent and nature of the so-called “return,” as well as its impact on the “restoration”, are matters with which I am not concerned here. 7 My sole interest has been with the question of continuity in Palestine.


6 See above pp. 21–23.

The view that the Babylonians brought into exile "the whole of" the Judean people is preposterous on any account. On the whole, we must assume that the Babylonians treated the defeated Judeans very much in the same way that they treated other conquered peoples. In addition to the king and his family, high officials, and members of the upper classes, the Babylonians would bring with them skilled labour as prisoners of war that could be of service to them. In particular the removal of the officials that used to run the country's central administration made a quick recovery of the macrostructure impossible, and also drastically reduced the chances of any national revolt in Judah. Obviously, this was a hard blow for the Judean state. We should not, however, think of a society in such a static way that through the removal of certain social strata a nation would simply cease to exist. To some degree, those who stayed behind, would have to take up the tasks of those who left, and life would go on, obviously under harsh circumstances and under new overlords.

As we have seen, archaeological excavations have demonstrated beyond doubt the continued existence of a considerable Israelite material culture in the Negev, and in particular in the area of Benjamin, but also in the Judean hills, and probably in Jerusalem. In other words, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the archaeological evidence once and for all has made any claim that "the centre of gravity was moved from Judah to Babylonia" preposterous. It would definitely be wrong to assume that whereas the "material" culture went on in the home country under difficult conditions, the "spiritual" culture moved to Babylonia. Any attempt to make sharp distinctions between the material remains of a culture and its intellectual activity fails to acknowledge the way in which societies basically constitute

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8 There is, however, little reason to deny that we know fairly little about the Neo-Babylonian deportation policy.
organic inherent structures which function in dynamic inter-
relationship. For instance, when we find that poetry of such
high quality as that in the Book of Lamentations could ac-
tually be produced in Judah after the disaster of 586, it fol-
lows that other kinds of literary activity might also have
taken place in Judah.

Also, far too much of the scholarly attention has been
focusing on the population and the élite in Jerusalem. We
have seen from the archaeological, as well from the biblical
evidence, that there was a substantial continued settlement
all over Judah, and we should, consequently, remind our-
selves that Judah, with its cities and towns and villages, con-
sisted of more than Jerusalem. These towns or villages, es-
pecially those at a certain distance from Jerusalem, were
probably completely unaffected by “the exile” and life was
allowed to go on in the same unruffled manner as before the
upheavals in 586. To judge from what evidence we do have
for continued settlement also in Jerusalem proper, we may
even ask whether it was not possible that life in Jerusalem,
too, went back to “normal” after a short while.

Finally, I would like to mention only one phenom-
enon which most certainly would have found fertile ground
in post–586 Jerusalem and Judah, namely prophecy. Proph-
ets, for a start, were always particularly active in times of
crisis.9 In Ps 74:9, a text lamenting the destruction of Jerusa-
lem, we learn about the despairing need for prophets in such
difficult times: “Our signs we do not see. There is no longer
any prophet, or anyone among us who knows for how long
(it will last)”. And prophets most certainly were not depen-
dent on the intellectual or political élite in Jerusalem. There
are, in fact, clear biblical indications that prophets did origi-
nate from small towns outside Jerusalem – exactly the kind
of place that would have escaped Nebuchadnezzar’s destruc-
tions. No biblical tradition informs us of any prophet rising

from the social milieu of one of the larger cities, or from Jerusalem itself. Thus, the prophet Jeremiah was associated with Anathoth, Amos with Tekoa, and Micha with Moresheth. The more we contemplate it, the more empty becomes the “Myth of the empty land”.
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The Babylonian Captivity of the Book of Isaiah
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The Babylonian Captivity of the Book of Isaiah

"Exilic" Judah and the Provenance of Isaiah 40–55

Novus forlag — Oslo 1997
Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning
To the Memory of Jonas C. Greenfield
30 October 1926 – 13 March 1995
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Hans M. Barstad

Hokksund
13 March 1997
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>AnBib</td>
<td>Analecta Biblica</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATD</td>
<td>Das Alte Testament Deutsch</td>
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<tr>
<td>BETL</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
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<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>Biblische Notizen</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSac</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Sacra</td>
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<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beiheft(e). Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>CThM</td>
<td>Calwer Theologische Monographien</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAT</td>
<td>Forschungen zum Alten Testament</td>
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<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
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<td>GThW</td>
<td>Grundriss der theologischen Wissenschaft</td>
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<td>HK</td>
<td>Handkommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
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<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
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<td>Int</td>
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<td>JBL</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPOS</td>
<td><em>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</em></td>
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<td>JSOT</td>
<td><em>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td><em>Journal of Semitic Studies</em></td>
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<td>JSSM</td>
<td>Journal of Semitic Studies. Monograph</td>
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<tr>
<td>KThR</td>
<td><em>King’ Theological Review</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>NRTh</td>
<td><em>Nouvelle revue théologique</em></td>
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<td>NTT</td>
<td><em>Norsk teologisk tidsskrift</em></td>
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<td>OBO</td>
<td><em>Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis</em></td>
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<td>Orien</td>
<td><em>Orientierung</em></td>
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<td>OTL</td>
<td><em>Old Testament Library</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>PEFQS</td>
<td><em>Palestine Exploration Fund. Quarterly Statement</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SJOT</td>
<td><em>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SVT</td>
<td><em>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum</em></td>
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<td>THAT</td>
<td><em>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</em></td>
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<td>WBC</td>
<td><em>Word Biblical Commentary</em></td>
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<td>ZAW</td>
<td><em>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</em></td>
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Among the (rare) instances of consensus in present-day biblical scholarship we find the assumption that chapters 40–55 of the Old Testament book of Isaiah was written in Babylonia during the period of the so-called Babylonian exile, following Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Ever since I had the opportunity to study problems in relation to the provenance of chapters 40–55 in the book of Isaiah in some detail a few years ago, I have been of the opinion that this view represents a scholarly misconception. I am now convinced that this erroneous view, irrespective of whether one believes that these biblical chapters go back to an anonymous prophet (The “Second Isaiah”), as most scholars still believe, or whether they represent a composite work, as some scholars have recently claimed, has been most detri-


2 Apparently, we can never “prove” the existence of a prophet “Second Isaiah” (on the birth of the Deutero–Isaian thesis, see below pp. 53–54 n. 1. Cf. also p. 73 n. 25, pp. 73–74 n. 26, p. 74 n. 27, and passim). Also, we cannot “prove” that all of Isa 40–55 goes back to “one person”. It is, however, unlikely that the text as we now have it was created “at once”, and in the course of a very limited period of time. At least someone must have been responsible for the final putting down in writing and arranging of the text. With regard to Isa 40–55 it is not possible to deny that we here have a work with a very high degree of consistency with regard to style, vocabulary and message. We shall, never-
mental to Isaian scholarship, and has sometimes not only lead to erroneous misinterpretations of several details, but also to an overall misunderstanding of this important biblical text.

The present monograph is the last in a series of studies on Isa 40–55 (which grew out of my 1982 article), dealing with problems in relation to the background and provenance of Isa 40–55. In one study I dealt with the question of Akkadian literary influence, attempting to demonstrate that none of the assumed examples of such influence on Isa 40–55 can be vindicated. Related to that article was my more recent attempt to show that it is not legitimate to regard certain words in Isa 40–55 as Akkadian “loanwords” as some scholars have done. In a monograph on the “Exodus motif” in Isa 40–55 I

theless, have to allow for a certain amount of redactional or editorial activity. We cannot, however, at all share the views of those scholars who have gone as far as to argue that Isa 40–55 is altogether a composite work of the post–exilic period (cf. J. M. Vincent, Studien zur literarischen Eigenart und zur geistigen Heimat von Jesaja, Kap. 40–55. Frankfurt am Main, 1977, J. H. Eaton, Festal Drama in Deutero–Isaiah. London, 1979). Cf. also further below p. 18, n. 2 and pp. 65–67.


4 H. M. Barstad, “Akkadian “Loanwords in Isaiah 40–55 and the
argued at some length that even if the Exodus motif no doubt does occur in Second Isaiah, most of the texts which scholars have taken to refer to a “New Exodus”, i.e. to the return of Babylonian exiles from Babylonia through the desert to Judah, modelled on the ancient Israelite tradition of the flight from Egypt, should rather be interpreted as poetic metaphors referring to the “New Israel”.\(^5\) The scholarly misinterpretation of the Exodus motif in Isa 40–55 represents a typical example of the diatessaron influence of the belief in a Babylonian setting of Isa 40–55 for the understanding of important exegetical aspects of the text.\(^6\) Finally, mention should here also be made of a recent monograph of mine, where I have dealt with the common belief that the land of Judah was in ruins and uninhabited, and that nothing much went on in the country between 586 and 538 BC.\(^7\) Also this particular scholarly view, which has contributed considerably to the allocation of Isa 40–55 to a Babylonian rather than a Palestinian setting, appears to have little support in historical circumstances.\(^8\)

My engagement in problems relating to the historical background of Isa 40–55, however, soon led to another question: If the Babylonian background of Isa 40–55 appears today to be so unlikely from a reading of the text itself, how did the “Babylonian view” come to be so dominant in biblical scholarship? This question brought me to the history of research. In the present work I intend to take a closer look at

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6 Cf. also below p. 62, n. 4, and p. 84, n. 19.


8 Cf. below pp. 77–87.
the history of Second Isaian scholarship in order to find out what the circumstances were that led to the postulation of a Babylonian setting for chapters 40–55 of the book of Isaiah. I shall also investigate how it has been possible that this view – in my opinion quite erroneous – should come to prevail in scholarly readings of chapters 40–55 of the book of Isaiah for more than a century.
II.
The Importance of the History of Research

Compared to many other disciplines taught in universities today biblical scholarship represents a fairly well established field, with a relatively long history. As a consequence of this, those of us who are trained to work with biblical texts in a scholastic context often engage ourselves not infrequently with positions which we have inherited from the past. More often than not, students of the actual history of research of our discipline are astonished to discover that scholarly positions strongly favoured in present-day scholarship may sometimes go back more than a hundred years or so. Especially today, when we are experiencing a strong change of interest from historical to literary ways of reading the biblical texts, it is significant that we keep asking ourselves whether the questions formerly raised, the arguments once used, or the results that were achieved in earlier times, in the days of a strong dominance of historical-critical scholarship, can still be said to be sound and valid.¹

¹ It is, of course, nothing new in itself to talk about “the Bible as literature”. Already before the turn of the century Hermann Gunkel stressed that biblical exegesis is primarily a literary science. What is new is that more and more scholars now seem to realise that, just as Gunkel was dependent on contemporary literary theory (with its strong diachronic-genetic approach), so today biblical interpretation must profit from the insights of recent literary theory and not from those of 19th century scholarship. One may get an idea of the importance of literary studies relating to the Bible by browsing through M. A. Powell, The
Critical research, then, must deal with its inherent history under the often unaccommodating, double aspect of both retaining and doing away with its tradition at the same time. Scholarship that is not critical of its own tradition will soon lose its life and freshness and turn into nothing but stale "antiquarianism".

I intend in this short monograph to approach the question of the "home of Second Isaiah" from the particular aspect of the history of research. To approach an exegetical problem from the point of view of the scholarly tradition may yield rewarding results regarding the rise and fall of positions and change of consensus in our discipline. For instance, one interesting phenomenon in the history of biblical research, which one may also observe in the humanities in general from time to time, is how a random remark by some well-

_Bible and Modern Literary Criticism_. New York, 1992. In a broader context the whole matter should be viewed in relation to the crisis in historicism which we are experiencing in the humanities at the moment. Here, biblical studies are particularly vulnerable, since their current methods basically grew out of strongly historicist approaches to the Bible.

2 In the early days of Second Isaian scholarship, a literary phenomenon which in itself is a legitimate child of the early German historical-critical period, relatively little scholarly acumen went into any attempt to distinguish between the problem of the habitation of a _prophet_ Second Isaiah (a development of the romanticist focusing on the prophets as persons and authors) and the commencement and growth of the _text_ of Isa 40–55. Since the large majority of the scholars that I shall mention throughout this study discuss the "home of Second Isaiah" with reference to a personal prophet, I have chosen, more often than not, to retain the designation "Second Isaiah". With this term, however, I do not necessarily mean a prophet person, but the "text" of Isa 40–55. The distinction between the text and the prophet is an important one indeed, but does not necessarily concern my arguments in relation to the provenance of the text as such. For my own part, I am satisfied to say that, if only for practical reasons, I believe that Isa 40–55 "basically" goes back to an unknown person/author who was active at the beginning of the reign of the Achaemenid Cyrus in the last part of the 6th century B.C. On the birth of the Second Isaian thesis, cf. below pp. 53–54, n.1.
known philomath, not seldom made in a footnote, in the progress of scholarly tradition slowly grows and eventually develops into a “well established” theory. Truly, quite a few scholarly dicta which are still with us today were not argued at all: they simply “happened”!

An example of this would, of course, be the story of the so-called “Servant Songs” in Second Isaian research, a concept which started life relatively modestly, but over the years came to develop into something of an exegetical monstrosity.3

From the moment we start realising the (rather self-evident) fact that the establishing of scholarly assertions emerges very much as an outcome of a cumulative tradition-process within scholarship itself, then the very history of scholarship becomes vital. Thus, theories do not represent infallible, static truths, but are the products quite often of former mentalities and presuppositions (which may not at all be valid anymore), and they may even sometimes be the results of ideology or accidental circumstances, rather than of any careful arguing. In general, far too little attention has, in my view, been paid to the critical discipline of the history of research in biblical studies.

One typical example of such a historically conditional scholarly claim, which has survived also in present-day biblical scholarship, is, in my view, the assumption that the prophet Second Isaiah lived among the exiles in Babylonia (i.e. that the text of Isa 40–55 originated in Babylonia), and that this is heavily reflected in the text and message of these chapters.

During recent years only a few voices have, on occasion, expressed themselves critically against a Babylonian setting of Second Isaiah.4 Yet, the question of the geographic

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4 See, for instance, already C. C. Torrey, The Second Isaiah. Edinburgh (1928), pp. 40–44 and in particular pp. 44–52, S. Mowinckel,
origin of chapters 40–55 in the book of Isaiah can hardly be said to have been among the more widely discussed topics of biblical scholarship. Nevertheless, the problem may seem to be of sufficient importance to warrant some consideration. This is especially true when it emerges that the scholars’ placing of the text in Babylonia has also unfortunately had a significant impact on how the text of Isa 40–55 has been understood.5

In the following survey of scholarly views on the domicile of Second Isaiah, I have concentrated primarily on the very early part of the history of research, and I have taken into consideration only a few of the more recent writers. The reasons for this are twofold: in keeping with what I have written above, the study of the rise and early development of scholarly surmises that are still with us today is important inasmuch as it may put these into perspective and render them more intelligible to us. Also, it remains a (sad) fact that the discussions which we have been witnessing in more recent literature regarding the setting of Isa 40–55 hardly go beyond repeating the arguments of the early days of biblical scholar-

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5 Cf. above p. 15 and below p. 62, n. 4, p. 84, n. 19.
ship, a phenomenon, of course, which calls for a few comments in its own right, something, however, which shall have to be forsworn in the present context.

The scholarly literature of the last and the beginning of the present century that touches on the relationship of Second Isaiah to Babylonia, is vast, and any attempt to present a full survey would soon grow into impracticable proportions. That I have chosen to do instead, is to present the reader with a much shorter, but reasonably representative survey. However, even if the material has had to be shortened considerably, I believe that the reader will find references to most of the arguments that have been put forward in the course of the scholarly debate also in this century.

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6 Thus, it is quite typical when A. Richter ("Hauptlinien der Deuterojesajaforschung von 1964–1979", Sprache und Struktur der Prophetie Deuterojesajas. Stuttgart (1981) p. 91) claims that references to historical events in late exilic times, as well as the text’s insights concerning the environment and life situation of the exiles have caused the majority of the scholars to place the authorship of Isa 40–55 in Babylonia.
III.
Early Writers Who Placed Second Isaiah Outside Babylonia

A fact (apparently) little known to scholars of today is that in the early days of biblical scholarship Babylonia was by far the sole candidate for scholarly efforts to “domesticate” the newly discovered prophet Second Isaiah.

Thus, it is with a certain interest we note that in his discussion of Second Isaiah’s locality Duhm puts decisive weight on דָּוִד in Isa 49:12 as a reference to the geographical location of the prophet, which he takes to be in Phoenicia. Duhm, who interprets כַּסְיָה as a reference to the Phoenician Sinites, finds it remarkable that Second Isaiah should here refer to an isolated geographical term like כַּסְיָה, unless he had a particular reason to do so. As Duhm has been one of the most influential Isaiah scholars in this century, it may be worthwhile to consider in some detail his statements regarding the domicile of the prophet Second Isaiah, and to ask what his arguments against other localities were?

When reading the famous commentary by Duhm, it soon strikes one that his reasoning could not exactly be char-

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1 B. Duhm, Das Buch Jesaja. Göttingen (1902) p. 336. The word כַּסְיָה was always felt as somewhat problematic by commentators. Thus C. R. Conder, “Notes on Bible Geography”, *PEFQS* (1904) 74, thought the reference was to Elam. Some even suggested that we have here a reference to China (!). This approach was in particular discussed by G. Lambert, “Le Livre d’Isaïe parle-il des Chinois”, *NRTh* 75 (1953) 965–972, who (in the present writer’s view quite correctly) identifies כַּסְיָה with Syene – Aswan – Elephantine.
acterized as painstaking. Whether it concerns his more general remarks,\(^2\) whether he disputes the Babylonian location of Second Isaiah,\(^3\) or whether he argues against a Palestinian setting of the prophet,\(^4\) Duhm is simply content to state his view in an unconditional rather than in an argumentative form. None of Duhm’s assumptions can be said to be very impressive, having the character of mere chance remarks rather than arguments. As I mentioned above this way of “arguing” one’s case was not uncommon in the early (?) days of biblical scholarship. However, as the פיטו argument of Duhm was felt to be quite improbable, both with regard to the identification of the geographical name\(^5\) as well as any possible relationship between this term and the location of the author of Isa 40–55, it is not surprising that the Phoenician home of the prophet has failed to find much support.\(^6\)

2 A typical statement is found in Das Buch Jesaja (1902) p. XIII: “... er [the prophet Second Isaiah] schreibt um rund 540 a. Chr., wahrscheinlich in einem am Libanon, etwa in Phonizien gelegenen Ort”.

3 The following quotation from Duhm’s commentary nicely sums up the essence of his argument against a Babylonian location: “Gleicht hat es gewiss nicht in Babylonien, wahrscheinlich auch nicht in Palästina, vielleicht im nördlichen Phönizien ...” (ibid., p. XVIII).

4 Ibid., p. 257: “Sehr wichtig wäre es nun zu wissen, ob diese Bevölkerung Jerusalems wirklich da war oder nur in der Vorstellung unserer Idealisten existierte; aber so wenig wahrscheinlich es für mich ist, dass Deuterojesaja in Babylonien lebte, so unsicher ist es doch, ob er in Palästina geschrieben hat. Es scheint doch fast, als ob seine Äußerungen über Jerusalem und die Städte Judas sich leichter verstehen lassen, wenn er in der Ferne lebte”.

5 See n. 1 above.

6 Among the rare followers of Duhm in this particular area we find Causse, who claims that Duhm’s Phoenician theory is the most acceptable of all the different views concerning the prophet’s whereabouts. Causse bases his argument primarily on Deutero–Isaiah’s description of nature, with its allusions to cedar wood and forests, as well as to the sea and the isles (A. Causse, Les dispersés d’Israël. Paris (1929) p. 35). In more recent years M. Dahood has been a rare advocate of the Phoenician provenance of Isa 40–55 (“Phoenician Elements in
The argument is important also to Ewald, the first scholar, to my knowledge, to suggest Egypt as the home of the Second Isaiah.\(^7\) Ewald argued against a Babylonian location on the basis of the observation that the northern parts of the Mesopotamian empire seemed like the remote end of the world to Second Isaiah (Isa 41:9, 46:11, cf. also 24:16). The events in Africa, on the other hand, were followed so closely that one may suspect that they concerned him directly (Isa 3:3, 45:13f.). From the use of the word סיני in Isa 49:11, according to Ewald, it follows that “die Sinüer d. i. die Pelusienten, die nordöstlichen Aegypter, seine landesleute, die östlichen länder aber ihm schlechthin die fernen sind ...”.\(^8\)

As we see, Ewald takes סיני to refer to some Egyptian location, assuming, however, the place to be Pelusium (today Tell el-Farama) rather than Elephantine. He finds evidence for an Egyptian setting also in Isa 45:4ff., where he sees references to pig offerings in relation to certain mystical ceremonies, as well as in Isa 65:4ff., where he believes that a certain mystical cult in relation to the dead and the tombs is being referred to. Further, according to Ewald, both Palestine and Babylonia are always regarded as being situated far away throughout Isa 40–66. Also, the many names and epithets used of Yahweh, and appearing here for the first time (Isa 42:5–8, 43:16f., 44:6.24–28, 45:1–18), are regarded by Ewald as having risen out of a polemical situation in connection with the elaborate Egyptian royal hymns of praise. Consequently, according to Ewald there can be no doubt that the prophet Second Isaiah lived in Egypt, probably as a member of the community of exiles that emigrated with

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\(^8\) Ibid., p. 30.
Jeremiah.

As no scholar today would subscribe to Ewald’s Egyptian interpretations, there is certainly no need to discuss them in any detail here. We should, however, note that Ewald was not alone in his wish to endow the prophet Second Isaiah with an Egyptian locality. As a matter of fact, in the early days of biblical scholarship, quite a few scholars were in favour of Egypt as the place where the prophet Second Isaiah was operant.

Among the biblical exegetes who were eager to follow Ewald here we find Bunsen, who even claims, without any arguments, that the prophet behind Isa 40–66 should be identified with the scribe Baruch, Jeremiah’s “pupil”.

Marti, who opposed a Babylonian setting for the prophet mainly for the reason that Second Isaiah reveals no knowledge of Ezekiel, also takes Egypt to be the home of the prophet. In support of his view, he argues in the following way. First, Second Isaiah cannot have lived among the exiles in Babylonia because he has no knowledge of the living conditions of those staying in Babylonia. Secondly, the person behind Isa 40–55 refers a few times (“mehrmals”) to Egypt (43:3, 45:14–17). Thirdly, we find a reference to the cult of Amon in Isa 45:19, and fourthly, when the prophet refers to the ends of the earth, the South is mentioned only with the name of one country, namely Syene.

Hölscher also opposes a Babylonian setting and envisions Egypt as the most likely place in which the unknown “Second” Isaiah could have lived. Hölscher opposes a Babylonian environment because he finds that the references to Babylonian deities, sorcery, and astronomy (46:1, 47:9–13, 44:25) cannot be taken as proofs of a Babylonian setting.

10 K. Marti, Das Buch Jesaja. Tübingen (1900) p. XV.
11 For the following, see G. Hölscher, Die Profeten. Leipzig (1914) pp. 321–322.
and that 40:27, 45:9, 46:12, and 48:14 hardly indicate any intimate knowledge of the exiles in Babylonia. Arguing for a location outside Babylonia, Hölscher puts some weight on the famous דתס in Isa 52:11, and on Isa 43:14, and possibly Isa 48:20, both indicating that Babylonia is viewed from an outside position.

Hölscher further stresses the fact that the references in Second Isaiah to the isles and coastlands ( Isa 41:1, 41:10, 19:1; cf. 40:15, 41:5, 42:4.12, 51:5), which in the Hebrew Bible always allude to the Mediterranean, would appear out of place in relation to Babylonia. Also the reference to Cyrus coming from a far country ( Isa 46:11) makes much better sense, according to Hölscher, if it is at some distance from Babylonia. The key to the prophet’s whereabouts for Hölscher, as for Duhm (and Marti), is the reference to דתס in Isa 49:12, which he takes to be an allusion to Syene/Aswan in Upper Egypt. This also accounts for the references in the text to the isles and coastlands, as well as to Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba (43:3, 45:14–17), all of which, according to Hölscher, are not easily understandable from a Babylonian viewpoint. Finally, Hölscher believes that the references to the homecoming through the desert (40:3f., 43:19; cf. 41:18f., 42:16), as well as the references to the Exodus event (43:16f., 48:21), would appear meaningless to a Babylonian Jew, whereas they would make sense to a Jew living in Egypt.

Phoenicia and Egypt were, as we have seen, clearly among the candidates for the home of the unknown prophet behind Isa 40–55 in the early days of Second Isaian scholarship. The arguments of the small number of scholars opting for Phoenicia or Egypt, however, were, at least by present day standards, intellectually inferior to those of the rather small number of scholars who argued for Palestine as the home of the unknown prophet.

An early German scholar who believed strongly both in the Second Isaian thesis and in the Palestinian background of
Second Isaiah was Seinecke.\textsuperscript{12} The major arguments for a Palestinian origin of Isa 40–55, however, were put forward by English-speaking scholars. In 1917 Maynard published an article in which he argued extensively for a Palestinian setting of the prophet Second Isaiah.\textsuperscript{13} Maynard put some weight on the demographic factor, arguing that the population of Palestine during the exilic period, which he estimated at some 50,000, must have constituted the audience of the prophet behind Isa 40–55. Despite the fact that he refers to this exilic Judean population as a “retrograde and unenlightened community”,\textsuperscript{14} he is nevertheless able to point to the book of Lamentations as an example of the creative powers of that same community.

Arguing against a Babylonian setting of Second Isaiah, Maynard points to the lack of familiarity in Isa 40–55 with Babylonian religious customs, the lack of any weight as evidence of the allusions in the text to diviners (Isa 44:25, 47:12–13), to the rivers of Babylonia (Isa 44:27, 45:1), its treasures (Isa 45:3), its trees and canals (Isa 44:4, 50:2), and the use of incense and fragrant cane (Isa 43:23–24). He further repudiates the relevance for a Babylonian setting of the reference to what is sometimes assumed to be Persian dualism in Isa 45:7 and the “rite of fire walking” in Isa 50:11.

As arguments in favour of Palestine Maynard advocates that the cedar tree used for the carving of idol statues (Isa 44:14) was unavailable in Babylonia. Altogether, the

\textsuperscript{12} L. Seinecke, Der Evangelist des Alten Testaments. Leipzig (1870) p. VI. Obviously, to those scholars who denied the division of the Book of Isaiah into a “First Isaiah” (chapters 1–39) and a “Second Isaiah” (chapters 40–66) Palestine would always be the natural choice.


\textsuperscript{14} A similar attitude to the Judean exilic community is found on p. 224, where Maynard claims: “One might say that it is hard to conceive that out of a poor community of fellahin and shepherds such a great prophet as Deutero–Isaiah arose”. On this argument see below pp. 85–87.
“botanical argument” is important to Maynard. He puts some stress on “the fact that Second Isaiah almost exclusively mentions trees that do not thrive in Babylonia: cedar, oleander, myrtle, pine-tree, elm, box-tree (Isa 41:19, 55:13), cypress, oak, fir-tree (Isa 44:14), but which are found frequently in Palestine. At the same time, the prophet never refers to the palm-tree, the tree par excellence of the lower Euphrates.15

Also geographical considerations are important to Maynard when assuming a Palestinian location for Second Isaiah: the prophet considers himself to be in the centre of the earth, that is Jerusalem (Isa 43:14, 48:5, 49:12). Three times he declares that Cyrus comes from the East (Isa 41:2.25, 46:4), and once from the North (Isa 41:25). Also the reference to “the isles” (Isa 41:1.5, 51:5) and, even more, the reference to Mesopotamia, Ur and Harran as “the end of the earth” (Isa 41:9) do not fit a Babylonian context. The same goes for the reading of נא, “here”, in Isa 52:5, as a reference to Babylonia. The contextual “Go out from there” of v. 11, according to Maynard, forbids such an interpretation. Also the expression “taken away” of v. 5 is in itself an argument in favour of a Palestinian location.

A further, geographical argument against a Babylonian setting is derived from the fact that the prophet only refers to locations around Palestine, namely Lebanon (Isa 40:16), Sela (Isa 42:11), Kedar, Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba (Isa 43:2 and 45:14). In particular the references to Kedar and Sela are interesting, according to Maynard: no Babylonian would have thought of these small countries so close to Palestine. Also the frequent references to mountains and forests (Isa 44:23, 54:10, 55:12) are not what one should have expected from a Babylonian, nor is the reference to the enemies of Israel as dwelling in hills and mountains (Isa 41:15) suitable for a Babylonian setting; it rather points to the Edomites. Also the repeated references to the sea in Isa 40–55 favour a Palestini-

an, rather than a Babylonian landscape.

Maynard finally gives the linguistic argument some thought. Here, he goes against the assertion that the expressions “take hold of the hand” in Isa 41:13 and 45:1 and “call by name” in Isa 43:1 and 45:3 show any influence from the Babylonian language, arguments which had been strongly favoured after Kittel’s influential article of 1898. The same goes for the term “my shepherd” in Isa 44:28, and the use of the uncommon word for “cup”, נְתֵן, in Is 51:17. Maynard argues, often with references to the Masoretic Text, that all of these “Babylonisms” are perfectly understandable as forming a part of Hebrew language and Hebrew literary traditions, and that there is certainly no need, and sometimes even quite wrong, to see in them any influence from Babylonian language and literature.

Buttenwieser is another scholar who argued rather comprehensively for a Palestinian setting of the prophet Second Isaiah. Buttenwieser’s main argument is that the undisguised way in which the prophet refers to Cyrus’ imminent conquest of Babylonia would have been impossible in Babylonia as such an action on enemy territory would immediately have led to Babylonian action against the prophet. In support of his view, Buttenwieser writes: “We know from Jer. 29:21–23 that the prophets Zedekiah and Ahab were burned to death by Nebuchadnezzar, because they encouraged the exiles of the year 597 in their hope of a speedy return to Judah”. That the Babylonian government would not have countenanced such an agitation as the one contained in Isa

16 Pp. 220–22 contain a series of further arguments in favour of a Palestinian setting of Second Isaiah. As they are somewhat particular, and some of them even bizarre, they are not representative of the general debate and need not be reproduced here.
17 Cf. below pp. 43–44 and 50–51.
19 Buttenwieser, ibid., p. 95.
40–55 may be inferred also from Ezekiel. Whereas Ezekiel devotes approximately a quarter of his book to words against foreign nations, it does not, according to Buttenwieser, contain a single prediction against Babylonia, whether of an open or disguised character. Despite this fact, Ezekiel, like Second Isaiah, must have looked upon Babylonia as Israel’s main enemy.

Buttenwieser finds further proofs against the Babylonian domicile of Second Isaiah in the fact that “both in his appeal to the exiles to leave Babylonia, and in his description of their prospective exodus, he assumes the role of an outsider, not the role of one who expects to participate in the coming events”. Thus, in his appeal to leave Babylonia in Isa 48:20, if he himself had been among the exiles, he would not have used the second plural imperative וְהָעַלְנוּ, but the first plural cohortative וַהַעֲלֵנִים. The same observation may be made for the following verse 21. Here too, “we may be sure that Deutero-Isaiah, when carried away by his vision of divine guidance for the Babylonian exiles, would have included himself among the recipients of God’s protection, had he been living among them, and instead of the pronoun of the third person, would have used the pronoun of the first plural”.

Further, in the וַהָעַלְנוּ, “Go out thence”, of 52:11 “we have direct proof that the writer did not live in Babylonia. Had he been living there, he would have said וַהָעֲלֵנִים, ‘Go ye out hence’”. And further: “The מְסַפֵּר of Isa 52:5 cannot be considered as affecting in any way the proof furnished by מְסַפֵּר of Isa 52:11, for Isa 52:3–6, it is generally agreed, is an interpolation”.

Furthermore, for Buttenwieser Isa 41:9 precludes the possibility that Isa 40–55 was written in Babylonia. In the reference to Abraham’s call from Ur of the Chaldeans, Second Isaiah uses expressions for Babylonia similar to what we find in Isa 5:26 and Jer 25:32 and 31:8 (“from the ends of the earth”, “from its extreme parts”). This clearly demonstrates,
according to Buttenwieser, "that Babylonia was for Deutero-
Isaiah as remote as it was for Jeremiah and Isaiah".21

Following these arguments against a Babylonian set-
ting of Isa 40-55, Buttenwieser adds several arguments for a
Palestinian domicile of the prophet. Thus, Isa 43:5–6, which
picture the exiles as coming from the East, the West, the
North and the South, only makes sense if Second Isaiah was
living in Palestine. Buttenwieser further regards Isa 40:9–11,
49:12.17–19, and 52:1–2.7–9 as proofs that the prophet
must have lived in Palestine: "The descriptions are so vivid
and direct that the natural deduction ... would be that their
author lived in the ruined cities of Judah".22

As a final proof that Second Isaiah did not live in
Babylonia, Buttenwieser points to the fact that while in Ez-
ekiel there is abundant evidence of this prophet’s Babylonian
surroundings, in Isa 40–55 we find nothing to suggest that
the author lived in a Babylonian environment.

One major conclusion of Buttenwieser is that since
Second Isaiah lived in Palestine, the country must have been
"the center of the activities that led to the rebirth of the na-
tion". The last pages of Buttenwieser’s article take account of
other biblical texts in order to demonstrate that the restoration
following the exile was primarily a work of the Palestinian
Jews. If exilic Judah was able to produce works of such high
literary standard as Isa 21:1–10, Isa 13, Ps 126, and Ps 85
this proves, according to Buttenwieser, that it also possessed
the cultural power to bring about the restoration.23 Butten-
wieser here anticipates the very same ideas as those found in
a much later work by Janssen. In an apparently mostly for-

21 Buttenwieser, ibid., p. 98.
22 Buttenwieser, ibid., p. 98.
23 Another great defender of the Palestinian environment of Sec-
ond Isaiah was, of course, C. C. Torrey (cf. above p. 19, n. 4). As Tor-
rey placed the prophet in the Persian period, however, his arguments are
bound to differ substantially from those of Maynard or Buttenwieser,
for example.
gotten book, Janssen argued that the people who were left in Judah after 586 B.C. must in fact have been responsible for a fairly large amount of the literature which we find in the Hebrew Bible.\(^{24}\)

\(^{24}\) See above p. 20, n. 4.
IV.
The Growth of the Babylonian Domicile of Second Isaiah

As an example of a very early commentator favouring a Babylonian setting of the prophet Second Isaiah we may start with de Wette. However, as is the case also with several later scholars who supported Babylonia as the prophet’s home place, it is quite clear that the most important thing for de Wette is the Second Isaian thesis itself.\(^1\) When it comes to the Babylonian setting of Isa 40–66, he is rather categorical, his only argument being that the political conditions reflected in this part of the book of Isaiah reveal that they take place in Babylonia. It is, moreover, quite clear that it is the current notion of a completely empty and waste Palestine in ruins that makes up his most important argument.\(^2\)

Yet another scholar favouring a Babylonian background for the prophet Second Isaiah was Knobel.\(^3\) Knobel opposed the view of Gesenius,\(^4\) who had claimed that Isa

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\(^2\) *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung* (1833) pp. 262–263.


40–66 was written down at several different times and sent to Babylonia as "circulars". Making a stand against Gesenius, Knobel maintained instead that Second Isaiah must most probably have lived in Babylonia. He builds his assumption on the prophet's apparent knowledge of the conditions of the exiles, a knowledge which could only be available to someone who belonged among the exiles himself (Isa 56:9ff., 57:3ff., 58:2ff., 65:3f.). Knobel's second argument is that Deutero-Isaiah refers to ill-treatment in a way which obviously shows that it was brought upon him by the exiles themselves (Isa 50:4–11). It is further typical of an early exegete of Second Isaiah like Knobel that he regards it as unproblematic to place the whole of Isa 40–66 within a Babylonian context.

From Davidson, again, it may clearly be seen how commingled is the question of domicile with the matter of the Second Isaian thesis. In fact, Davidsen does not really touch on the matter of domicile much, which he takes to be Babylonia, but he discusses the Deutero-Isaian thesis quite comprehensively. As he is a thorough text reader, this leads him in turn to the conclusion that not all of Isa 40–55 can be placed comfortably in a Babylonian setting, and he believes that chapters 59–66 belong to a time when the prophet, and some of the people, had already returned to Palestine.

Kuenen too believed that Second Isaiah must have lived in Babylonia. He does this because of the prophet's intimate knowledge of the details of life among the exiles in Babylonia. Kuenen finds support for his assumption above

6 Ibid., p. 59.
7 A. Kuenen, Historisch-kritisch onderzoek. Tweede deel. Leiden (1863) p. 108, referring to the prophet's "bekendheid niet alleen met den uiterlijken toestand, maar ook met de gezindheden der Joodsche ballingen, met de verschillende rigtingen, die zich onder hen voordeden, met hunne wisselende gemoedstemming".

To Fürst, again, the important thing is the Second Isaian thesis. The actual argumentation of Fürst, however, is poor. As Palestine was laid waste in ruins and unable to foster any prophetic activity after 586, Fürst does not even have to discuss the particular problem of domicile, but can devote all his energy to the interpretation of Isa 40–66 against its background, which he presupposes is a Babylonian one. In fact, the whole of Isa 40–66 consists of one long eyewitness description of the conditions which the author of that text experienced in Babylonia. In accordance with this surmise, there is no limit to the kind of information Fürst is able to extract from the Second Isaian text.

For Reuss too, the rather vague arguments in favour of a Babylonian setting of the prophet Second Isaiah apparently serve the function of being primarily arguments for the separation of chapters 40–66 in the Book of Isaiah from chapters 1–39.

According to von Orelli the domicile of the unknown prophet cannot be decided for certain. He does believe, how-

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9 Ibid., p. 618.
10 As Fürst may, in some respects, be deemed typical, even though he is to be found among the more “extreme”, the following quotation may serve useful for conveying a little of the “Zeitgeist”: “Aus dem Trostbuche erfahren wir, dass die Babylonier dem Hauptgott Bel und ihren andern Götttern in den Gärten opferten, auf den ziegelförmigen viereckigen Vorsprüngen der Häuser räucherten, dass sie öfter in den Grabgewölben ihrer Göttertempel aufzuhalten pflegten, um Träume und Eröffnungen über die Zukunft zu erhalten, dass sie auch Schweine opferten, deren Fleisch sie bei ihren Opfermahlzeiten verzehrten, und in den Opferstücken die Wahrsagmittel sahen und gebrauchten, um daraus die Zukunft zu erkennen” (p. 633).
ever, that Babylonia is the more likely choice. If Second Isaiah does not care much for matters Babylonian, this is simply because they are beyond him; his is a nobler cause. That he does have a knowledge of Babylonian gods, idol cult, and astrology may nevertheless be seen from Isa 40:19f., 41:6f., 44:9ff., 46:1, 47:12f., and 65:11.  

With Dillmann we are introduced to a whole series of reasons in favour of a Babylonian setting of the prophet. As Dillmann is representative of the very best scholarship of the time, a survey of his major arguments will give an impression of the flavour of the reasoning of the early days of Second Isaian scholarship. Dillmann’s major argument is the prophet’s knowledge of Babylonian circumstances and the conditions of the exiles. Second Isaiah’s knowledge of Babylonian life, according to Dillmann, is clearly to be seen from Isa 43:14, 46:1f., 47, and 65:3f.11, as well as from the descriptions of the production of statues in 40:19f., 41:6f., 44:9ff., and 46:6f.

Dillmann also reviews some of the objections raised against a Babylonian authorship, and rejects them. Thus, the description in Isa 42:22 of the exiles in prison, should not (as assumed by Duhm and Rutger among others) be regarded as evidence that the prophet cannot have been an eye-witness, but reflects 42:6 (one should also compare 49:9 and 61:1). These expressions should, moreover, be regarded as poetic/hyperbolic expressions, similar to what we find in Isa 47:6 and 51:14.23.

Further, one cannot conclude from the יבש in Isa 52:11 (which in the light of Isa 48:20 must be a reference to Babylonia) that the author of Isa 40–66 lived in Palestine. It must be concluded from Isa 52:5 (where the יבש refers to Babylonia), as well as from Isa 65:20 (where יבש refers to Jerusa-

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lem), that such an assumption is unacceptable. Further, the text of Isa 52:11f. is suspected. It is also obvious, according to Dillmann, that the author of Isa 40–66 is quite familiar with Palestinian conditions. Thus, he refers to Jerusalem (Isa 40:9, 44:26, 61:4, 64:9), the cities of Judah and Lebanon (Isa 40:16, 60:13), Sharon and Achor (Isa 65:10), bare hills (Isa 41:18, 49:9), Edom and Bozrah (Isa 63:1), ships of Tarhish (Isa 60:9), snow (Isa 55:10), silica (Isa 50:7), cedar, ypress, acacia, and wild olive trees (Isa 41:19, 55:13, 60:13), viticulture and wine (Isa 61:6, 62:8, 65:8.21), and to the removal of stones from the road (Isa 62:10). All this, however, is no more than what one would expect from pious patriots, whose thoughts and minds were always turned against Zion. That Second Isaiah himself should have been to Palestine, is, still according to Dillmann, quite unlikely, “da man einen so begeistert u. phantasievoll schreibenden Mann sich nicht gut als Greisen vorstellen kann”.14

Dillmann considers Isa 44:14 to be a noteworthy text if it could be proved that the different species of wood used for the production of the idol statues did not grow in Babylonia. This, however, he finds impossible to prove, as the flora of present-day Mesopotamia is not necessarily identical with that of ancient times. Moreover, he claims that the mention of the populus Euphratica in Isa 44:4 and the myrtle in Isa 41:19 and 55:13, both of which are referred to in the Old Testament only in very late texts, probably indicates that these trees became known to the Israelites only in Babylonia. Further indications of a Babylonian authorship is the mirage (“Kimmung”), mentioned in Isa 49:10, which is not reported before in the Bible.

According to Dillmann, Egypt is an impossible setting for Isa 40–66. For even if מים in Isa 49:12 should be a name for a part of ancient Egypt (as maintained by Bunsen and Ewald), this does not imply that the author of Isa 40–66

14 Ibid., p. 356.
actually lived there. This goes also for the references to Ethiopia and Egypt in Isa 43:3 and 45:14, which have no relevance whatsoever to the home of the prophet Deutero-Isaiah. Also, the pig offerings mentioned in Isa 65:4f. were not only possible in Egypt, and cannot be taken as an indication of the Egyptian domicile of the prophet. And when Israel, according to Isa 41:8f., is "taken from the ends of the earth and summoned from its far-off places", this is no indication of an Egyptian base of the author, but might have been also said from a Palestinian (cf. Isa 5:26) or Babylonian standing point. Nor has the frequent use of "מ"ק any connection with an Egyptian setting of the prophet.

Riehm15 too supports a Babylonian home for the prophet Second Isaiah, but he hardly brings any arguments in favour of this view beyond the mere statement that the prophet "ihre (i.e. the exiles’) äusseren und inneren Zustände genau kennt".

Bleek, again, gives no real arguments for his placing of the prophet in Babylonia, except for the usual reference to a different age.16 For this writer, too, then, the argument for Babylonia is very much a part of the argument for the Second Isaian thesis.17 Further, it is also apparent that Bleek’s Babylonian setting is the result of the tabula rasa notion concern-

17 Ibid., pp. 451–452.
ing life in Palestine during the exilic period. Bleek, however, has some difficulties putting all of Isa 40–66 in a Babylonian environment, and he claims that parts of the text go back to the time before the exile.

The very thorough commentary by Buhl also holds the opinion that the major part of Isa 40–66 was undoubtedly written in Babylonia. Buhl, however, does not really discuss the matter at all, but is content to make the statement that a "major part" of the text goes back to the exile, and that it was "undoubtedly" written in Babylonia.

Cheyne, again, is more circumspect and believes that we cannot know for certain where the prophet lived. He finds, however, that "the poetic and rhetorical character of his style makes it barely possible to hold that he lived at a distance from the main body of exiles". The arguments of Ewald for Egypt and Duhm for Phoenicia are unacceptable: "A well-informed man like the author may quite naturally...

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18 Ibid., pp. 452.
19 Included among the parts likely to have been written in Palestine are Isa 56:9–57:11 and 63–66 (Bleek, Einleitung in die Heilige Schrift (1860) pp. 454–455. See also the later editions from 1886 and 1893. It is even suspected that the Palestinian part of the text may start already from chapter 58 onwards (cf. also the 6th edition from 1893, p. 87). In this way the commentary of Bleek illustrates the early uneasiness among scholars to relate the whole of Isa. 40–66 to a Babylonian setting.
20 F. Buhl, Jesaja. Kjøbenhavn (1894) p. 539: "Kun saameget staaar i ethvert Tilfælde fast, at en vesentlig Del deraf er affattet under Fangenskabet og uden Tvivl i Babylonien (52,5), medens den af Ewald fremsatte Formodning, at Forf. opholdt sig i Ægypten, er aldeles blottet for Bevisgrunde".
21 T. K. Cheyne wrote extensively on the book of Isaiah during many years. See, for instance, his Introduction to the Book of Isaiah. London (1895) pp. 282–283. In his earlier works, however, Cheyne did not really believe in any Second Isaiah, but appears to be of the same view as Delitzsch (cf. below p. 74, n. 26) that the so-called First Isaiah was carried away "in the spirit" to Babylonia (T. K. Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah (1886) p. 242).
have meditated on the prospects of Egypt (Isa 43:3, 45:14), and have been acquainted with the name of the Egyptian or the Phœnician Sin (Isa 49:12), and with the names of the trees of Lebanon (Isa 41:19). There is no allusion to Egyptian animal-worship, which, even more than idolatry, must have shocked Jewish exiles in Egypt (see Wisd. 12:23–24, and cf. Jer. 46:15), nor to the specially Phœnician cultus of Tammuz”. This, according to Cheyne, leaves us with three options: Judah, Babylonia and the “coast-lands of the West”. As the coast-lands are always represented as far-off countries, however, and as only the least cultured classes were left in Judah after the fall of Jerusalem, only Babylonia remains. This is indicated also by the vivid descriptions of the characteristics of the city of Babylon which we find in Isa 40–66. The language used in Isa 40:9, 41:9, and 52:7 is not an indication of any Palestinian setting of the prophet, but demonstrates to us how “the prophet is transported in imagination to Palestine and to the time immediately preceding the fulfilment of the promise”. This, likewise, accounts for the “thence” of Isa 52:11. The “here” of 52:5, which is inconsistent with the latter expression, stands in Isa 52:3–6, a passage later added. Again, we notice how it is the notion of an empty Judah inhabited by ignorant peasants which actually makes this author too decide for Babylonia as the home of the prophet Second Isaiah. All other argumentatio follows after the decision for Babylonia has already been made.

More sophisticated is Wildeboer, who first surveys the different arguments for and against a Babylonian setting of Isa 40–66 which may be found in the scholarly literature,23


23 G. Wildeboer, De letterkunde des ouden verbonds. Groningen, 1893. In Wildeboer’s Letterkunde (which is remarkably advanced for his time) one will find an excellent survey of the history of research on the Second Isaian problem (pp. 312ff.).
and then simply opts for Babylonia, which he claims to have been the scholarly consensus since the middle of the 19th century. Wildeboer, who is a good reader of texts, and who is, moreover, inspired by Rutger, is, however, unable to connive at the fact that Zion and Jerusalem, in particular in Isa 49–62, are very much at the centre of events. For this reason he makes the claim that chapters 40–48 were written in Babylonia, whereas chapters 49 ff. were written after the prophet had returned to his home country.

A scholar like Strack, again, apparently does not hold a strong view on the matter of domicile altogether, nor does he bother to bring forth any arguments, but is content to ascertain: “Als Abfassungsland ist Babylonien anzusehen”. Strack, then, would be a typical example of how, after a certain period, it appears to be unnecessary even to discuss the matter of domicile, unless, of course, when deviating from the growing Babylonian consensus.

The same could be said for Driver, for whom the important thing apparently also is the Second Isaian thesis itself, whereas the Babylonian home is merely presupposed.

Kittel too takes it for granted that the prophet was living in Babylonia and brings forward no arguments whatsoever in support of his claim. But then, of course, one should keep in mind that one of the most influential works with regard to the definite establishing of the domicile of the prophet Second Isaiah in Babylonia was an article published by Kittel in 1898, attempting to indicate linguistic and

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24 Ibid., p. 325.
25 Ibid., pp. 326–327.
stylistic similarities between the message of Isa 40–55 and the Babylonian literature.29

With Oort we meet yet another of those scholars who have difficulties attributing all of Isa 40–66 to the hand of a single author. Like others before him, Oort believes that Isa 40–48 forms the work of the unknown prophet, and that this prophet must have lived among the exiles in Babylonia. He does not, however, give us any reasons for this assumption.30

In favour of Babylonia we also find Budde. This author too is unwilling to argue his case, but is content to state that, despite the fact that Second Isaiah is very much concerned with Zion, the text clearly reflects the conditions in the Babylonian goalah.31

To Steuernagel, it is again clearly the matter of the Second Isaian thesis that stands in focus, and he is content to take for granted the Babylonian setting without actually arguing his case.32

Cornill also believes that the prophet was in Babylonia. The manner in which the text presents itself, according to Cornill, is only conceivable if we assume that its writer was a direct eyewitness of the events described.33 However, to

Cornill too it appears more likely that only 40–48 belongs within this Babylonian context. Again, we notice with interest how a growing number of scholars have problems with the ascribing of all of Isa 40–66 (or 40–55) to a Babylonian context.

Oettli, again, is less categorical, and finds that the text hardly can be said to give away the prophet’s domicile altogether. He gives, nevertheless, rather half-heartedly, credence to Babylonia, which he perceives as more likely than any other place. He does not, however, present any arguments at all in support of his view. In Oettli, then, we have yet again a good illustration of how the Babylonian consensus has now really started to make its impact on scholars.

Half-hearted also is a scholar like Haller, who believes that we really cannot decide the matter of the prophet’s domicile with any certainty, and that the geographical locations already suggested by scholars (Babylonia, Egypt, Palestine) are all possible candidates. Still, he opts for Babylonia because of Second Isaiah’s familiarity with Babylonian mythology and “Redeweise”, his preoccupation with Cyrus, and his hatred of the city of Babylon and her deities (Isa 46ff.).

Strongly in favour of Babylonia is Sellin, who, unlike most supporters of a Babylonian domicile, actually presents us with a series of arguments in support of a Babylonian setting of the prophet. Sellin is able to point to Second Isaiah’s intimate knowledge of events in Babylonia in the year 538 B.C. (with reference to Isa 43:14), to his knowledge of Babylonian religion and astrology (with references to Isa 40:19f., 41:6f., 44:9ff., 46:1, and 47:2f.), but above all to the prophet’s language, showing such a strong Babylonian influence that not only did its user live in Babylonia, but he must even have been born and raised there. In the latter

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35 M. Haller, *Das Judentum*. Göttingen (1914) p. XII.
question, Sellin is above all strongly influenced by Kittel's classic article of 1898, the arguments of which were further developed (and extended to include also Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions) by Sellin himself.

Still further arguments for a Babylonian setting of Isa 40–55 were to be provided by König. There can be no doubt whatsoever, according to König, that Second Isaiah lived in Babylonia. The arguments for this are as follows:

The exiles are mentioned explicitly in Isa 43:14, 47:1, and 48:14,20. The prophet often addresses himself directly to the exiles: Isa 40:1.27f., 41:8–10.12–16, 43:1ff.10, 44:8, 46:3.12, 48:1ff.20, 51:1ff., 52:1ff.12. The prophet is also acquainted with the approaching conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus (Isa 41:2–4.25, 44:28, 45:1–4.13, 46:11), and he never gets tired of describing the production of idol statues, in order to warn the exiles from being allured to worship deities other than YHWH (Isa 40:19f., 41:7.19, 42:17, 44:9–17.19f., 46:6f.). Also, the producers of idol statues are addressed directly by the prophet (Isa 40:18.25). Further, he is acquainted with Babylonian astrology (Isa 47:13), and he challenges the gods of Babylonia to trials (Isa 40:21, 41:2ff.21ff.26, 43:9).

König is quite amazed that some scholars, after being presented with convincing arguments of this kind, can still doubt the Babylonian home of the prophet, and he devotes few pages to arguing against the evidence presented by those in favour of a domicile outside Babylonia. A solid part of his

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37 Cf. above pp. 43–44 and below pp. 50–51.
criticism concerns the rejection of the arguments put forward by Cobb. König further attacks Duhm for his assumed Phoenician domicile of the prophet Second Isaiah, and then goes on to criticise the arguments in favour of a Palestinian setting of the prophet. He is here content to discuss only two passages. Some consideration is given to the נב of Isa 52:5, which, following other scholars before him, he takes to be an indication of Babylonia rather than of Palestine. The נב of Isa 52:11 also has to be considered, according to König, but the expression should not be regarded as an argument against the possibility that the prophet lived in Babylonia.

Mention should further be made of a scholar like Meinhold, who also claims a Babylonian origin for Isa 40–55. Meinhold does not, however, hold a very strong view on the matter of domicile. In support of his assumption, he refers to the fact that the prophetic book is nameless. Only if the prophet lived in Babylonia would it make any sense to protect the originator of the anti-Babylonian message in Isa 47 for example with anonymity.

I shall end this survey of the growth of the “Babylonian consensus” with Volz, who also favours Babylonia as the home of the prophet Second Isaiah. His reasons for doing so are partly that he finds the arguments for other locations unenlightening, and partly that he thinks that the prophet expresses himself about Babylonian matters more authoritatively than Ezekiel, whom he believes was certain to have lived in Babylonia.

The impact of Sellin in particular on several generations

41 König, Das Buch Jesaja, pp. 342–343.
42 For the arguments of Duhm, cf. above pp. 23–24.
43 König, Das Buch Jesaja, pp. 344.
45 P. Volz, Jesaja II. Leipzig (1932) p. XV.
of Old Testament scholars through his famous "Introduction" can hardly be exaggerated with regard to the "Babylonian consensus". These, we must remember, were the days when German Old Testament scholarship was regarded more or less, rightly or wrongly, as being identical with Old Testament scholarship in general. With the calamitous liaison between Sellin and Kittel German Old Testament scholarship had practically sealed the Babylonian fate of Isa 40–55 for the future. Of particular importance here is the question of Babylonian literary influence on the text of Isa 40–55.

Nevertheless, a considerable period of time was to pass from when the first discoveries of Mesopotamian texts were made to the period when any real interest in the relationship between these new texts and the assumed Babylonian setting of the prophet Second Isaiah became noticeable in the works of the scholars. In the very early studies not many gave much attention to the possibility that Second Isaiah’s Babylonian background would reveal itself in such a way that one could be able to find direct influences from Akkadian sources on the text of Isa 40–55.

Thus, the first attempt to utilize the new knowledge of Mesopotamian languages and literatures for the study of the Old Testament on a larger scale was Eberhard Schrader’s book on Mesopotamian literature and the Old Testament published in 1872. Here, we find that Schrader does illuminat

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46 That there is no limit to scholarly perspicacity may be learnt from a more recent edition of Sellin’s now classic introduction. When the Babylonian exilic claim is somewhat “endangered” by the reference to plant names in Isa 41:19, which may seem to indicate a place for Second Isaian domicile “an den Fuss der nordwestlichen Randgebirge Mesopotamiens”, this apparent menace is soon done away with: “Aber der Prophet könnte diese Gegend vielleicht auf Wanderungen kennengelernt haben, so dass man ihn doch wohl unter der Golah zu suchen hat” (E. Sellin, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*. Heidelberg (1959) p. 107).

in Isa 41:25, מְדַבָּרָה in Isa 44:14, and בַּדְּתָן in Isa 46:1 in the light of Akkadian parallels, but nowhere is there any mention of direct influence from Akkadian literature on the text of Isa 40–55. The second edition of this work is fairly similar to the first. In the 3rd edition of 1902, however, the influential article by Kittel from 1898 seems to have made the necessary impact.

A similar development may be found in the work of the dedicated pan-Babylonian Alfred Jeremias dating from 1904, who could point to several “parallels” between Isa 40–55 and Akkadian literature, but who found even more parallels in Isa 1–39, and does not speak of any “direct influence” at all, not even when he refers to the similarities between the “Cyrus Cylinder” and Isa 44:28 and 45:1ff. On the contrary, Jeremias points to the fact that such formulations were quite commonly used to greet new kings as saviours. However, in the second edition of Jeremias’ book on

48 Same work, pp. 270-272.
49 E. Schrader, Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament. 2. umgearbeitete und sehr vermehrte Auflage. Giessen, 1883. This edition has a much more elaborate treatment of Isa 46:1 than the first edition and has also added a short note on Isa 63:15, but still, there is no mention of any “direct” influence (pp. 411-414).
50 3. Auflage mit Ausdehnung auf die Apokryphen, Pseudepigraphen und das Neue Testament. Berlin, 1902. In this completely rewritten edition, not only has the number of Akkadian parallels been expanded to 17 for Isa 40-55 (cf. p. 676), but also the article of Kittel with its notion of “die enge, z.T. wörtliche Berührung” between the Cyrus cylinder and Isa 45.1ff. is now introduced on the scene (p. 381, n. 2). That the authors now presuppose a Babylonian domicile is stated explicitly on p. 281.
52 Ibid., pp. 343-345.
53 Ibid., pp. 348-342. Cf. also similar parallels from Jer (pp. 345-347), Ezek (pp. 347-361), and the Minor Prophets (pp. 362-367).
54 Ibid., p. 343.
the Old Testament in the light of the Ancient Near East this has all changed. Now having read the article by Kittel, Jeremias claims that the prophet Second Isaiah probably must have known the Cyrus Cylinder in order to express himself in the way that he does.\(^{55}\)

We may likewise follow a similar “step by step” development in the case of Gressmann. In his book on the origin of eschatology dating from 1905, well aware of the similarities between the Cyrus cylinder and other Mesopotamian inscriptions, Gressmann was at first somewhat sceptical of Kittel’s claim that we find influence from Babylonian court-style in Isa 40–55. When dealing with Isa 45:1.4, for instance, Gressmann argued that we really cannot know for certain whether there is, directly or indirectly, any influence from Akkadian litterature in this text.\(^{56}\) During the preparation of his manuscript for printing, however, he apparently changed his mind. Later in the same book, he appears to have been convinced by Kittel’s argumentation, and he now believes that there is a possible influence from the Babylonian Hofstil.\(^{57}\) Gressmann subsequently develops the theme of

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\(^{55}\) “Man hat fast den Eindruck, als ob der Verfasser des prophetischen Stückes [Isa 45:1] den Text des Kyros-Zylinders gekannt haben müsste” (Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients. Handbuch zur biblisch-orientalischen Altertumskunde. 2. neu bearbeitete Auflage. Leipzig 1906, p. 535. He then refers to Kittel’s article from 1898. See also the 3. edition from 1916, p. 543 (Dritte, völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage, Leipzig, 1916) and the 4. edition from 1930, p. 601 (Vierte, völlig erneuerte Auflage. Leipzig, 1930), the two last editions without the subtitle Handbuch ...

\(^{56}\) H. Gressmann, Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie. Göttingen (1905) pp. 251-252 (that he is not altogether against Akkadian influence on Isa 40-55, however, can be seen from his claim (p. 223) that Second Isaiah’s references to Götterstrassen/Prozessionss-rassen are a result of Babylonian influence on the prophet).

\(^{57}\) H. Gressmann, Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie (1905) p. 305, claiming that Second Isaiah “sich vielleicht an den babylonischen Hofstil angelegt hat”. (the style of Isa 40-55 is discussed on pp. 302ff.)
influence from the Babylonian court-style on the prophet Second Isaiah considerably.\(^{58}\) In another context, however, he claims that there is no need to think of the Cyrus cylinder in particular, as this was written only after Babylon had fallen to Cyrus. The cylinder is rather to be seen as part of a common genre. He thinks, however, that Kittel was right when claiming that there is a strong Babylonian influence, first because the formulations found on the cylinder were unknown in Israel prior to Second Isaiah’s use of them, secondly, because the texts “berühren ... sich teilweise wörtlich mit fast gleichzeitigen babylonischen Inschriften”, and thirdly, these expressions can only be explained from a Babylonian background.\(^{59}\) Gressmann consequently well illustrates the way the notion of Babylonian literary influence developed in Second Isaian scholarship.

Warm support was subsequently lent to Kittel’s “Hof-stil” by many scholars, for example M. Haller,\(^{60}\) and from now on more and more scholars would come to accept Babylonian influence in Isa 40–55 to the extent that we are allowed to talk of a whole library of Babylonian literary influence on Second Isaiah.\(^{61}\) In recent scholarship too Babylonian influence still plays an important role in discussions about


\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 61.

\(^{60}\) M. Haller, “Die Kyros-Lieder Deuterojesajas”, *EYXAPIΣΘ-ΠΙΟΝ*. Göttingen (1923) p. 270. Haller even claims that “Deuterojesaja wäre somit am Hofe des Perserkönigs ein Vorläufer Nehemias gewesen” (ibid., p. 277). One may also note Haller’s imaginative view of the expression μαρα in Isa. 52:11, in which he claims that we here have an exhortation to go out of the city of Babylon in order to find security at the court of Cyrus or in his military camp (ibid., p. 277).

\(^{61}\) A survey of the major part of the relevant secondary literature on the subject up to 1973 may be found in the unpublished dissertation by S. L. Peterson, *Babylonian Literary Influence in Deutero-Isaiah: A Bibliographic and Critical Study*. Vanderbilt University 1975. For further literature see my articles referred to above pp. 14–15, n. 3 and n. 4.
the whereabouts of the prophet Second Isaiah.62

62 For instance M. Haran ("The Literary Structure and Chronological Framework of the Prophecies in Is 40–48", Congress Volume Bonn 1962. Leiden (1963) p. 154), after having argued at some length for the Palestinian origin of Isa 49–55, claims with regard to chapters 40–48 that we here find "traces of milieu, descriptions that betray echoes of a Babylonian background, and turns of speech that have instructive parallels in the royal inscriptions of the Chaldean period". We find no arguments however, only footnote references to the works of Jeremias, Stummer, Kittel, and Behr. Yet he can conclude (p. 155) that "They [i.e. the echoes of a Babylonian background] also furnish decisive proof (if it is still needed) of the locale of the formation of these prophecies – that is, the soil of Babylon".
V.
Some Features Peculiar to the Early Commentators on Second Isaiah

The commentators from the mid-19th century onwards are of great interest from several points of view. Obviously, it would be a mistake to regard the scholars of this period as a homogeneous lot, but at least some thoroughly illustrative features seem fairly common to the group. For one thing, this is the period in which the Second Isaian thesis, having in fact already been vindicated for some considerable time,¹

¹ The critical recognition that chapters 40–66 of the book of Isaiah cannot be ascribed to the same origin as chapters 1–39 is found already in a commentary by the Jewish scholar Ibn Ezra from the 12th century (see M. Friedländer, *The Commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah*. Vol. 1. London (1873) pp. 170–171, and Vol. 3. London (1877) p. 64). According to quite a few scholarly publications, it was not until J. C. Döderlein, *Esaias ex recensione textus hebraei*. Altdorf, 1775, that the possibility of an exilic date for the last part of the book of Isaiah was pointed out. This particular view, however, appears to be incorrect, and yet it illustrates in a good way how errors in the secondary literature are taken up by the scholars and after a while develop into a kind of consensus. Apparently, it was only in the third edition of Döderlein’s commentary on Isaiah (from 1789) that this author explicitly claimed an exilic authorship for chapters 40 and the following (see p. XV of the third edition). Döderlein had, however, made similar claims already in 1781. See J. M. Vincent, * Studien zur literarischen Eigenart und zur geistigen Heimat von Jesaja*, Kap. 40–55. Frankfurt am Main (1977) pp. 17–18. However, according to Vincent, it was J. B. Koppe who first (1780) claimed exilic authorship for (most of) chapters 40–50 of the Book of Isaiah (Vincent, *op. cit. p. 17*). According to R. Smend (*Deutsche Alttestamentler in drei Jahrhunderten*. Göttingen (1989) p.
was really going through a consolidating phase. As we have seen in the previous chapter, this does play a major role with regard to the localizing of the prophet outside of Palestine, and, as we have also seen with regard to quite a few scholars, not necessarily in Babylonia. Apparently, the stress on a location outside Palestine became convenient, and perhaps even necessary, when arguing that Isa 40–66 belonged to a different time, and had a different background from Isa 1–39. The fact that the matter of domicile formed an inherent part of the discussion of the Second Isaian thesis itself, especially in the early days, is extremely important and can hardly be overestimated!

The most commonly shared outlook of 19th century German Protestant exegesis was, notwithstanding, the view that life in Judah after 586 B.C. had virtually ceased to exist. This view, which has only recently changed,² was based on the presentation of post-exilic Judah which we find in the Bible, partly in the Deuteronomistic history and in Jeremiah, but

31) the “discovery” of Second Isaiah was most likely made by J. G. Eichhorn in 1783 (I am grateful to Professor Smend and Dr. Vincent who both sent me copies of their books). Apparently, it is somewhat problematic to pinpoint the exact circumstances leading to the Second Isaian thesis, or which person(s) should be given the greater credit (cf. Smend, loc. cit.). The question has also been treated in some detail by M. Mulzer, who also favours Doderlein and the year 1781 (“Doderleir und Deuterojesaja”, BN 66 (1993) 15–22). Eichhorn, moreover, was one of the first scholars to suggest a Babylonian domicile for the prophet (see his Einleitung ins Alte Testament. Leipzig (1787) p. 64, and the discussion pp. 64–72). Still, it was not till the 20th century that the thesis of a Second Isaiah would come to be fully accepted by the scholarly community. A good survey of the research on Second Isaiah from before the turn of the century is found in G. Wildeboer, De letterkunde des ouden verbonds. Groningen (1893) pp. 312 ff. Cf. also J. M. Vincent, op. cit., pp. 15ff.

² The view of a tabula rasa Palestine, which played such an important role in the early history of Second Isaian scholarship, is dealt with in my monograph The Myth of the Empty Land. Oslo, 1996. Cf. also below pp. 77–87.
above all in Chronicles. Especially in Chronicles one is given the impression that life in Judah during the exilic period was virtually non-existent. The whole country lay in ruins and the whole population, except for some poor peasants trying to eke out a living in the hill-side, was taken away to Babylonia. According to the Chronicler, the land of Judah was truly depopulated for seventy years. The impression that the deportations were total is also given by other sources (2 Kgs 5:11; Jer 52:15). The large majority of exegetes of the last century were hardly aware that the biblical picture of post-exilic Palestine was far more “ideological” than “historical”, aiming at the theological upgrading of the exiles in Babylonia to the true Israel, and, in later texts, at the stressing of the greater importance of those who came back over against those who were left in the country.3 Obviously, as life in Judah was thought to be non-existent and nothing much of any religious or cultural value could take place there, it went without saying that a “spiritual genius” like Second Isaiah was unlikely to thrive under such miserable conditions and that his whereabouts, consequently, had to be sought elsewhere.

We should also recognize that the actual knowledge of 19th century scholars about Babylonia was very limited indeed.4 This is important because it means that whenever

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4 During the years 1861–1884 H. C. Rawlinson published in London his famous five volumes of The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, for the first time really making Akkadian texts available to the scholarly world. It was now possible to form a picture of Mesopotamian civilization, based on indigenous literary sources. Till then, anyone who wanted to study Babylonian religion and culture had mostly to depend on classical sources for their information, most of which must be regarded as notoriously unreliable (see A. Kuhrt, “Assyrian and Babylonian Traditions in Classical Authors”, Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn. Berlin (1982) pp. 539–553.
these scholars make claims concerning the obvious familiarity of Second Isaiah with Babylonian matters, they have actually no reliable sources on which to base their comparisons. This fact is important also from the perspective that when access finally was gained to some real knowledge of the Mesopotamian cultures through the first archaeological excavations and subsequent finds of thousands of cuneiform tablets, it was obvious that this could only put more fuel on the fires of the by now more or less developed consensus on a Babylonian home of the prophet Second Isaiah. This phenomenon is seen clearly for the first time in the enormous influence of the article on Cyrus and Deutero–Isaiah written by the moderate pan–Babylonian Rudolf Kittel in 1898.

Still another characteristic of this early period of historical exegesis was the growing uneasiness (for obvious reasons) of those scholars who opted for a Babylonian setting for the whole of Isa 40–66. Even for the most fervent “pro–Babylonian” exegete it was difficult to explain away the fact that so many of the texts to be found in Isa 40–66 simply did not reveal any Babylonian traits at all. This particular

5 Here it should also be noted that some considerable time was to pass before it was thought possible to trace direct influence from Akkadian literary sources on the text of Isa 40–55. This is seen clearly in the first attempt to utilise the new knowledge of Mesopotamian language and literature for the study of the Old Testament by E. Schrader (Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament. Giessen 1872), as well as from a whole range of similar anthologies and commentaries from this period following the book by Schrader (this point is made also in the useful, but uneven unpublished dissertation by S. L. Peterson, Babylonian Literary Influence in Deutero–Isaiah. Vanderbilt (1975) pp. 15–24, which does not work with Akkadian sources). For a survey of the development of the belief in Babylonian literary influence in Second Isaiah, cf. above pp. 35–52. For a critique of this whole trend see my articles on Babylonian literary influence (1987) and on the question of Akkadian loan–words in Isa 40–55 (1994) referred to above pp. 14–15, n. 3 and n. 4.

FEATURES PECULIAR TO THE EARLY COMMENTATORS 57

problem, which could not be overlooked in the long run, was subsequently “solved” through Duhm’s thesis of a third prophet Isaiah, Trito–Isaiah,7 apparently securing the Second Isaian thesis for the next generations. Ironically, the thesis of the so-called “Third Isaiah” has turned out to be an unhappy one. It appears that most scholars who have been working with Isa 56–66 in recent years have difficulties with the thesis.8 We should note, however, that the “Trito–Isaian” thesis only represented half a “solution”. Within the Second Isaian corpus itself there were also obvious problems. Quite a few of the early commentators who I have referred to in the previous chapter had difficulties with attributing all of Isa 40–55 to an alleged Babylonian background. Consequently, what we are witnessing in this slowly growing dissatisf-

faction of some scholars, is in reality an important intuitive (and sometimes also even well founded) early critique of the Babylonian background not only of Isa 56–66, but also of other Second Isaian texts, in particular chapters 49–55.\(^9\)

Since, however, the Babylonian view had already made such a strong impact, this phenomenon could only be explained by these scholars by ascribing the first part of the book (chapters 40–48) to a Babylonian background, whereas the latter part, of the text (chapters 49–55) were claimed to have been written after the prophet had returned to his home country, or else by regarding the "Palestinian" parts as later additions to an original Second Isaian corpus.

\(^9\) Also other divisions of the text were suggested. J. Ley, for instance, claimed that chapters 40–52 were written before the return from Babylonia, whereas 53–66 were written in Judah (\textit{Historische Erklärung des zweiten Teils des Jesaja}. Marburg, 1893, p. 22). The claim that Isa 40–48 was written in Babylonia, whereas chapters 49–55 were written in Jerusalem, after the prophet had returned home to Palestine, as argued, for instance, by Davidson, Wildeboer, and Cornill, has been made also by recent scholars (see, for instance M. Haran, \textit{Between RI’SHON-ÔT (Former Prophecies) and HADASHÔT (New Prophecies)}. Jerusalem (1963) in particular pp. 83ff.). For a survey of scholars who, in recent years, have divided the Second Isaian corpus into 40–48 and 49–55 (a "Jacob/Israel part" and a "Zion/Jerusalem part"), see F. Matheus, \textit{Singt dem Herrn ein neues Lied}. Stuttgart (1990) pp. 143–151.
VI.
Some Reflections on the Validity of the Arguments for a Babylonian Domicile

I have presented above, at some length, a fairly representative (though far from exhaustive) survey of scholarly views on Second Isaiah’s “native land” from the early days of Second Isaian scholarship onwards. As we have seen, the arguments have been of many kinds. Among them we find the claim that the prophet must have lived in Babylonia because his book has no superscription and only if the prophet had lived in Mesopotamian surroundings would it have made any sense to protect the originator of the anti-Babylonian message in (for example) Isa 47 with anonymity.1 Or again, it has been claimed that Second Isaiah must have lived among the exiles because his message reveals such a high degree of familiarity with Babylonian matters.2 There appear to be no limits to the kind of information which may be extracted from Isa 40–55 based on this particular point of view. We may, for instance, even learn how the Babylonians told the future from pieces of pork from their sacrificial meals! A fairly large amount of the arguments were, as we have seen, of a geo-

graphical and botanical nature, claiming that we find in Isa 40–55 such an acquaintance with the geography and flora of Babylonia that the prophet “must have lived there”. More familiar to present day readers are the discussions whether or not שֶׁלֶחָה מִבָּבָל in Isa 52:11, נֶמֶל in Isa 43:14, and מִבָּבָל in Isa 48:20 indicate that Babylonia is viewed from an outside position, and how these expressions, consequently, should be used for determining the prophet’s whereabouts.

The reason for the above, quite random and short examples from the history of research is not, it should be stressed, because we want to look down on those who went before us. We must realise the fact that the scholars who wrote these books and articles were, like ourselves, children of their time. Some were giants, some were less brilliant, and some, perhaps, were little short of mediocre. Nevertheless, it is on their shoulders that we now stand. Admittedly, some of the citations that I have given in the previous chapters may raise a smile today, but obviously this is not my reason for quoting them. The sole purpose for giving a few quotations has been to attempt to convey a little of the Zeitgeist. This has turned out to be a very useful undertaking, since it demonstrates beyond doubt that present day mentalities and ideologies are very different from the ones prevalent in the early days of biblical scholarship. This, one hopes, does not come as a surprise to anyone. Whether we, as the profound lovers of labelling and categorizing that we are, prefer to call earlier times “idealistic”, “romanticist”, “positivistic”, or whatever, there can, none the less, be little doubt that one altogether “spürt einen anderen Geist”.

We have seen above what the arguments were of those who set the trend for coming generations in Second Isaian scholarship. The question which we shall now have to ask is to what extent these arguments can be said to be valid also for present-day scholars. If it should be the case, as I believe it is, that the arguments that once gave birth to the “Babylonian thesis” have now reached their “expiry date”, this
must obviously have some kind of consequence also for our view upon the very positions that grew out of these same arguments.

On the other hand, it should be made quite clear that it is not necessary, nor is it really possible, for us here and now to enter into any meaningful debate with scholarly positions based on the arguments of which I have presented selections above. What is important to us is to what extent the kind of arguing that did take place in those early days of biblical scholarship can still be said to be valid today. And this brings us to the heart of the matter. The text itself of Isa 40–55 can only partially be the same to us as it was to scholars of previous generations. As every generation reads texts in the light of its own presuppositions and mentalities, so we read texts today with our, quite different ones. Apparently, to a Buttenwieser, or a König, or a Maynard, or a Wildeboer, or to all of their intellectual compatriots, it was possible to read Isa 40–55 as a kind of fact-book, where this or that "piece of information" carried some sort of independent evidence. Today, we must realize that we are not at all in the position to argue in such a way any more, and that the text of Isa 40–55 is not to be regarded as a treatise in (say) botanical matters or in local geography. Like all prophetic texts, Isa 40–55 is a poetic text, and should also have to be treated as a poetic text, something which makes a considerable difference.3 In particular, great care must be taken not to interpret

3 Here one should be aware of the fact that recent scholarship has gradually found it more and more difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between "poetry" and "prose" in ancient Hebrew literature. This is partly a consequence of the fact that both terms, "poetry" and "prose", are taken from very different literary traditions from those of the Ancient Near East, and that one may justly ask about the adequateness of such terms being applied to the biblical literature (there is, for instance, nothing which indicates that the ancient Hebrews themselves were aware of any such distinction being made) and partly a result of developments within poetics in general. Recent studies by J. L. Kugel, The Idea of Biblical Poetry. New Haven, 1981, R. Alter, The Art of Bibli-
the many metaphors of its poetic language literally, something which, I am afraid, has too often been the case with Second Isaiah.\textsuperscript{4} It is probably correct to say that, despite the efforts of several authors who have engaged themselves in this particular field,\textsuperscript{5} many are apparently still unable to

\textit{cal Poetry}. Edinburgh, 1990, A. Berlin, \textit{The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism}. Bloomington, 1992, H. Fisch, \textit{Poetry with a Purpose}. Bloomington, 1990, have all contributed towards a better understanding of the problems involved here. Traditionally, there has been a tendency to apply the designation “poetry” more or less automatically to literature that makes extensive use of parallelism, or abounds in imagery or metaphors. The problem, of course, is that we find parallelism and metaphors also in the so-called “prose” literature. Even if these discussions are very important indeed, they concern us here only indirectly. For this reason I am not going further into the discussion in the present context.

\textsuperscript{4} Negligence of the strongly poetic character of Second Isaiah’s language has often resulted in the misinterpretation of many metaphors and other poetic constructions in this prophet. A case in point are the several so-called “Exodus Texts” which are to be found in Isa 40–55. In my monograph \textit{A Way in the Wilderness}. Manchester, 1989, I have attempted to demonstrate how these texts basically should not be seen as references to any New Exodus modelled on the ancient Israelite theme of the exodus from Egypt, but rather as metaphorical expressions for “The New Israel”.

appreciate how rhetorical\(^6\) and metaphorical\(^7\) the language of

many other, similar texts\} can be explained as a result of wear and tear of manuscripts, and that these words will have to be reconstructed), L. Boadt, “Intentional Alliteration in Second Isaiah”, *CBQ* 45 (1983) pp. 353–63. In an earlier article, “Isaiah 41:8–13: Notes on Poetic Structure and Style”, *CBQ* 35 (1973) pp. 20–34, Boadt was able to identify the following poetical devices in Isa 41:8–13: chiasm, parallelism, word-repetition, inclusions, metrical changes, reversal of fixed pairs, illiteration, assonance, and end-rhyme. It has even been maintained that many difficulties of interpretation in the text of Isa 40–55 are brought about by the author’s tendency to use also a variety of tenses strictly for poetic purposes (see P. P. Saydon, “The Use of Tenses in Deutero–Isaiah”, *Bib* 40 (1959) pp. 290–301). Other works dealing with the poetical techniques of Isa 40–55 are J. A. MÚgica, “Sentido de pasado de la forma “yqt” en algunos textos de Isafás II”, *EstB* 30 (1971) pp. 195–204, and G. Ruiz, “Lamed y bet enfáticos y lamed vocativo en Deutero–isafás”, *Homenaje a Juan Prado* (1975) pp. 147–61. Nevertheless, there are comparatively few investigations entirely devoted to this important field.

\(^6\) That Isa 40–55 is to be regarded basically as a rhetorical text has been argued above all by Y. Gitay, who attempted to interpret the whole of Isa 40–48 with the help of Aristotle (Prophecy and Persuasion. Bonn, 1981). For a survey of rhetorical studies of the Hebrew Bible before Gitay, see ibid. p. 32, n. 103. There can be little doubt that Gitay is basically right in his claim, and that we find in Isa 40–48 (as in 49–55) a deliberate relationship between the persuasive aim of the ‘ext and the various forms used by the author to formulate his message o his audience. Since we basically have to do with a rhetorical text, insights from Aristotle will, unquestionably, always be useful. There are, therefore, many valuable observations to be found in Gitay’s book. One would have hoped, however, that he had been able to take into consideration also some insights from Ancient Near Eastern rhetorical literature. Here, however, very little research has been done so far. Whereas classical rhetoric is currently experiencing a renaissance and abounds in scholarly activity (see, for instance, a recent work like Persuasion. Greek Rhetoric in Action. Ed. by I. Worthington. London, 1994), next to nothing has been done in the field of the Hebrew Bible. Unfortunately, despite its interesting title, a recent study like The Bible as Rhetoric. Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility. London, 1990, is not quite what one might have expected.

\(^7\) Recent books dealing with the phenomena of allegory and
Isa 40–55 (and the other prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible) really is. Also, due to the cognitive status of poetic texts they do not yield "facts" in the same way as prose texts do, and questions concerning textual reference and reality will always be even more difficult in the case of poetical texts as it is the case with prose texts. Consequently, we shall at least have to refrain from the attempt to draw any conclusions about the provenance of the text of Isa 40–55 from botanical, geographical or other details in the text in the way it was done by exegetes of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Again, I cannot treat this problem in any great detail.


8 It it quite illustrative that the by now well known and much used handbook of W. G. E. Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry. Sheffield, 1984, actually started life as the author’s dissertation on Isa 1–66. One thing, however, is the growing awareness of the strongly poetical language of the prophets, quite another is the proper assessment of this phenomenon with consequences for the actual exegesis of Second Isaiah. Here, I feel, we still have not reached very far. At the same time, there is also another danger at hand. With the stressing of the poetical and literary qualities of the text, the pendulum may soon swing too far in the “poetical” direction, at the risk of loosing the important historical dimension. In some scholarly circles, we are for the moment observing a tendency to regard the prophetic books in general as being without any connection whatsoever to the historical phenomenon prophecy. This trend regards the persons behind the prophetic compositions of the Hebrew Bible not as prophets and poets, but as poets rather than prophets (see my critique of this position in, “No Prophets?”, JSOT 57 (1993) 39–60).

9 Many other examples could also have been mentioned here. A
but must be content to give but one example: the argument based on זָהִי וָעֻז in Isa 52:11. Since this particular expression has played such an important role in the discussion of the “home of Second Isaiah”, and probably has constituted the most important single argumentative evidence in support of a Palestinian setting for the text, it may be deemed worthwhile to take a closer look at this passage in order to see how this expression should really be understood.10

It is, however, necessary first to say something about the nature of Isa 40–55 in general. The whole of the text consists of several poetical “bits and pieces”. Exact delimitations of the different “units” found in the text are, despite the many classical example of a scholarly misunderstanding in Isa 40–55 is the interpretation of Isa 40:1–11 (The so-called “prologue”) as a description of the return of the exiles through the desert from Babylonia to Jerusalem. Because scholars have failed to see the strongly poetic character of the text of Isa 40–55, Isa 40:1–11, which is a metaphorical composition depicting the future salvation of the Judean people, has, strongly influenced by the belief in a Babylonian provenance of the text, been incorrectly interpreted in a literal sense. Today, the misunderstanding of this text has become scholarly consensus, and may even be found in modern Bible translations (cf. the heading “News of the returning exiles” in The New English Bible). We have here a prime example of what I would call “The Babylonian captivity of the Book of Isaiah”. Cf. Iso above pp. 13–15, as well as the following pages.

10 As an advocate of a Palestinian location of Isa 40–55 for many years, I have myself, in an earlier article, used Isa 52:11 as an argument in favour of a Palestinian setting of Isa 40–55 (“Lebte Deuterojesaja in Judäa?”, Veterotestamentica (1982) p. 86). I do not believe anymore that this is possible. On the other hand, this does not imply that I would state categorically that it is impossible to argue anything about the background of Isa 40–55 on the basis of the text, or that all the arguments of the 19th century are invalid with regard to the question of place of origin. In order to deal with such problems, however, every single relevant text has to be studied anew. This is not the concern of the present study where I am not primarily arguing a Palestinian origin, but attempting to show how the (wrong) belief in a Babylonian one came into existence.
attempts which have been made, hardly possible. I do believe, however, that we may say that the text of Isa 40–55 is basically a unity. By this I mean that the style, vocabulary and ideas found in the text, as well as the poetical techniques applied, indicate that the composition must go back to the same creative mind, and that it may even be dated fairly accurately around the middle of the 6th century B.C.

How much of this prophetic message was uttered on how many occasions, and exactly when these words were said for the first time, is less important, and, I should believe, also impossible to find out. We are dealing with a kind of oral poetry which may, or may not, have been taken down in writing more or less immediately. We shall also have to take into consideration the possibility that “the author” may have delivered fairly long “speeches”. The claim made by earlier scholarship that the prophets were ecstacies, unable to

11 See the current commentaries on Second Isaiah.
12 As is well known, there are also Isaian passages outside of Isa 40–55 which appear to come from the same tradition, notably Isa 35. The most recent book to deal with the problem of the redaction and composition of the whole of the book of Isaiah in relation to Isa 40–55 is H. G. M. Williamson, The Book Called Isaiah. Oxford, 1994. See also above p. 14, n. 2.
13 Contrary to current scholarly belief, I believe that there is no reason to doubt that the words of the prophets may have been taken down in writing “immediately”, rather than circulating in an oral form for a lengthy period of time. We may conclude this from the general practice regarding prophetic words both from the Hebrew Bible and from other ancient Near Eastern prophetic texts (H. M. Barstad, “No Prophets?”, JSOT 57 (1993) 56–60. Cf. also H. M. Barstad, “Lachish Ostracon III and Ancient Israelite Prophecy”, Eretz–Israel 24 (1993) 8*-12*). That the words of the prophets were taken down in writing, of course, does not mean that they did not also circulate in oral form. Ancient Israel was, despite its written literature, nevertheless basically an oral society. The prophets were in all likelihood oral poets. Also, what happened to the texts when later edited and reused does constitute a major problem. The text of Isa 40–55, however, is so well composed that it is hardly likely that it has been much “tampered” with.
express themselves coherently in more than a few sentences at a time is absolutely unfounded.

The poetic units found in Isa 40–55 all belong within the same intellectual and artistic/poetic universe. What characterises the oral poetry of Isa 40–55 in particular, is that it draws heavily (and solely) on ancient Hebrew literary and poetical traditions. The message contained in Isa 40–55 is, despite the complexity of the composition and the intricacies the poetic language, relatively simple: the text comforts and persuades its audience, the people of Judah, in a strongly rhetorical manner, and describes their restoration and future Prospering as promised by their God YHWH, following the Achaemenid Cyrus’ conquest of the Babylonian empire. Probably the author of the text now sees new hope for his compatriots who have been under Babylonian yoke since the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. In this connection it is of less importance to whom we owe the actual writing down of the different texts, or their final composition, whether to the “prophet himself” (if he existed), or to some other person(s), or whether the text has been through a long tradition process before appearing before us as it does today.

Isa 52, the chapter in which we find the expression שור שלג, fits straight into the general message of Second aiah which I have just outlined. When dealing with a text like Isa 52 it is not adequate, of course, to determine what the genre is that we have in front of us, but we shall also have to decide what is the purpose and function of the text. In this chapter we find several beautiful, poetic compositions, most of them (in particular 52:1, 52:7, 52:8, 52:10) in the form

14 I have demonstrated this phenomenon at some length in my monograph A Way in the Wilderness (1989), passim.
15 Thus, I do believe that texts have “meanings” and “purposes” and “functions” and I am not too impressed by some recent trends which tend to put everything on to the poor interpreter.
16 Again, I am not going into any discussion concerning where
of holy war poetry. The different texts in this series of holy war images are related to similar passages found also in other places in Isa 40–55. All these different holy war descriptions are poetic utterances giving expression to one and the same theme: the future salvation of Judah and her restoration to prosperity and triumphant power vis-à-vis her enemies. It is this particular theme which actually creates the “unity” of Isa 40–55. No matter how many or how different are the traditions or motifs used, how exquisite the deliberate choice of words, how creative the combinations, or how advanced the poetical techniques, the very message of Second Isaiah is quite simple and almost narrow: preaching the glorious future of Judah and the underlining of the glory of her God YHWH. The text of Isa 40–55 is more or less saying the same thing all the time, but is doing so in a remarkable variety of different poetic expressions.

In chapter 52, we notice with interest the similarities in phraseology and contents between vv. 1–2 and vv. 11–12, indicating that the compositions are created purposely, and
that they belong within the same context. In addition to such similarities in style as the double imperatives מארח והארח and מארח והארח, both passages are embedded in holy war imagery and contain references to holy war and to cultic uncleanness in relation to it. The common translation into English of כל יוהוה in Isa 52:11 is “the vessels of YHWH”. With the “vessels of YHWH” one is normally thinking of the vessels from the temple that were taken away by the Babylonians after the catastrophe of 586 and to which we may find references in Jer 27:16, 28:3.6, and Ezra 1:7. One should not fail to notice, however, that all these other passages have כל בית יוהוה, the vessels of the house of YHWH, i.e. the vessels of the temple. Isa 52:11 is the only passage in the Hebrew Bible which has כל יוהוה alone. I believe that this difference is quite important.

Against the background of the overall importance of

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17 For the use of this word in holy war imagery in general, see J. Schreiner, “מארח”, TWAT 5 (1986) 1184-1190. For a Deutero-Isaianic use of מארח in Holy War imagery, see Isa 41:2, 42:13. When we find so many repetitions in the text of Isa 40–55, this has to be explained in the light of the nature of oral poetry. An oral poet was trained to handle a large stock of words and phrases, combining them in different ways, making different kinds of allusions, etc. Thus, repetition of the kind that we find in Isa 40–55 would be a main characteristic of oral poetry.

The phenomenon has been treated thoroughly by E. Zurro, Procedimientos iterativos en la poesía ugarítica y hebrea. Roma, 1987.

18 מ Observable is a very problematic lexeme, something which may be seen from the more than 50 different words used in the LXX to render the different uses of biblical Hebrew מ Observable into Greek, as well as from the text critical problems which appear in relation to quite a remarkable number of the occurrences of the verb מ Observable (see S. Schwertner, “מ Observable”, THAT II (1976) 148–149). Yet a military flavour to the word מ Observable is sometimes undeniable (cf. 1 Kgs 20:39 {with מ Observable}, and 22:32 {מ Observable + only attested here in the Hebrew Bible}). In view of Second Isaiah’s predilection for rare words, however, it should surprise no one that he makes use of the word מ Observable in the context of holy war in Isa 52. Apparently, in future research it is necessary to clarify in more detail the use of מ Observable as a military term.
holy war traditions in the whole of Isa 52, there is sufficient reason to assume that in the expression הֵמָה י ה ה in Isa 52:11 we have a reference to the “weapons of YHWH” rather than the “vessels of YHWH”. As כִלּ in the Hebrew Bible is also a designation for “weapons” and “weaponry”, this should surprise no one. In fact, the very expression כִלּ appearing in Isa 52:11 is a terminus technicus for a weapon carrier. In Ps. 7:14, in a context heavily embedded with holy war phraseology, כִלּ is used as an expression for YHWH weapons.

Consequently, we should not understand the words of the prophet “depart, depart, go out of there” as a reference to the going out from Babylonia at all. Rather, we must read this text in the context of the whole passage 52:1–12, which is a strongly poetical text, utilising holy war imagery about the future salvation of the Judean people. These texts, again, should be compared to a Second Isaian passage like 51:9 and its context, a holy war text relating to the enemies of the chosen people, as well as other other passages in Second Isaiah embedded with holy war terminology, as, for instance, Isa 55:12–13.

19 Cf. Judg 9:54, 1 Sam 14:1.6, 16:21.
20 That YHWH, when portrayed as a warrior, was equipped with all sorts of different weapons, can be seen from many texts in the Hebrew Bible. For a survey of YHWH’s weapons, see under “Bewaffnung Jahwes” in H. Fredriksson, Jahwe als Krieger. Lund (1945) p. 129.
21 On the use of אָשֶׁר in holy war terminology, see most recently, S. M. Paul, Amos (1991) p. 161, n. 19, and A. van der Lingen, “bw–ṣr (“To go out and come in”) as a military term”, VT 42 (1992) pp. 59–66. That Isa 48:20 and 52:11–12 are unrelated to any return from Babylon was claimed already by Y. Kaufmann, The Babylonian Captivity and Deutero-Isaiah. New York (1970) pp.72–73. Kaufmann also makes the same point concerning the “carriers” which I have made above. He does, however, use the term “bearers of the instruments of His warfare”, which does not quite cover the unmistaken holy war implications of our expression (Kaufmann, p. 217, n. 14).
To sum up: the moment one starts to interpret the different poetic holy war texts of Isa 40–55 literally, one puts a false construction on them. Just as the address to Zion/Jerusalem to wake up and put on garments in 52:1 should not be taken literally, so the appeal to go out in 52:11 does not refer to any literal going out of the exiles from Babylonia. The allusion is rather to the going out from Jerusalem in holy war (cf. 52:1–2, 52:7–8, and 52:11–12 all of which belong together) in a strictly metaphorical way. What we are dealing with here are poetic formulations, metaphorically giving expression to the prosperous and mighty new Judah, with YHWH fighting on her side. All the holy war themes of Isa 52 (and elsewhere in Isa 40–55) are concerned with this one and the same matter.23 Unfortunately, they have, as a rule, been thoroughly misunderstood.

In conclusion, then, we must make the claim that the attempts which we have seen in the scholarly literature to make statements concerning the “home of the prophet Second Isaiah” by arguing from the surface of the text is very problematic indeed and cannot at all be accepted.

Quite another matter is the reason why such attempts were made in the first place. As I have tried to demonstrate, the whole debate about the home of a prophet Second Isaiah was brought about by circumstances which formed inherent parts of scholarly mentalities of the 19th century, but which do not necessarily need to be valid today. The very consensus of a Babylonian home of the prophet grew slowly in the history of the discipline and is closely connected with the birth of the Deutero–Isaian thesis. As soon as a prophet “Second Isaiah” had appeared on the scene of scholarship, romanticist scholars, overfocusing on the person of the prophet, went about to attempt to define more precisely what the person to be found behind the Deutero–Isaian corpus was

23 Compare also the use of holy war terminology in Isa 59:16-20, where YHWH is coming to Zion as a conqueror to liberate his people.
like. What was his theology? What were his inspirations? Where was he living? Whereas the first advocates of the Second Isaian thesis took little or no notice of the prophet’s whereabouts, it was not long before the question became vital in scholarly discussions.

Already the fact that the question of the domicile of the prophet appears to have been so closely interlaced with the Deutero-Isaian thesis itself is a matter to which some attention should be paid. Clearly, we should not deceive ourselves into believing that, in those days, the home of Second Isaiah was a matter cultivated entirely in isolation, and purely for the sake of academic inquisitiveness.

This particular aspect further explains why also such locations as Egypt and Phoenicia were brought into the debate. Today, it may present itself as somewhat remarkable that anyone should want to argue for Phoenicia as the place where Isa 40–55 came to be. In the light of the intellectual climate of 19th century biblical scholarship, however, this is probably not so conspicuous after all. Thus, in the discussion whether or not Isa 40–55 (–66) should be considered as being of a different origin and of a different period from Isa 1–39, it became important to those scholars who were in favour of the Second Isaian thesis to underline the non-Palestinian atmosphere of Isa 40–55 in order to distinguish between the home of Second Isaiah and the Palestinian background of Isaiah of Jerusalem, whose words were to be found in Isa 1–39. In this way the stress on a non-Palestinian environment of Isa 40–55 (–66) should, in fact, come to operate as an important, underlying argument in the Second Isaian debate.

Correspondingly, to some “conservative” scholars in the early days of Second Isaian scholarship it became important to locate the prophet in Palestine. Not a few scholars,

24 Cf. above p. 53, n. 1.
25 An example of this would be W. H. Cobb, “Where was Isaiah 40–66 written?”, JBL 27 (1908) 48–64. Cobb defended the unity of
it must be remembered, went strongly against the disintegration of the Isaian corpus altogether. It appears to be mostly

the book of Isaiah also in his work “The Integrity of the Book of Isaiah”, BS (1882) pp. 519ff. From the following quotation, taken from S. Davidson, An Introduction to the Old Testament (1863) p. 57, we may learn something – today perchance easily forgotten – about how sensitive was the whole matter of a “Second Isaiah in Babylonia” in this early period of historical critical scholarship (Cf. also below n. 7). When referring to scholars before him who had argued in favour of the Second Isaian thesis, Davidson felt it necessary to make the following statement about them: “... men as truth-loving and honest as any on the opposite side of the question, are not likely to be wrong on a question within their peculiar province. It is almost presumptuous to dispute their opinion, unless it were as true as it is false that they were enemies to religion and the Bible ...”. Apparently, the somewhat apologetic combination of the Second Isaian thesis with an unargued Babylonian setting of Isa 40–55 has not entirely left us, and variations of it can be found also in the more recent literature. Note, for instance, the following statement by C. R. North, Isaiah 40–55. London (1952) p. 17: “If anyone prefers to believe that Isaiah 40–55 was written by Isaiah of Jerusalem, he is perfectly free to do so ...”. And then, without actually arguing for Babylonia (p. 17): “All things considered then, it seems safe to conclude that Isa 40–55 is the work of a prophet who lived in Babylonia during the middle years of the sixth century”.

26 As an example of early commentators providing us with a variety of arguments in favour of the unity of the Isaian corpus we may mention A. F. Kleinert, Über die Echtheit sämtlicher in dem Buche Jesaja enthaltenen Weissagungen. Berlin, 1829 (a massive defence of the unity of the book of Isaiah, with rich literature), H. A. Ch. Hävernick, Handbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung. Erlangen (1839) 150ff. (see in particular pp. 177–194), C. F. Keil, Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung. Frankfurt a. M. (1873) 268–277, C. W. E. Naegelsbach, Der Prophet Jesaja Theologisch-homiletisch bearbeitet. Bielefeld und Leipzig, 1877 (the arguments for authenticity are found in particular on pp. XX–XXXII). The unchallenged “leader of the opposition” in a time when the majority of the younger, protestant scholars were in favour of the Second Isaian thesis was the distinguished Old Testament scholar Franz Delitzsch (see his Biblischer Commentar über den Prophet Jesaia. Leipzig (1866) 385–390). From Delitzsch’s commentary it appears clearly how its author does not really want to regard himself an an historical–critical exegete at all, his arguments being of a
forgotten today that the establishing of a thesis of a Second Isaiah within German, protestant academic circles, which nowadays seems to be such an evident and legitimate position, quite often encountered heavy opposition from other parties. The very radicalism of the thesis, we should keep in mind, was in those days more often that not regarded by many conservative scholars, not to mention lay opinion, as representing an attack on the foundations of the Christian faith.

In the long run, however, faced with competition only from Phoenicia and Egypt – geographical locations that may

“theological” rather than of a “historical” disposition. A little before the turn of the century, however, Delitzsch, who was known for his strong opposition to the historical critical approach to the Bible in general, “went over to the enemy” and accepted the Deutero-Isaian thesis (see his Messianische Weissagungen in geschichtlicher Folge, Leipzig (1890) 138). Around the turn of the century the majority of the younger scholars went in for the Deutero-Isaian thesis, and most of the older ones who had supported Delitzsch did not live to witness his “treachery” (cf. S. Wagner, Franz Delitzsch, München (1978) pp. 256ff.).

27 Thus, it should take a long time indeed before Catholic scholars would feel free to accept as commonplace the view that the book of Isaiah was not an organic totality. When some of the early Catholic commentators took up the “modern view”, this was soon stopped by the Pontificial Biblical Commission, which, on June 28, 1908, decided once and for all that Catholic scholars were not allowed to adhere to the viewpoint that there had ever been such a thing as a Second Isaiah (cf. Enchiridion Biblicum. Romae/Neapoli (1961) 100–101). Even if this very restrictive view was changed in the forties, as recent as in 1964 one writer assumes that it is only probable that the majority of Catholic biblical scholars adhere to the Second Isaian thesis (see A. Gamper, “Deutero-Isaias und die heutige katholische Exegese”, Orien 28 (1964) 185–87). Some Catholic scholars, however, paid little notice to the papal restriction on their activity. It may be noted with interest how a scholar like F. Feldmann, after having paid due respect to the Pontificial Commission by referring to the statement of 1908 with the remark that the question of authorship “noch Dunkel schwebt”, then goes on with his own commentary which presupposes the Second Isaian thesis (Das Buch Isaias, Münster (1926) p. 13).
have been felt as somewhat far-fetched even in the early days of Second Isaian scholarship – Babylonia would naturally and slowly develop into the only legitimate alternative for providing the new Isaiah with a domestic shelter. After all, from the point of view of most scholars in those days, Babylonia had massive support from a major witness: the Bible itself. According to biblical “consensus”, the whole population of Judah had been taken to Babylonia after 586, and Jerusalem and the Judean cities were all destroyed. In other words: there was no Judah left in which any prophetic activity could take place, and since the whole population of Judah was in Babylonia anyway, what could be more natural than to look for the prophet Second Isaiah among the exiles there?
VII.
The Tabula Rasa, Or the Myth of the Empty Land

Above, we noticed on several occasions how commingled was the growth of the Babylonian setting of Isa 40–55 with the birth and development of the Deutero-Isaian thesis, a thesis which was heavily opposed in the early days of biblical scholarship.1 Apparently, it became peremptory to connect Isa 40–55 (–66) with a setting different from Palestine in order to stress the argument that this text was not going back to the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem, son of Amoz, but belonged to a different time. Even if other locations were also suggested (Egypt, Palestine, Phoenicia), the scholarly community soon “ended up” by choosing Babylonia as the prophet’s homeland.

To present-day readers of older commentaries, who are in possession of the promptitude of apprehension that only after-thought can provide, or perhaps happily unaware of how very much apart are “their world” and “our world”,2 it ought to be a mystery of no little proportion that the arguments which we have seen in favour of a Babylonian provenance of Isa 40–55 were capable of justifying a Babylonian consensus, whereas the (apparently) far more convincing evidence established by those who went in for Palestine as

1 Cf. above pp. 73–74, n. 25, n. 26, n. 27.
2 See E. D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation. New Haven, 1967, p. 137 and passim. I fear that Hirsch is too optimistic, though, when he makes a sharp distinction between the historicity of interpretation and the timelessness of understanding.
the home of the prophet Second Isaiah hardly made any impetus at all. Thus, when comparing the argumentation of (say) Duhm and Dillmann with that of Maynard or Buttenwieser, there should be but little doubt that the intellectual soundness of the latter surpasses that of the former (at least to us it does). There is, consequently, every good reason to believe that had the scholarly community of those days really taken upon itself to pay more serious attention to and listen more carefully to the Maynards and Buttenwiesers among the early scholars, today consensus with regard to the home of Second Isaiah might have been a different one.

Today, it may seem obvious that the arguments of Buttenwieser for a Palestinian setting for Second Isaiah are far more convincing than most of the argumentation in favour of Babylonia. For instance, there can be little doubt that the familiar arguments (when for a moment granted the legitimacy of which I have deprived them in the present study\(^3\)) whether or not מַשֶּׁה in Isa 52:11, or בָּלָה יִשָּׁה in Isa 43:14, or בָּלָה מְבַבֶּל of Isa 48:20, indicate that Babylonia is viewed from an outside position, should more or less have settled the matter of the prophet’s Babylonian whereabouts alone. Yet, Buttenwieser and those of his companions who favoured a Palestinian setting did not stand a chance. How could this be?

There are, of course, several reasons for this. For one thing, we must keep in mind that these were the days of a strong German dominance in biblical scholarship. Thus, the nice series of arguments presented by a Maynard or a Buttenwieser, for instance, was hardly discussed in Europe at all. Had the major discussion in those days taken place within the English-speaking scholarly community, it is unlikely that we should have had the kind of “Babylonian consensus” which we are still facing today.

\(^3\) See above pp. 59–71.
Also, “pan-Babylonianism” plays a certain role in our story. This phenomenon, once so dominant in the world of biblical scholarship,\textsuperscript{4} surfaces significantly and pervasively for the first time in relation to Isa 40–55 in the argumentation in Kittel’s very influential 1898 article,\textsuperscript{5} establishing the scholarly myth of “Babylonian literary influence in Second Isaiah”, thus contributing considerably to the longevity (or even immortality?) of the prophet’s Babylonian sojourn.

In this way, simultaneously with the development of the belief in the Babylonian domicile, the topic of Babylonian influence on the text of Isa 40–55 also came to form an integral part of the Second Isaian thesis. Already a brief glance at the history of research, a part of which I have presented in some detail above,\textsuperscript{6} made it apparent that the Second Isaian scholarly interest in Akkadian matters progressed slowly in accordance with the growing belief in the Babylonian home of the anonymous prophet. In this context the enormous influence of Kittel’s article of 1898 can hardly be overestimated. From reading the literature of this early period of Second Isaian scholarship, it may be seen how the views put forward in Kittel’s article slowly crept into other scholars’ work and gradually developed into a consensus. That Kittel’s views on the influence on Isa 40–55 from contemporary Babylonian court–style was hardly ever questioned, may be seen from several of the most influential German Old Testament scholars of that time.

However, the overwhelmingly most important single factor which contributed towards the localization of the prophet Second Isaiah in Babylonia in the early days of Second Isaian scholarship is represented by what we may call


\textsuperscript{5} R. Kittel, “Cyrus und Deuterojesaja”, ZAW 18 (1898) 49-62. See also above pp. 50–51 and 43–44.

\textsuperscript{6} See above pp. 54.
the tabula rasa, or “the Myth of the Empty Land” argument. The notion of an uninhabited, and uninhabitable, Palestine, following the subjugation by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar, was deeply rooted in the mentality of 19th century scholarship and its importance for the locating of Second Isaiah outside of Palestine can hardly be overrated.7

When reviewing above scholarly contributions opting for Babylonia as the place where Second Isaiah was active we noticed how the tabula rasa mentality did sometimes play a role for these authors. However, only a few of them referred explicitly to Judah as a land without population. In many cases, early Second Isaian scholarship is silent on this particular point, and apparently content to presuppose an empty land. This implied position is most clearly seen in those authors who only half-heartedly went in for a Babylonian domicile, stating that we really cannot say anything for certain about where the prophet lived, but that Babylonia is the most likely place. A major reason, apparently, why they would find Babylonia more likely than Palestine is that, in their minds, Palestine was depopulated and in ruins.

Others did not engage themselves in any discussion of the matter at all, but were content simply to claim, without delay, that Babylonia was the place where the author of Isa 40–55 must be sought. Such a complete lack of argumentation is, of course, only possible because the claim represented a reference to an already established consensus of a Baby-

7 As I have dealt with this important phenomenon at some length in my monograph The Myth of the Empty Land (1996), I shall not go into many details here. What is important in the present context is to show the relevancy of the idea of a tabula rasa Palestine for the localization of Isa 40–55 in Babylonia. Not all the scholars of the last century, however, believed in the empty land. It is fairly typical that a scholar like Seinecke, who went in for a Palestinian location for Second Isaiah (see above p. 28) was able to state: “Dass aber Judäa und Jerusalem längere Zeit hindurch völlig menschenleer gewesen wäre, ist eine übertriebene Vorstellung (L. Seinecke, Geschichte des Volkes Israel. 2. T. Göttingen (1884) p. 77).
Ionian domicile, or because of the prevalence of the notion of the “empty land” which had made Palestine unsuitable as a home for the prophet in the first place. In fact, there are good reasons to assume that when the notion of a Babylonian domicile of the prophet Second Isaiah more or less represented scholarly consensus already from the mid-19th century onwards, this was, again, mainly a result of the idea of a *tabula rasa* Palestine. For the most part, real attempts to argue a Babylonian domicile from the text of Isa 40-55 were something that actually came later, following, in addition to the need for providing the Second Isaian thesis with a more solid base against its attackers, the already well established general conception that Judah after 586 was in fact unfit for most things.

Thus, the significance of the predominance of the *tabula rasa* mentality simply cannot be overstated. It is present in all the literature of the period which produced the prophet Second Isaiah, sometimes pronounced, but in most cases not. The difficult thing for the reader of the scholarly literature of those early days of biblical exegesis is that the idea of the *tabula rasa* is not always stated in an argumentative form, but is something that forms an inherent part of the scholarly mentality. Whereas the view of an empty Palestine is not overtly stated, it is always taken for granted.

By far the most impelling result of the 19th century scholarly notion of a total exile, with the carrying away of the entire population from Judah to Babylonia, was the belief that the centre of gravity for cultural and spiritual life was also moved from the uninhabitable and ruined Jerusalem to Babylonia. Consequently, the unknown prophet behind Isa 40-55 was also forced to migrate together with his compatriots. Today, we know that the notion of a total exile was quite wrong and that, in fact, the large majority of the population also continued to live in Judah after 586. This matter should

8 In my monograph *The Myth of the Empty Land* (1996) I have
have some consequences also for the question of whether Isa 40–55 originated in Babylonia or not. After all, we cannot deny the fact that the contents of these chapters are through and through concerned with Judah and the city of Jerusalem, whereas Babylonia does not play any major role at all.9

This whole matter becomes even more conspicuous when we notice how, among the scholars who went in for Babylon, quite a few merely presuppose the Babylonian background, whereas others claim that we can hardly know at all where the prophet lived, but that Babylon “is the more likely place”. What we are indeed witnessing here, is not only the strength and power of a hard-dying scholarly trend, but also a prime example of the growth of a consensus gentium fallacy.

So today, when looking back on the discussion around

shown how archaeological excavations have demonstrated beyond doubt the continued existence of a considerable Israelite material culture in the Negev, and in particular in the area of Benjamin, but also in the Judean hills, and probably in Jerusalem. By combining archaeological, biblical, and Babylonian sources one may conclude that Judah constituted a small, but important wheel in the economic machinery of the Neo-Babylonian empire, and that it is impossible to claim that, whereas the “material” culture went on in the home country under difficult conditions, the “spiritual” culture moved to Babylonia. The sharp distinction made between “before” and “after” 586 in what was in every respect continuous culture is the creation of later tradition, and much scholarly work regarding the “exile” must be characterized as “romanticist” and has, to a large degree, been detrimental to biblical scholarship.

9 This point has already been made by some of the scholars in the early days who argued for a Palestinian home of the prophet, and I am not going to repeat the arguments here. It is also stressed by several of those scholars who had great difficulties in attributing large parts of Isa 40–66, and even 40–55, to a Babylonian setting, leading to the division between a Babylonian origin of 40–48 and a Palestinian origin of chapters 49ff. (cf. above p. 58, n. 9). For a short, but pertinent survey of the relative non-importance of Babylon in Isa 40–55 as compared to in the rest of the Book of Isaiah, see C. T. Begg, “Babylon in the Book of Isaiah”, The Book of Isaiah (1989) 121–125.
the end of the last century and at the beginning of the present century, we may clearly say that it was certainly not the perspicaciousness of the argumentation that secured Babylonia its position. The consensus was, to a great part, rather brought about by the scholarly mentality of a *tabula rasa* Palestine.

Today at least the majority of scholars apparently do not quite believe anymore that life in Judah ceased to exist completely during the "Exilic period". When browsing through a fairly representative selection of handbooks and introductions, as, for instance, those of Oded, Ackroyd, Herrmann, Soggin, Miller and Hayes, Ahlström, Gottwald, Albertz, it appears that the scholarly world today has become more and more aware of the fact that life must have gone on in Palestine also after 586.

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14 J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. London, 1986, has a more up to date view of the archaeology of the period (p. 417), and a good section on the problems related to Gedaliah (pp. 421–424), as well as some reflections on the continuation of cultic life (p. 426).
Knowing to what degree the notion of a *tabula rasa* Palestine actually influenced the growth of the myth of the Babylonian Second Isaiah, one would have thought that this new, and undoubtedly more correct, assessment of the "exile" would have made an impact also on the study of Isa 40–55. This, however, is obviously not the case. Apparently, the Babylonian Isaiah has become a part of our scholarly mythology. A sober savant like Ackroyd, for instance, despite his assurance that the people who survived the disaster 586 would soon have resumed their ordinary way of life, is at the same time able to state (without giving any references or presenting any arguments): "Moreover, although there is no absolute certainty, it seems most probable that 40–55 at any rate derive from a Babylonian setting, almost certainly before the fall of Babylon to Cyrus the Persian".

Again, we may observe how the strength and power of the scholarly tradition restrain the exegetes, not allowing them to draw the necessary consequences of a completely

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19 Ibid., pp. 105–106. In his earlier work, *Exile and Restoration* (1968), Ackroyd states that the localization of Second Isaiah is not provable, but that a Babylonian setting is the more likely one in view of the tremendous concentration in Isa 40–55 on the release from captivity, the return to the land, and the parallels to the Exodus (ibid., p. 120). In my monograph *A Way in the Wilderness* (1989), I have attempted to demonstrate that these different phenomena should not be understood in the way they normally are; alleged references to the return of the exiles from Babylonia, but are rather to be seen as poetical expressions alluding to the new and prosperous Israel. When we find references to a return to the land, the texts do not concern the return from Babylonia alone, but the return from the whole of the Diaspora! And even if I should be wrong in this understanding of the so-called "Exodus texts" in Isa 40–55, Ackroyd’s argument here is not a very strong one, as there is no reason whatsoever why a concentration on release from captivity, return to the land, or on the Exodus necessarily must originate in Babylonia!
changed situation. What we may now witness with regard to post-586 Palestine is a kind of “middle-position”, combined with a certain aporia. The new consensus which has now become visible concerning life in Palestine after 586, and which seems to be replacing the former idea of a tabula rasa, is that whereas “exilic” Judah is now at least granted the right to exist, it is still not entitled to any cultural or religious activity. Our main problem today seems to lie with the fact that the after effects of the former utterly negative view of life in Judah during the exilic period still dominate the scholarly scene.

Thus, even if most scholars, more of less vaguely, admit that “most of” the population was left in the country, they appear to believe that what Jewish culture there was, took place in Babylonia, not in Judah. If, however, “most


21 I am, of course, not claiming that other scholars do not hold more adequate views, but the bulk of scholarship is most certainly still to be found holding this opinion. Thus, a scholar like Oded can write: “The dearth of information about the Jewish community which remained in Judah is not an accident, since the centre of gravity in the events which influenced the nation’s historical development moved from Judah to the Diaspora” (B. Oded, “Judah during the Exilic Period”, Israelite and Judean History. London (1977) pp. 476-80). And Soggin: “The spiritual centre of Jerusalem and Judah was transferred to Babylon, and there it remained for some decades, until the first of the exiles returned home” (J. A. Soggin, A History of Israel. London (1984) p. 256). And Bright: “... but though there were doubtless godly people in Judah who, like their brothers far away, mourned over Zion and longed for its restoration [referring to texts like Pss 74 and 79, Isa 63:7-64:12, and Lam], they were too leaderless and helpless to do more than dream. The impulse to restoration, when it came, did not come from them. It is probable, indeed, that the religious loyalty of many of these people had been seriously undermined, and that their was a Yahwism in no very pure form [referring to texts like Ezek. 33:24-29, Isa 57:3-15, 65:1-5, 11f.]. “Though Israelites in Palestine were still the numerical majority, Israel’s future scarcely lay with them. Israel’s true centre of grav-
of the population” remained in Judah, as it must have done, and as the majority of scholars now admit, this population must have consisted not only of “illiterate peasants”, but also of artisans, traders, village and town elders, scribes, priests and prophets. In other words, what we are dealing with here is not some picturesque idea of a bunch of illiterate peasants, but a functioning state, with many of its different political institutions still intact. What is represented in the 19th century writings, and of which we may find ample remnants deeply rooted also in present day scholarship, are fairly antiquated views on the nature and function of ancient societies.

If we cannot allow ourselves any more to think of the Judean society after 586 as a community where no culture existed, or where prophets could no longer arise (the services of priests and prophets must have been equally essential to the Judean society after 586 as it was before the disaster!), this, again, must have consequences for the traditional belief that chapters 40–55 (-66) of the Book of Isaiah originated in Babylonia. In fact, the message of Isa 40–55 fits rather perfectly into the kind of society which we should expect to find in Judah after the catastrophe of 586 B.C. As for cultural activity in Judah in general, no one, to my knowledge, has ever disputed either the fact that Lamentations represents outstanding activity had temporarily shifted from the homeland” (J. Bright, A History of Israel. London (1980) p. 345). Also Bright admits that “the popular notion of a total deportation which left the land empty and void is erroneous and to be discarded” (pp. 343–344, referring to the works by Janssen and Ackroyd). And Weinberg: “It is highly unlikely that a material culture of any degree of sophistication could have been maintained during these centuries in Jerusalem without leaving more substantial remains than have been found so far; we must think more in terms first of squatters and then of people able to maintain only a mere subsistence level” (S. S. Weinberg, “Post-Exilic Palestine – An Archaeological Report”, Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Jerusalem (1969–1970) p. 81).

22 I have dealt with this in some detail in my book The Myth of the Empty Land (1996).
ing literary qualities, or that it is a product of Palestine. If poetry of such high quality as that which we may find in Lamentations actually could be produced in Judah after the disaster of 586, why could not the poetry of Isa 40–55 have been composed under similar circumstances? If it really were the case that Judean society continued to exist, may be even to flourish after 586, why should the most likely place to look for the provenance of Isa 40–55 be in Babylonia? I am not really claiming here primarily that the provenance of Isa 40–55 was not in Babylonia. What I am more modestly proposing is that none of the 19th century arguments in favour of a Babylonian setting of Isa 40–55 can any longer be regarded as valid, and that this obviously should have consequences of some sort. When the arguments and scholarly mentalities of the last century, which created the Babylonian domicile of the prophet Second Isaiah, can no longer be regarded as acceptable, is it then acceptable to keep the conclusions which they once produced?
By taking a closer look at the question of the *domicile* of the prophet Second Isaiah\(^1\) in early biblical scholarship I intended to learn something about how the present consensus of a Babylonian provenance of chapters 40–55 of the book of Isaiah came about, and whether there is, from the particular perspective of the history of research, cause to entertain any doubt about this position. In other words; are the 19th century views which led to the belief that Second Isaiah was active in Babylonia, a scholarly opinion which is still acceptable to us today?

One important observation following the study of recent discussions concerning the prophet’s whereabouts, is that the majority of the arguments and conclusions found in present day scholarship represent but mere reflections of the debate from before and after the turn of the century. For instance, from observations in the text, attempts are made to reach conclusions about the geographical and cultural background of the author behind Isa 40–55.\(^2\) This circumstance, however, raises a major problem when we realise that the 19th century use of “linguistic”, “geographical”, or “botanical” evidence taken from the surface of the text of Isa 40–55 in order to reconstruct the environment of the text’s “author” can no longer be regarded as valid.

In fact, the whole question of the relationship between

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\(^1\) On the distinction between a prophet Second Isaiah and the text of Isa 40–55 in biblical scholarship, see above p. 18, n.2.

\(^2\) Cf. pp. 23ff. and 35ff. above.
19th century scholarship and biblical studies at the end of the 20th century involves important hermeneutical problems. When reading the commentaries on Second Isaiah from the last and the beginning of the present century, it becomes very clear how very far apart are “their” world and “our” world. Yet, we tend to use the very “same” arguments for the very “same” texts, even when these, in several respects, cannot, of course, be the “same”. Thus, the history of research an sich provides us with extremely complex hermeneutical challenges, and this enormous “reference gap” between 19th century scholarship and readers of today must not be overlooked. Not only have we been witnessing a total change in the intellectual climate, but also the methods of our discipline have changed almost to a revolutionary degree. At the same time we have tended to keep, like “stowaways”, the “same” questions and the “same” conclusions which were left us by earlier generations. From a study of the commentaries from the time when the consensus concerning the Babylonian

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3 This has led, for instance, to the modern commentators’ endless automatic repetitions like, for instance, K. Elliger’s statement: “Das Wort [Isa. 40:18–26] des Propheten geht eindeutig in die Situation der in Babylonien im Exil lebenden Judäer” (Deuterojesaja. Neukirchen/Vluyn (1978) p. 91), or, by the same author, in a demonstration of the powerful attraction of the “myth of the empty land”: “Zur Frage nach dem Ort [commenting on Isa 44:24–28] ist nicht viel zu sagen. Die geschichtliche Situation, in die hinein 24–28 ergeht, ist einigermaßen deutlich. Jerusalem ist noch nicht wieder bewohnt und liegt noch in Trümmern ...” (Elliger, p. 465). Quite illustrative is also Steck, who has claimed that, for instance, all the Zion texts must be later additions to the Second Isaian corpus because they do not quite fit the Babylonian context. Steck’s only justification for doing so, however, is found in statements like, e.g. “Geht man – wie auch uns scheint, zurecht – davon aus, dass Aussagen über die Heimführung von Jakob/Israel aus Babel zum Grundkonzept Deuterojesajas gehören...” (O. H. Steck, “Israel und Zion”, Gottesknecht und Zion. Tübingen (1992) p. 174). I could give many other examples, but this is not necessary as they would probably be known to many. See also the reference to the survey by Richter above p. 21, n. 6.
background of Isa 40–55 developed it appears that this scholarly surmise, too, derives from a very different "mental time" than ours.

A question which presents itself readily against the background of the above remarks concerning the hermeneutical implication of the study of the history of Second Isaian research would be whether all scholarly arguments from before and after the turn of the century shall have to be abandoned following the change in intellectual climate. Apparently this is not the case.

For instance, if it really were the case that we could identify direct influence in vocabulary, style and ideology from Akkadian literary sources on the text of Isa 40–55, such positions as those presented by Kittel and his followers would deserve to be taken seriously, and should most certainly have to be met with special attention. However, as I have argued elsewhere, the claim that chapters 40–55 of the book of Isaiah abound in Akkadian literary influence to the degree that they give their author away as a compulsory resident of a Babylonian environment rather than of a Palestinian one cannot be vindicated. As I have shown above, one of the most important single factors which led to the growth, and, finally, to the consensus of the Babylonian setting of Isa 40–55 was what I have called the "Myth of the empty land". The tremendous impact of the belief that Palestine following the Babylonian invasion of 586 was a country wholly in ruins – a place where no activity whatsoever could take place, as "all Judah" was deported – for the development of the belief in a Babylonian Isaiah can hardly be overestimated. Again, however, we have to do with a presupposition which can no longer be upheld. None of the former arguments for a localising of the text of Isa 40–55 outside Palestine based on this tabula rasa mentality can be upheld.

4 See above pp. 43–44 and 48–52.
5 See above p. 14, n. 3 and n. 4.
One important discovery of the present study has been the fact that the early discussions on the "home of Second Isaiah", which ended up by placing the prophet's whereabouts outside Palestine, should come to form a part of the very debate concerning the Second Isaian thesis itself. It became an important underlying factor in the discussion to stress the non-Palestinian character of Isa 40–55 (66) in order to separate this part of the book of Isaiah from the Palestinian chapters 1–39. As a result of this, as well as a result of the strong belief in the empty land referred to above, both Phoenicia, Egypt, and Babylonia were suggested as the prophet Second Isaiah's homeland – with Babylonia as the slowly emerging winner.7

At the same time, it is important to realise that the Babylonian "victory" was far from outstanding! We noticed, for instance, that the consensus of a Babylonian setting of Isa 40–66 tended to "crack" already at an early time when quite a few scholars started to attribute only parts of Isa 40–55 (66) to a Babylonian environment, believing that the rest of the text must have had a Palestinian origin.8

The sympathies of the present author regarding the provenance of Isa 40–55 will not be a secret to the readers of the present monograph. Yet, the purpose of the present investigation has, in fact, not been to demonstrate that Second Isaiah lived in Palestine. What I have wanted to do is to show that the arguments put forward in support of a Babylonian domicile simply are no longer valid.

As a scholarly tradition can only receive rationality and legitimacy through a constant, consequent, and conscious critical attitude to itself, it appears that the current view on the home of Deutero–Isaiah is heavily due for reconsideration. There cannot, as I see it, be "business as usual".

I do not believe that the matter of the geographical loca-

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7 For how this happened, see above pp. 35–52.
8 See above pp. 44–45.
tion of Isa 40–55 is a problem to which we may provide any definite answer. In fact, we can probably claim a Palestinian setting as little as we can claim a Babylonian one. However, what we can and should do, is to attempt to clarify more precisely which is *the more likely* geographical setting for Isa 40–55.

The important point here is that the legitimacy and foundation for the late 19th and early 20th century arguments in favour of a Babylonian setting of Isa 40–55 are no longer valid, relevant, or realistic, having arisen under circumstances and with presuppositions totally different from those regarded as authoritative today. As the Hebrew Bible primarily is a Palestinian phenomenon, it is really of those who still want to advocate a Babylonian setting for chapters 40–55 of the book of Isaiah that we should ask to argue their case. In the meantime we shall simply have to live with the possible assumption that the text in question originated on Palestinian soil.
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A WAY IN THE WILDERNESS.
THE "SECOND EXODUS" IN THE MESSAGE
OF SECOND ISAIAH

BY
HANS M. BARSTAD

Professor of Old Testament in the University
of Oslo, Norway

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER 1989
Dedicated to the Memory of
ANDERS JØRGEN BJØRNDALEN
23.3.1928 - 14.1.1989
Scholar and Gentleman
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My manuscript was finished in February 1988, and I have been unable to take any notice of books and articles that have reached me after that time.

Hokksund, October, 1989
Hans M. Barstad
ABBREVIATIONS EMPLOYED

AbrN  
Abs-Nahrain

Ae  
Aegyptus

AHw  
W. von Soden, Akkadisches Handwörterbuch. Wiesbaden, 1965-

AnBib  
Analecta biblica

ASTI  
Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute

ATANT  
Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments

BBET  
Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie

BEATJ  
Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums

BHH  

Bib  
Biblica

BN  
Biblische Notizen

BZ  
Biblische Zeitschrift

BZAW  
Beihef zur ZAW

CBQ  
Catholic Biblical Quarterly

Conc  
Concilium (German edition)

CThM A  
Calwer theologische Monographien. Reihe A. Bibelwissenschaft
<table>
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<td>Communio viatorum</td>
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<td>ET</td>
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<td>Int</td>
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<td>JBL</td>
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<td>Journal of Theological Studies</td>
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<td>KAT</td>
<td>Kommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
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<td>ScrTh</td>
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<td>Studies in the History of Religion</td>
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<td>ZAW</td>
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<td>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</td>
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

To the serious student of the Hebrew Bible it has for some
time\(^1\) been recognized that chapters 40 – 55 of the Book of

\(^1\) The critical observation that chapters 40 – 66 of the Book of Is¬

aiah cannot be attributed to the same source as chapters 1 – 39
goes back a long time (according to M. Friedländer, *The Commen¬
tary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiab*. Vol. 1. (1873) 170 – 71. Vol. 3. (1877) 64, the literary unity of the Book of Isaiah was rejected already by

Ibn Ezra in the 12th century). The first scholar in modern times
to attack the unity of the Book of Isaiah in a more systematic
manner, was probably J. C. Döderlein (*Esaias ex recensione

textus hebraei ad fidem codicum...* 1775). Even if the observa¬
tions of Döderlein (and others) in time should come to represent
the average scholarly view, it was not until the 20th century that
they should be generally accepted. Thus, the book by J.-M. Re¬

mond, *Dissertation critique sur l'inauthenticité d'Esaïe*, 1840,

opposing the unity of the Book of Isaiah, cannot be regarded as
representative of the mid-nineteenth century. More representa¬
tive is A. Rutgers, *De echtheid van het tweede gedeelte van Jes¬

aja*, 1866, opposing the disintegration of the book. To-day, the

scholars who argue for the unity of the Book of Isaiah based on
common authorship are not many. They do exist, however. Thus,
a scholar like O. T. Allis defended the unity of the Book of Isaiah
in his book: *The Unity of Isaiah*. 1950, and S. M. Gozzo did the
same as recent as in 1962, in his: *La dottrina teologica de libro di

Isaia* (for further information on this aspect, one may consult
one of the surveys of the history of research, referred to in n. 4
below). Most recently, the scholarly world has been witnessing a
much more prolific debate in this area, based on «unity of tradition» (see the works by Brueggemann, Clements, and others men¬
tioned in n. 111 below). That this trend has found its way also into
the commentaries, may be seen from the most recent com¬
mentary on the market, J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1 – 33*, 1985, and
*Isaiah 34 – 66*, 1987, who treats all 66 chapters of the Book of
Isaiah «as a single literary whole... presented as a kind of drama,
Isaiah represent the words of an unknown prophet\(^2\), who delivered his message towards the end of that difficult period in the history of the Jewish people most commonly referred to as "the Babylonian Exile"\(^3\).

\(^2\) Nevertheless, the scholarly world has by no means seen the end of the Second Isaiah debate. As everyone will know, we have no "proofs" even of the very existence of a prophet "Second Isaiah". There may have been such a prophet, and there may not. Thus, quite recently, J. M. Vincent (\textit{Studien zur literarischen Eigenart und zur geistigen Heimat von Jesaja}, Kap. 40 – 55, 1977) has argued that there was no prophet "Second Isaiah". According to this author the text in question, which for a large part stems from the cultic prophecy of the Jerusalem temple, is the work of several authors and traditors. It was handed down during several generations, and does not go back to any single prophet. The text was first conceived in post-exilic times. Two years later there appeared the book by J. H. Eaton (\textit{Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah}, 1979), which, in accordance with the author's earlier work on the Psalms and the autumnal New Year Festival, attempted to demonstrate that the text of Is 40 – 55, having its background in this very festival, is the work of an "Isaian circle" of "festal prophets". Interesting as these different theories may seem to be, they can hardly be said to be convincing. On the other hand, the matter is not a simple one. What we can decide with regard to chapters 40 – 55 of the Book of Isaiah is whether the message contained in this text appears to be meaningful as addressed to a certain audience in a certain historical situation. Theoretically, we should then be able to sort out the passages which do not harmonize with the given historical situation as "unauthentic". Much closer, I am afraid, it is not possible to get concerning the so-called \textit{ipsissima verba}. A similar attitude was taken by A. Schoors, "\textit{Arrière-fond historique et critique d'authenticité des textes deutéro-isaïens}"; \textit{OLP} 2 (1971) 105 - 35. On these problems, cf. also the survey by A. Richter, referred to in n. 4 below.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

When contemplating the considerable amount of secondary literature on Deutero-Isaiah, it is easily imaginable that one should want to ask the question whether it is really worth while to produce yet another contribution to the debate; Do we not now have enough secondary literature on the topic? Is there really anything more to say, which has not already been said? I should most vehemently repudiate any such objection. The very existence of a large secondary literature, containing a considerable variety of different, and in part incompatible, scholarly views, in itself quite clearly demonstrates the need for our continuing efforts to attempt to solve the riddles of these sixteen chapters within the Isaianic corpus.

A major problem recurrent to the modern reader of biblical prophetic texts in general, and of Is 40–55 in particular, is that the language of these texts may sometimes be strongly metaphorical. This, of course, is not felt as a difficulty when the metaphor applied is easily perceived. In many cases, however, this is not so, and the interpreters of the ancient texts will then, as we have seen it done again and again, often attempt to read the metaphors literally.


INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In the present writer's view the language of the prophets is far more rhetorical and metaphorical than most scholars are willing to admit. And Second Isaiah makes no exception in this respect. On the contrary! We must constantly remind ourselves that even if also this prophet clearly has a distinct message, the man behind this message is not only a preacher and a prophet, but he is also an artist and a poet.

6 Negligence of the strongly poetic character of the prophet's language has often resulted in the misinterpretation of many metaphors and other poetic constructions in Is 40 – 55. In fact, I believe that the main obstacle to a correct interpretation of the prophet's message is the extremely high literary quality of the work. One scholar (G. Dahl, «Some Recent Interpretations of Second Isaiah», JBL 48 (1929) 362) even went as far as to compare the literary quality of Second Isaiah with Homer and Shakespeare. Not everyone, however, would share this high regard for the literary quality of Second Isaiah. A scholar like R. H. Pfeiffer, for instance, could write: "Isaiah belongs to the golden age of Hebrew literature, Is. 40 – 55 to its silver age." (Introduction (1948) 462-63). In the present writer's view, Pfeiffer is hardly justified in his statement here. Obviously, many scholars have touched upon this phenomenon during their work with the text of Is 40 – 55. Nevertheless, there are very few investigations entirely devoted to this important field. A book of general interest is R. Lack, La symbolique de Livre d'Isaïe, 1973. Cf. also by the same author,«L'image symbolique littéraire dans la Bible», Symbolisme et Théologie (1974) 137 – 49. It would lead too far to take these problems up here, but in order to illustrate some of the difficulties which we may come across, I will refer the reader to articles like D. F. Payne, «Characteristic Word-Play in Second Isaiah: A Reappraisal», JSS 12 (1967) 207 – 229, D. Yellin, «The Use of Ellipsis in Second Isaiah», JPOS 1 (1920 – 21) 132 – 37 (thus, it is probably incorrect when J. Morgenstern, «The Loss of Words at the Ends of Lines in Manuscripts of Biblical Poetry», HUCA 25 (1954) 41 – 83, believes that the phenomenon described by Yellin (he does not mention Yellin's article, and he mentions also many other similar texts) can be explained as a result of wear and tear of manuscripts, and that these words have to be reconstructed), L. Boadt, «Intentional Alliteration in Second Isaiah», CBQ 45 (1983) 353 – 63. In an earlier article, «Isaiah 41 : 8 – 13: Notes on Poetic Structure and Style», CBQ 35 (1973) 20 – 34, Boadt was able to identify the following poetical devices in Is 41 : 8 – 13: Chiasm, parallelism, word-repetition, inclusions, metrical changes, reversal of fixed pairs, alliteration, assonance, and end-rhyme. It has even been maintained that many difficulties in the text of Is 40 – 55 are brought about by the author's tendency to use also a variety of tenses strictly for poetic purposes (see P.
using a very rich and very metaphorical, and sometimes also very difficult language.

As everyone familiar with the message of Second Isaiah will well know, the desert, or the wilderness, plays an important role in this prophet’s message. Quite commonly, these occurrences of the “desert motif”, as well as of other, related texts, are being referred to by biblical scholars as “exodus texts”, and viewed as giving expression to the return of the exiled Judeans through the desert from Babylon back to Jerusalem, thus constituting a “new exodus”. Those

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7 A general survey of the “desert motif” in the Hebrew Bible is given by S. Talmon in his article “Desert Motif” in the Bible and in Qumran Literature, Biblical Motifs (1966) 31 – 63.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

scholars who refer to these texts as «exodus texts», however, have failed to recognize the strongly metaphorical character of these texts.

The particular interest of the scholars in the «desert texts» or «wilderness texts» of Isaiah 40 – 55, and the relationship of these texts to the assumed idea of a new exodus, is not least the result of the commonly accepted view that a very considerable part of the Judean population was living in exile in Babylon, and that the prophet Second Isaiah was active among the exiled Judeans there. The references in Isaiah chapters 40 – 55 to the desert, consequently, are assumed to reflect the notion of the return from exile, modelled on the biblical tradition of the escape of the Israelites from Egypt.

Some time ago, however, I came to suspect that not only did the prophet sojourn in Jerusalem, but also his message is not primarily concerned with the exiles: the words of this prophet are clearly addressed to those who stayed behind – the people of Judah and Jerusalem. It was in Palesti-

cond Isaian corpus, see in particular K. Kiesow, Exodustexte im Jesajabuch 1979.

9 H. M. Barstad, «Lebte Deuterojesaja in Judäa?» Vetero testamentica (1982) 77 – 87. Whereas the view that the prophet lived in Babylon seems to be the opinio communis to day, this has not always been the case. In addition to the works mentioned in my 1982 article, older scholars like M. Buttenwieser, «Where Did Deutero-Isaiah Live?» JBL 38 (1919) 94 – 112, W. H. Cobb, «Where was Isaiah 40 – 66 Written?» JBL 27 (1908) 48 – 64, J. A. Maynard, «The Home of Deutero-Isaiah», JBL 36 (1917) 213 – 24, were all in favour of a Palestinian setting of the prophet. Quite influential in America was here the commentary by C. C. Torrey, The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation, 1928 (cf. J. D. Smart, History and Theology in Second Isaiah, 1965). Also a few European scholars have been convinced by Torrey's arguments (see, for instance, U. E. Simon, A Theology of Salvation (1953) 16). An alternative view, maintaining that the prophet delivered parts of his message in Judah, has in particular been frequent among Jewish scholars (see, for instance, M. Haran, «The Literary Structure and Chronological Framework of the Prophecies in Is 40 – 48», Congress Volume Bonn 1962 (1963) 127 – 155, in particular pp. 150ff., arguing that whereas chapters 40 – 48 were composed during Second Isaiah's sojourn in Babylon, from Is 49 onwards we have utterances by the prophet after he had arrived upon his ancestral soil (cf. also by the same
ne that this great figure of the past delivered his words of comfort and promise of restoration to the Judean nation. As this different geographic setting of the prophet obviously must have consequences for how the different parts of his message should be understood, I then wanted to take a new look at the so-called «home-coming texts», or «exodus texts», in Is 40 – 55, in order to see if these texts should not be understood somewhat differently from how the major scholarly trend had understood them. On the following pages, I have put together some of my research in this area.

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author, Between RISPONOT (former Prophecies) and HADASHOT (New Prophecies) 1963, in particular pp. 83ff.
CHAPTER II

A WAY IN THE WILDERNESS. IS 40 : 3 – 5

As an adequate starting point for our investigation we shall take a closer look at the famous text Is 40 : 3 - 5 and its context:\n
1. Comfort, comfort my people,
says your god.

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10 With «context» I am referring not only to the «nearest» context of a given passage, but also to the ideological over tones provided by the whole of the message of Second Isaiah. Is 40 - 55 is made up of several, longer, meaningful compositions, and it has probably been a hindrance to scholarly work on this text that some scholars have insisted that it consists of several small, independent units. Thus, the German form critic J. Begrich was able to identify some 70 different «units» in Is 40 – 55 (Studien zu Deuterojesaja, 1938). The scholar who above all has reacted against the excesses of form criticism is J. Muilenburg (see his now classical commentary The Book of Isaiah, 1956. Cf. also B. W. Anderson, «The New Frontier of Rhetorical Criticism», Rhetorical Criticism (1974) passim). It is important, though, to be aware of the fact that it was only against the exaggerations of form criticism that Muilenburg was in revolt. As the great scholar he was, he was very well aware of the merits of form criticism in biblical research (cf. his article «Modern Issues in Biblical Studies», ET 71 (1960) 229-33). The discussion between the adherents of James Muilenburg on the one hand, and the «German School» on the other, however, brings us deep into problems concerning the composition and structure of Is 40 – 55, and cannot concern us here. I refer the reader to the wise remarks by C. Westermann in his Sprache und Struktur der Prophetie Deuterojesajas (1981), passim. In the same volume, pp. 89 - 131, one may also find the useful survey «Hauptlinien der Deuterojesajaforschung von 1964 – 1979» by A. Richter. Cf. also below n. 53.
2. Speak tenderly\textsuperscript{11} to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her bondage has come to an end, and that her sin is paid for; that she has received from the hand of Yahweh double for all her sins.\textsuperscript{12}

3. A voice cries: Prepare the way of Yahweh in the wilderness, make straight in the desert a highway for our god!\textsuperscript{13}

4. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the uneven ground shall become a plain and the mountain-ranges (?) an open valley.


\textsuperscript{12} The expression «double for all her sins» should probably not be taken literally (as done by A. Phillips, «Double for all her Sins», ZAW 94 (1982) 130 – 32). For some reason, scholars have often felt this expression a little troublesome. G. von Rad has offered a different solution to the problem in his article, הום מוכלת in Jes 40 : 2 = Equivalent?, ZAW 79 (1967) 80 – 82, where he maintains that מוכלת, similar to הסנה מוכלת in Deut 15 : 18 and Jer 16 : 18, should be understood as a legal term with the meaning «equivalent». Von Rad seems to be unaware of the fact that a similar view was taken by J. Thomas already before the turn of the century. In his article, «Double for all Her Sins», The Expositor. 5th Series. Vol. 4 (1896) 370 – 80, Thomas translates מוכלת with «sufficient» rather than with «double», based on a comparison with Job 11 : 6. The translation «equivalent» was suggested also by N. H. Snaith, Isaiah 40 – 66 (1967) 179, n. 2.

\textsuperscript{13} On this text, cf. also further below pp. 17 - 20.
5. The glory of Yahweh shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.

The meaning of the opening verses of Is 40–55 is not difficult to grasp. It is certainly no coincidence that we find this text standing at the very beginning of Second Isaiah's message. These two verses contain in essence the basic message of the prophet. In fact, there is not a single idea to be found throughout the Second Isaian corpus, that could not be subsumed under these two verses. All of the rest of Is 40–55 makes up one long poem, retelling and reformulating, again and again, with different words and with different similes, the message of 40:1–2. This message, being directed to Jerusalem (v. 2), i.e. to those who were left behind in Judah after the catastrophe, and who make up the prophet's audience not only here, but throughout the whole of Is 40–55, informs the listeners that Yahweh, the mighty god of Israel, has given the prophet the mission of preaching comfort to his people. His task is to inform them that Yahweh, their god, has forgiven them, yet he has by no means forgotten them. When the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587/86 B.C.E.15, this was the result of Yahweh wanting to punish his people for their transgressions16. But Yahweh, the god of Israel, has now forgiven his people. As the one that rules not only over Israel, but also over the world history17, Yahweh has now called upon the mighty Achaemenid Cyrus18 to conquer Babylon, and put an end to the power of the Babylonians. Following this event, the Judeans will arise from their oppressed national state, and they can now look forward to a bright and prosperous future as the chosen people of Yahweh, their god. Around this basic message, subsequently, the prophet develops his great poem of comfort and persuasion19.

14 Cf. above p. 6–7 and below n. 232.

15 Cf. n. 235 and n. 288 below.

16 Adhering to this viewpoint, Second Isaiah clearly finds himself in the same theological tradition of the election as do e.g. De-
Even if 40: 3 - 5 may, at first sight, seem to constitute a self-contained, meaningful unit within the larger context in which it is placed, we should not attempt to be too decisive about the meaning of these verses without having first taken a closer look at the context. We notice with interest that the prophet in v. 3 introduces his composition with the sentence קֵיפ על, «a voice cries». A similar rhetorical device introduces the continuation of vv. 3 - 5, vv. 6 - 8, making the compositional connection between these two units apparent:

6. A voice says (נָשָׁה קֵיפ): Cry (נָשָׁה)!  
   And I said: What shall I cry?  
   All flesh is grass,  
   and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.


17 Concerning the widespread Ancient Near Eastern belief that the gods were behind everything that happened in history, cf. B. Albrektson, History and the Gods, 1967.

18 On the Cyrus figure in Is 40 - 55, cf. also n. 57 below.

19 Cf. also the work by Gitay mentioned below n. 108. It is the merit of Gitay that he has stressed the strongly rhetorical character of the message of the prophet Second Isaiah.

20 It has been commonly recognized that יִתְחַלֶּל in Is 40: 6 cannot be translated as it is ordinarily done in the Bible; translations like «glory» or «beauty» are usual. The somewhat problematic יִתְחַלֶּל has been discussed by, among others, G. Miegge, «Autour d'une exégèse orthodoxe d'Esaïe 40 : 6», Maqqêl Shâqêdh. Hommage à Wilhelm Vischer (1960) 165 - 70, and L. J. Kuyper, «The Meaning of יִתְחַלֶּל Isa. 40 : 6», VT 13 (1963) 489 - 92. Kuyper prefers the translation «strength».
7. The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of Yahweh blows upon it.
(Surely the people is grass).

8. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our god will stand for ever\(^\text{21}\).

Whereas it may be somewhat difficult to decide anything with certainty with regard to Is 40:3–5 at first glance, the meaning and function of vv. 6b–8 are not so difficult to see. This passage clearly expresses the perishableness of all things; only the word of Yahweh is everlasting. The motif which we encounter in these verses in the message of Second Isaiah, namely that all things perish, is well known from the Hebrew Bible\(^\text{22}\). In the present context the motif serves the purpose of underlining the glory and the mighty powers of Yahweh (cf. v. 5), as well as the feebleness of the prophet's audience: the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah. The people who inhabit the captured city and her surroundings, at present laying waste in ruins\(^\text{23}\), need fear or


\(^{22}\) Cf. A. Strobel, »Vergänglichkeit\textemdash«, *BHH* 3 (1966) 2081.

\(^{23}\) The extent of the destruction of Jerusalem in relation to the extent of the population in Jerusalem and Judah after the destructions of 587/586 has been touched upon by the present writer in an article »On the History and Archaeology of Judah During the Exilic Period\textemdash«, *OLP* 19 (1988) 25–36.
despair no more (cf. vv. 1 – 2). If they put their trust, not in things human, but in the mighty hands of Yahweh, their god, their situation will soon change for the better. After endless years of misery, the time has now finally come for rejoicing:

40 : 9. Get up to the mountain top,
   you herald of good
news for Zion!
   Lift up your voice with strength,
   you herald of good news for
   Jerusalem!
   Lift it up and do not fear!
   Say to the cities of Judah:
   Here is your god!24

Here, too, the prophet introduces, in accordance with what we found in vv. 3 and 6 above, a rhetorical device in order to accentuate his message. The «herald of good news» (מesser הימל) serves the same function of dramaticizing the situation as do the «voices» of vv. 3 and 6. We have here to do with purely rhetorical devices, ultimately stemming from holy war imagery, and one should take great care not to try looking for anything «historical» in the situations which are described here25. These literary devices are important also from a compositional point of view as they connect the smaller «units» of the prophet's message together. As the different smaller units all belong within the same, greater context, they can only be fully understood when


25 At the same time, of course, the situation in which the prophet and his audience find themselves is an historical one. The message of the prophet is vacillating all the time between the concrete aim, taking into account the actual historical situation, and the poetic way of expressing this message.
viewed in the light of each other. This, of course, makes the very use of such terminology as "small units", less meaningful. The reason for the rejoicing then follows in vv. 10 – 11:

10. Here is Adonay Yahweh! He comes
with might,
and his arm rules for him (?)²⁷.
Here! His recompense is with him
and his reward before
him.

11. Like a shepherd he will tend
his flock,
with his arm he will gather
them.
He will carry the lambs in his bosom (?)
and lead the ewes (?)²⁸.

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²⁶ On the problem of "units", cf. also above n. 10 and below n. 53.


Of all the passages in Second Isaiah that have been taken as allusions to the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem through the desert, the most famous, and the one most frequently quoted, is undoubtedly Is 40:3–11. When, for example, the *New English Bible* uses the headline "News of the returning exiles" for this text, this is only in agreement with a broad scholarly consensus prior to, and following, this translation. We may here think of such scholars as M. Haller, J. Lindblom, C. R. North, A. S. Kapelrud, P. R. Ackroyd, J. L. McKenzie, C. Stuhlmueller, C. Westermann, P.-E. Bonnard, A. S. Herbert, R. F. Melugin,

29 M. Haller, *Das Judentum* (1925) 25.

30 J. Lindblom, *The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah* (1951) 101. Lindblom, on the other side, is one of the few scholars who have seen a connection between 40:1–3 and other desert descriptions in Second Isaiah, and who has rightly understood the strongly metaphorical character of these expressions (ibid. 100–101).


K. Kiesow\textsuperscript{40}, R. W. Klein\textsuperscript{41}, and R. P. Merendino\textsuperscript{42}, only to mention a few names.

The rest of chapter 40 praises the incomparability of the mighty god Yahweh\textsuperscript{43}, the feebleness of the nations\textsuperscript{44}, and the illusory power of other gods\textsuperscript{45}. All of these themes

\textsuperscript{40} K. Kiesow, \textit{Exodustexte im Jesajabuch} (1979) 160 and passim.

\textsuperscript{41} R. W. Klein, \textit{Israel in Exile} (1979) 98.


\textsuperscript{45} The Götterpolemik, which plays such an important role in the message of Second Isaiah, was earlier almost unanimously assumed to be a late addition to Is 40 – 55. In more recent times, however, scholars have maintained that the idol passages are genuine (cf. i. a. E. Niels, «Deuterojesaja. Erwägungen zur Formkritik, Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte», \textit{VT} 20 (1970) 202 – 03, D. H. Odendaal, \textit{The Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40 – 66} (1970) 98 – 100, M. I. Gruber, «The Motherhood of God in Second
play important roles in the message of Second Isaiah, and together with such imagery as that of holy war\textsuperscript{46}, and the shepherd motif\textsuperscript{47} of vv. 10 – 11 (which I have just quoted), they serve the purpose of making the people of Jerusalem and Judah, despite all their misery, trust Yahweh to be their god and believe that he is not only willing, but also able to help them and turn their desperate hopes for national liberty and restoration into reality.

Above\textsuperscript{48}, I have touched upon the problem of metaphorical language in Is 40 – 55. One typical example of such metaphorical language is Is 40 : 3 – 4:

3. A voice cries:
   Prepare the way of Yahweh
   in the wilderness,
   make straight in the desert a
   highway for our god!


\textsuperscript{46} The phenomenon of «holy war» is treated in some detail below, pp. 75ff.

\textsuperscript{47} Further on the «shepherd motif», see below, n. 206.

\textsuperscript{48} Cf. in particular pp. 3ff.
4. Every valley shall be lifted up,
    and every mountain and hill
shall be made low,
    and the uneven ground shall become a
plain,
    and the mountain-ranges (?) an open
valley.

We have already noticed that the context of this pericope contains utterances of a general homiletic/didactic/persuasive nature, aiming at convincing the prophet's audience of the mighty powers of their god Yahweh. I believe, however, that it is completely wrong to interpret vv. 3 – 4 and their context as a reference to the homecoming of the exiles of Babylon through the desert back to Judah. When scholars have done so 49, this is the result of different factors. Firstly, there is the unfortunate belief in the Babylonian setting of the prophet50, which has, among other things, led to an interpretation of 40 : 3 similar to what we should have expected in the days of 'Pan-Babylonianism'; namely that the phraseology and ideology of the prophet in 40 : 3 are modelled on the Babylonian Prozessionsstrassen51. Sec-

49 A few references are given above in notes 29 – 42. A rare exception to the scholarly consensus is represented by R. Kilian, "Baut eine Strasse für unseren Gott! Überlegungen zu Jes 40 : 3 – 5", Kinder des Wortes (1982) 53 – 60. This scholar opposes the commonly accepted view that Is 40 : 3 – 5 has anything to do with the return of the exiles through the desert. Kilian reaches his conclusion, however, by assuming that Is 40 : 1 – 8 is a later addition to the Second Isaian corpus. Worth mentioning is also another article in the same volume: E. Haag, "Der Weg zum Baum des Lebens", Kinder des Wortes (1982) 35 – 52, who suspects influence from Gen 1 - 3 in Is 40 : 3 and other related texts in the Book of Isaiah. In this, he is probably right. We note with interest that J. Day, in his book God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea (1985) 54 - 56, has stressed influence from Gen 1 also in the continuation of the text in question, Is 40 : 13 – 14, polemizing against an assumed Babylonian influence in this text.

50 Cf. above p. 6 - 7.

51 E. g. P. Volz, Jesaja II (1932) 3 – 4, with references to some of the older literature. More recently, one may compare e. g. U. E. Simon, A Theology of Salvation (1953) 39 and C. Westermann,
ondly, the majority of the scholars have failed to interpret the passage 40 : 3 – 4 in the light of its context. If they had done so, they would have realized, among other things, that such matters as «exiles» and «homecoming» do not play an overwhelmingly important role in the prophet's message. The message of this prophet is really very simple: Again and again he is trying to persuade his audience that Yahweh has forgiven them, and that they must put their trust in him as their god. If they do this, the nation will prosper again, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah shall raise from the wretched state in which they now find themselves. Within the context of national restoration there belongs also the return to Zion of Judeans from abroad. This event, however, comprises the return of exiles not only from Babylon, but from the whole of the diaspora52.

_Das Buch Jesaja Kapitel 40 – 66 (1970) 34 – 35. Cf. also in general: G. Furlani, «Sul significato delle strade processionali dell'Asia occidentale antica», _Aeg_ 22 (1942) 85 – 99. Not all the commentators, however, believe in influence from the Babylonian processional roads. S. Smith, _Isaiah Chapters 40 – 55_ (1944) 65, prefers to think of Persian military roads. Others, like J. Morgenstern, _The Message of Deutero-Isaiah in its sequential Unfolding_ (1961) 15, simply thinks of a «highway through the desert» along which the exiles were to travel back to their homeland. A theory slightly different from that of the religious processional roads, or roads built for military purposes, was put forward by S. Garofalo, «Preparare la strada al Signore», _RivBib_ 6 (1958) 131 – 34, who believes that the background is to be found in the Ancient Near Eastern roads that were built to receive royalty and people of consequence. The problem of «Babylonian influence» on Is 40 – 55 in general is treated by me in an article «On the So-Called Babylonian Literary Influence in Second Isaiah», _JOT_ 2 (1987) 90 – 110.

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52 The notion that the people shall return to their home country was particularly popular in exilic times. This motif has been treated i. a. by S. Böhmer, _Heimkehr und Neuer Bund_, 1976, and E. A. Martens, _Motivations for the Promise of Israel's Restoration to the Land in Jeremiah and Ezekiel_, 1972. It is interesting that this phenomenon is found also in Akkadian texts: G. Widengren, «The Gathering of the Dispersed», _SEA_ 41 – 42 (1976-77) 224 – 34. In addition to the Akkadian texts, Widengren also mentions the biblical texts Is 11 : 12, 49 : 5 – 6, 56 : 8, Ez 39 : 27, Mi 2 : 12, 4 : 6. On Zion, see below n. 177. Cf. also n. 121 and n. 175 below.
The return from the diaspora, again, constitutes only a part of the total restoration, which includes full political and religious restoration, victory over Yahweh's enemies, etc.

The language of Is 40:3–4 is through and through metaphorical. As so many of the metaphorical passages in Second Isaiah dealing with wilderness and desert, also 40:3–4 should be regarded as poetical allusions to Yahweh's encroachment upon the course of history, resulting in a new and blossoming future for the Judean nation. On the following pages I intend to take a closer look at the so-called «exodus texts» of Is 40–55, in order to see how they should be understood. Among the questions we shall have to ask ourselves are: Is the «exodus motif» as important as some scholars seem to believe? If it is, what does the prophetic use of this biblical motif mean? Does the use of this motif, if it is really found, refer to the home-coming of the Judeans through the desert from Babylon, or does it refer to something else? And if it does refer to something else, is it then appropriate to refer to this assumed motif by such terminology as «new exodus»?

53 Cf. above notes 5–6. In addition to the problems connected with a strongly metaphorical and artistic language, there are also the problems connected with the very character of the texts themselves. Being, in fact, poems of a very high quality, these texts do not at all operate along the same lines as prosa texts. Thus, a typical characteristic of Second Isaiah's way of expressing himself is his ability to move in several different levels or spheres of meaning at the same time. This problem was felt by G. Pfeifer, who attempted to describe the differences between the prophets Amos and Second Isaiah in the following way: "Will man graphische Vorstellungen zu Hilfe nehmen, so kann man Amos' Denken als linear, das Deuterojesajas als spiralförmig deuten—(Amos und Deuterojesaja denkformenanalytisch verglichen, ZAW 93 (1981) 443). The phenomenon is better described by the Norwegian historian of literature J. Børtnes, who shows how the message of a written poetical work of art is more to be likened to the message e. g. of a painting, than with that of a written document; it is «spatial» rather than «linear» (cf. J. Børtnes, «Om lineæritet og spatialitet», Episke problemer (1980) 111–60). Obviously, this makes all talk about «literary unities» very problematic.
CHAPTER III

WATER IN THE DESERT. IS 41:17-20

One further text, commonly referred to by scholars as an «exodus text», is Is 41:17 - 20:

17. The wretched and the poor seek water, and there is none. Their tongues are parched by thirst. I, Yahweh, will answer them, (being) god of Israel, I shall not abandon them.

18. I will open rivers on bare heights and springs in the valleys. I will turn wilderness into marsh-land and dry land into springs of water.

19. I will put cedar, acacia, and myrtle, and olive in the wilderness. I will set cypress, plane and pine together in the desert;

20. so that they will see and know, observe and understand, that the hand of Yahweh has done this, and the holy one of Israel has created it.
Again, it is essential to take into consideration the context of the passage which we have just quoted. Chapter 41 consists of a mixture of words against the nations\textsuperscript{54}, and words of salvation for Judah\textsuperscript{55}. The words against the nations are

\textsuperscript{54} The words against the nations play an important role in the message of Second Isaiah. Contrary to what some scholars have maintained, the prophet can hardly be referred to as a universalist, or an internationalist, in the sense that he includes also the foreign nations into Yahweh’s saving history. Rather, he does include them, but only in a negative sense: salvation for Israel signifies at the same time doom and disaster for the foreign nations. Throughout the whole of of Second Isaiah’s message there is a strong nationalist bias. Those scholars who have seen this prophet as a missionary, comprising the whole world in his message, have misunderstood the basic contents of Is 40-55. Typical foreign nation texts in Second Isaiah are 41:11-16 and 49:22-26, both of them characteristically enough appearing in close connection with words of salvation for Israel. The texts that have caused the most headache to interpreters of Second Isaiah regarding the problem of universalism versus nationalism, are those texts which proclaim that Israel shall be «a light to the nations», that Yahweh’s salvation shall reach the «end of the earth», etc. I am here, of course, referring to the texts 42:1-7, 49:1-6, and 51:4-5. What all of these texts state, however, is that Israel’s salvation shall reach the end of the earth, and that the nations shall be enlightened and realize how it is. Obviously, this problem is too complicated for a thorough discussion in a footnote of a work on a totally different topic, and I will leave the problem of the nations here. Cf., however, also above n. 44.

\textsuperscript{55} Words of salvation for Israel play a major role in the message of the prophet Second Isaiah and have, of course, been commented upon by many scholars, in particular after the influential, now classical, article by J. Begrich, «Das priesterliche Heilsorakel», 
\textit{ZAW} 11 (1934) 81 – 92. The identification by Begrich of the genre (\textit{Gattung}) of the word (oracle) of salvation with the «Priestly oracle of salvation» was recently attacked by E. W. Conrad, «Second Isaiah and the Priestly Oracle of Salvation», 
\textit{ZAW} 93 (1981) 234 – 35. The views of Begrich, however, are still shared by many scholars. Thirty years after the publication of Begrich’s article, C. Westermann attempted to distinguish between two different, separate genres within the salvation oracle («Das Heilswort bei Deuterojesaja», 
\textit{EvTh} 24 (1964) 355 – 73), the genre of the \textit{Heilszusage} and the genre of the \textit{Heilsankündigung}. P. B. Harner, «The Salvation Oracle in Second Isaiah» 
\textit{JBL} 88 (1969) 418 – 34, lends support to
found in vv. 1–7, 11–16, and 21–29. The passages vv. 1–7 and 21–29 are very similar from a compositional point of view, both of them consisting of so-called trial speeches, references to Cyrus as an instrument in the hands of Yahweh for destroying the enemies of Judah and words...

Begrich, but goes against the views of Westermann. Altogether, it may seem that Westermann's thesis has not had many adherents. A scholar like H. E. von Waldow, for instance, who has engaged himself in these questions, is very critical towards Westermann's views (The Message of Deutero-Isaiah, Int 22 (1968) 267). Also scholars writing in German have expressed themselves critical of this identification of yet another Gattung. See e.g. J. Schüpphaus, Stellung und Funktion der sogenannten Heilsankündigung bei Deuterojesaja, ThZ 27 (1971) 161–81. Cf. also the work by A. Schoors mentioned in n. 56 below, pp. 32–46. It would lead too far, in this connection, to go any further into this discussion. Two general works on salvation in Second Isaiah from a more theological point of view could be mentioned: J. Kahmann, Die Heilszukunft in ihrer Beziehung zur Heilsgeschichte nach Is 40–55, Bib 32 (1951) 65–89 and 141–72, and P. H. Plamondon, Sur le chemin du salut avec le IIe Isaïe, NRTb 104 (1982) 241–66, the latter being particularly concerned with the use of וָק in Is 40–55.


against the worthless idols\textsuperscript{58}. Vv. 11 – 16 depict how Judah is going to wipe out from the face of the earth all her enemies. These verses form a part of the larger unit, vv. 8 – 16, consisting of a «word of salvation» for Judah\textsuperscript{59}, where we, among other things, may read how Israel has been chosen by Yahweh as his servant\textsuperscript{60}, and how this divine election\textsuperscript{61}, according to the words of Yahweh through the prophet, guarantees the safe future of the Israelite people. Following this word of salvation, there appears the description by the prophet, which I have quoted above, of how the desert is going to turn into fertile land.

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\textsuperscript{58} On the words against the idols in Second Isaiah, cf. above n. 45.


\textsuperscript{60} The passage Is 41 : 8 – 10, incidentally, is one prime example of a «servant text» that clearly makes it impossible to isolate the so-called four «servant songs» of Bernhard Duhm (Is 42 : 1 – 4, 49 : 1 – 6, 50 : 4 – 9, and 52 : 13 – 53 : 12) from the rest of the Second Isaiah corpus, and treat them as a separate entity (cf. below n. 86).

\textsuperscript{61} As already mentioned (above n. 16), the election plays an extremely important role in the message of Second Isaiah. Further on this, cf. below n. 87 and n. 225.
From a compositional point of view, vv. 17 - 20 may seem to stand out somewhat from the context. In particular the verses that describe the turning of the desert into water, vv. 18ff., may give the reader the impression of having more the character of supplementing the composition in which they appear, than of forming an inherent part of that composition. In many respects the verses 17 - 20 remind us of the hymnic passages which we may sometimes find in the prophetic writings. That we here, nevertheless, have to do with a well planned composition, may be seen by the fact that these -hymnic- statements follow immediately after the -I- used of Yahweh, thus forming a close relationship to the so-called -self predication- formulas, found in Is 40 - 55. Functioning as a kind of hymnic complement, the unit 41 : 17 - 20 fits the context perfectly. These verses may belong to the -original- text, or they may stem from the hands of a later editor or author. This, however, we shall probably never be able to know for certain, and as long as we


64 We are here touching upon the difficult problem of the composition of the Deutero-Isaian corpus, a problem which cannot, of course, be treated in any detail here. Obviously, this problem concerns the whole Deutero-Isaian thesis (cf. above notes 1 - 2).

65 Thus, I cannot share confidently the belief of e. g. R. P. Merendino in the possibility of identifying genuine Second Isaiah words and separate those words from the words of later editors of the text (see in particular his book: *Der Erste und der Letzte*, 1981). I have objections to Merendino's methodological approach, but must refrain from going into details here.
have no proof to the contrary, the soundest thing to do from a methodological point of view seems to be to regard the text as originally belonging within the present composition. This assumption has some support in the fact that we have similar texts in Second Isaiah which seem to fit the context much better than here.\(^{66}\) The passage 41:17–20, consequently, should, from a compositional point of view, be regarded as a supplement to the words of salvation to Judah, vv. 8–16.

Having taken a closer look at the passage Is 41:17–20, as well as at its closest context, the question we shall now have to ask ourselves is whether there is any justification in the claim that we have in this text an "exodus motif" and reference to the homecoming of the exiles from Babylon through the desert? I should most vehemently object to both of these commonly held assumptions, and in what follows, I intend to state in more detail my reasons for doing so.

As we have just seen, we find in the context of Is 41:17–20 nothing that may lead our thoughts to the exodus traditions of ancient Israel. The words of salvation preceding vv. 17–20, vv. 8–16, are of a very general character and do not move beyond the mere stating of the fact that Judah is Yahweh’s chosen people, and that he, using his mighty powers, will help them to conquer their enemies. These ideas are well known to us from many passages in Is 40–55.\(^{67}\) The description concerns the general restoration of the Judean people. We have no allusions whatsoever in the text to the exodus, nor to the exiles, nor to any going out from Babylon.

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\(^{66}\) Cf. below pp. 66ff.

\(^{67}\) On the relationship to the nations in Is 40–55, cf. above n. 44 and n. 54.

\(^{68}\) In 41:8, however, we have a reference to the calling of Abraham. This represents yet another illustrating example of how Second Isaiah uses freely from the whole arsenal of the ancient Israelite traditions (concerning this prophet’s use of Israelite traditions, cf. also e.g. notes 49, 112, 174, 255 of the present work).
Is 41:17–19 is, as we may see from the text quoted above, mainly concerned with the metaphors of thirst and water, and of turning the arid desert into fertile land. Again, this variation of the phenomenon of the "hymnic self praise" of Yahweh has nothing to do with any "exodus motif", but serves, as we may see from v. 20, the purpose of convincing the prophet’s audience. Perhaps a better term for this kind of text would be "hymnic theophany". In fact, the motif of turning the desert into fertile land is well known from the biblical tradition. The probably best preserved example of this motif outside Is 40–55 is found in Ps 107.

In vv. 33–35 of this text, a thanksgiving psalm to Yahweh for all his great deeds towards the distressed (in other words a situation quite similar to the one we find in Is 41), we read:

33. He makes rivers into wilderness,
    and water springs into dry ground,
34. fertile land into salty land,
    because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.
35. He makes the wilderness into marsh-land,
    and dry land into springs of water.

69 The assumption by H. – J. Kraus (Psalmen 2 (1966) 740–41), that vv. 33–43 of Ps 107 reflect the post-exilic community and the preaching of Second Isaiah, must be regarded as a reminiscence of the previously commonly held view that the biblical psalms were written i. a. as a result of influence from the prophet and not, as it has been seen correctly by many scholars, that Second Isaiah in his "writings" (on "written" versus "oral" in this prophet cf. further below n. 108) was influenced by the ancient Israelite traditions, among them also the Psalms (on the relationship of Is 40–55 to the psalms, see also below n. 255).

70 Cf. also the rest of the text of Ps 107.
The important thing about the verses which we have just quoted from Ps 107, as well as about their context, is that they clearly seem to refer to Yahweh's providence in general, and not to any specific event. Consequently, the text of Ps 107 can hardly be linked to any 'exodus tradition'. Ps 107: 33 – 35 should not primarily be taken as referring to Yahweh as responsible for the water so necessary for fertility, but rather as a metaphor of Yahweh being responsible for the well-being of man in general, and with the power of withdrawing the blessing from man and his land when he has failed to behave according to the laws of Yahweh. Thus, one cannot fail to see the many similarities between the text of Ps 107: 33 – 35 and Is 40: 17 – 18, also beyond obvious similarities in style and language.

In another text, Ps 74: 13 – 15, we find that the 'water motif' intermingles with the motif of the dividing of the sea and the killing of Leviathan, reminiscences of the primeval creation fight. The creation act is here seen as an act of salvation (cf. v. 12):

13. You stirred up the sea with your might,
you smashed the heads of
the dragons in the waters.

14. You crushed the heads of
Leviathan
and made food of him
for the sea beasts (?)

15. You cleaved open spring
and torrent,
you dried up ever-flowing streams.\(^{72}\)

What we have before us here are reminiscences of an ancient mythological description of the creation of the world (cf. further vv. 16 – 17). From the way the water motif is being used in v. 15, we may assume that the particular use of this motif which we find in Ps 107 : 33 – 35 and in Is 41 : 17 – 18 originally goes back to ancient Canaanite creation mythology\(^{73}\). It is certainly no coincidence that these motifs in Ps 74 : 13 – 15 appear in a national lament. By referring to the mighty deeds of Yahweh in the past, the psalmist wants to prevail upon Yahweh once more to come to the rescue of his people. In the same manner, Ps 74 also refers to the covenant\(^{74}\) of Yahweh with his people (cf. vv. 2 and 20). One may further compare the expression «the wretched and the poor» in Is 41 : 17 with the occurrence of the same expression in Ps 74 : 21. It is also worth noticing that we in Ps 74 find no trace whatsoever of any reference to the exodus event.

Another, quite interesting text in our connection is Ps 114, where we find a combination of different «water motifs»:

1. When Israel left
   Egypt,
   the house of Jacob a people
   of strange language (?),

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\(^{73}\) Cf. above n. 71.

2. Judah became his holy one,
   Israel his dominion.

3. The sea saw (it) and fled,
   Jordan turned back.

4. The mountains skipped like rams,
   the hills like lambs.

5. Why was it, you sea, that you fled;
   Jordan that you turned back?

6. That the mountains skipped like rams,
   hills like lambs?

7. Before the face
   of מִשְׁכָּן 75,
   tremble, earth! Before the face
   of the god of Jacob!

8. Who turned the rock into a marsh of water,
   the hard cliff into springs of water.

In this old psalm we find three different "water motifs" represented. Firstly, there is the reference to the events related in Ex 15; the passing through the Red Sea/Jordan. In the present context, this motif has developed further into mythological descriptions of creation and the primeval sea. Finally, we find in v. 8 the motif of turning rock into water. The description here is an allusion to the story of Moses and the rock, found in Ex 17:6 and Num 20:11, but the function is that of a divine epithet. As such, the allusion constitutes a fertility/abundance/prosperity motif, of the same kind as the similar descriptions in Is 41 and Ps 74, quoted

75 This, incidentally, is the only occurrence in the Hebrew Bible where מִשְׁכָּן is used as a personal name for the god of Israel.
above. As it now stands, the whole of Ps 114 is to be regarded as a description of Yahweh's theophany. 76

Another very interesting text is Ps 104. In this old 77 hymn to Yahweh the creator, we may read in vv. 5 – 13:

5. You set the earth upon its
   foundation,
   so that it should never ever be
   shaken.

6. The deep you covered
   as with a garment,
   above the mountain the waters
   stood.

7. From your threat they fled,
   from the sound of your thunder
   they took to flight.

8. The mountains went up, the valleys
   went down,
   to the place that you had
   set for them.

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76 Concerning the dating of this psalm, cf. J. Jeremias, Theophanie (1965) p. 96 and passim. A few words should be said, however, concerning the attempt to date the psalms in the Hebrew Bible. In the present context, I have repeatedly referred to several psalms as «old». This does not imply, however, that these psalms in their present form go back before exilic times. There can be little doubt, though, that many of the basic elements that we find in these psalms must be very old, going back at least to the middle of the second millennium B. C. E. It is not least thanks to Ugaritic studies, that scholarship has made some real progress in this very area (cf. P. C. Craigie, «Ugarit and the Bible», Ugarit in Retrospect (1981) 109 – 111). Relevant to the dating problem is also the balanced review by P. D. Miller, Interpreting the Psalms (1986) 11 – 13 and passim.

9. You set a limit, so that
they should not pass over,
so that they should not return and
cover the earth.

10. You sent forth springs
in the water-courses,
they run among the mountains.

11. They give drink to every beast of
the field,
the wild asses quench their
thirst.

12. Beside them the birds of heaven
dwell,
from among the branches they sing.

13. You water the mountains
from your high above,
from the fruit of your work, the earth is
satisfied.

Again we have here a combination of several "water motifs". Basically, the verses of the hymn which we have quoted above are related to Yahweh's creation of the world. The description of the primeval creation motif in vv. 5 – 9 are followed by the reference to the "springs in the valley", an expression not unlike the one we find in Second Isaiah. Here, the motif stands as an introduction to Yahweh as the provider of the life bringing rain that waters fields and animals. Again, we have no reference whatsoever to any "exodus motif".

In another text in Second Isaiah, Is 43 : 1978, the particular motif of making roads in the desert, partly dealt with above79, is combined with the motif of making streams in the wilderness. In this very illustrative text, these motifs, again, are combined with the well known Second Isaian phraseol-


79 See pp. 8ff, 17 - 20 and also below pp. 38, 47, 62, 109 - 110, and n. 115.
ogy of making new things\textsuperscript{80}, clearly indicating that the metaphorical use of the roads and the streams in the wilderness is giving expression to the new prosperity of Judah, following the intervention and action of Yahweh. All of these different metaphorical allusions, consequently, are nothing but poetical variations of the same basic theme of the restoring of the nation and the bright and prosperous future of the Judeans. They are, in fact, creation texts, bearing witness to the creation of the new nation; the new Judah! Thus, we may read in Is 43: 18 – 21:

18. Remember not the past things, nor consider the things of long ago.

19. See, I am doing a new thing. Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will certainly make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.

20. Wild beasts will honour me\textsuperscript{81}, jackals and ostriches. For I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, for my chosen\textsuperscript{82} people to drink,

21. the people whom I formed\textsuperscript{83} for myself, that they might declare my praise.

\textsuperscript{80} Cf. below n. 233.

\textsuperscript{81} For the motif that all nature participates in the praise of the mighty god Yahweh, cf. also Is 42: 10 – 12, 44: 23, 49: 13, 55: 12 (cf. also Is 35: 1 – 2). This motif, too, occurs frequently in the Psalms (cf. e. g. Pss 96: 12 and 98: 8).

\textsuperscript{82} Cf. n. 16 above and n. 87 and n. 225 below.

\textsuperscript{83} Cf. also below n. 224.
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Very similar to Is 41: 17 – 20 is also the passage 44: 1 – 4. So, this passage, too, has been regarded by several scholars as still another one of the so-called -exodus texts- of Second Isaiah:

1. Now hear, Jacob, my servant, Israel whom I have chosen.

2. Thus says Yahweh, your maker, who formed you from the womb, your helper:
Fear not84, my servant Jacob, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

3. For I will pour out water on thirsty land and streams upon thirsty ground. I will pour out my spirit on your offspring, my blessing on your descendants.

4. They shall grow up amid85 the grass, like poplars (?) by flowing streams.

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85 Rather than to take the word ḫyw to be the preposition, J. M. Allegro here prefers the translation: -And they shall spring up as the green ben tree, as willows by the watercourses- (The Meaning of ת in Isaiah 44: 4, ZAW 63 (1951) 154 – 56). The real problem here is that ע is corrupt in the first place, and it is somewhat uncertain how this text should be read.
In this text, as in Is 41 : 17 – 20 quoted above, we notice how the motifs of water and dry land follow the statement that Israel is Yahweh's servant\textsuperscript{86}, his chosen people, that may now look forward to a brighter future\textsuperscript{87}. Again we ha-

\textsuperscript{86} No problem of biblical theology has taken up so much scholarly time and effort as the problem of 'Yahweh's servant' in Is 40 – 55. Ever since B. Duhm (cf. Das Buch Jesaja, 1922) separated the passages Is 42 : 1 – 4, 49 : 1 – 6, 50 : 4 – 9, and 52 : 13 – 53 : 12 as later additions to the Second Isaiah corpus, and placed these texts in a separate group, there has been no end to the discussion concerning the so-called 'servant songs'. Obviously, this complex problem cannot be treated here. The classical history of research of the so-called 'servant songs' is C. R. North, The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah, 1948. For the period before Duhm, North's work should be supplemented with the dissertation of E. Ruprecht, Die Auslegungsgeschichte zu den sogenannten Gottesknechtliedern... bis zu Bernhard Duhm, 1972. Rich in information is also V. de Leeuw, De Ebed Jahwe-profetieën. 1956. Cf. also the survey by H. Haag, «Ebed-Jahwe-Forschung, 1948-1958», BZ 3 (1959) 174 – 204. References to the most recent debate are found in the survey by A. Richter in C. Westermann, Sprache und Struktur der Prophetie Deuterojesajas (1981) 102 – 04. The present writer does not at all believe in the thesis of the so-called 'servant songs', but believes rather that all the texts in Is 40 – 55 which has the expression 'servant of Yahweh', like, for instance, the passage Is 44 : 1 – 4 quoted above, should be treated in a similar way (cf. H. M. Barstad, «Tjenersangene hos Deuterojesaja», NTT 83 (1982) 235 – 44). Most recently, a similar view has been advocated by T. N. D. Mettinger, A Farewell to the Servant Songs, 1983. Unfortunately, the scholarly world seems at present unwilling to listen to Mettinger's arguments (cf. e.g. H. J. Hermisson, «Voreiliger Abschied von den Gottesknechtliedern», ThBR 49 (1984) 209 – 22. There are, however, a few exceptions in this case, and in a few years time I believe that all this will change (among the notable exceptions to the traditional view one should note H. M. Orlinsky, «The So-Called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah», Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah (1967) 1 – 133). The best treatment of the 'servant motif' in the Hebrew Bible is probably still C. Lindhagen, The Servant Motif in the Old Testament, 1950.

\textsuperscript{87} Again we are being presented to the essential message of Second Isaiah: the restoring of the Judean nation and the bright future of the people. Again we notice the important role that the election motif plays in the prophet's theology. The election forms one
WATER IN THE DESERT

Ve no reference to any "exodus motif". Also, the "water motif" of this text has fairly little to do with "water". As we may well see from v. 3, the water motif is used metaphorically for what is going to happen to the Israelites. The text which we have just quoted gives us a good indication of the prophet's use of language. The language here is purely metaphorical, "thirsty land" and "dry ground" being references to the Israelite people. As the "servant of Yahweh", chosen by him a very long time ago, they may now forget all their troubles. The next generations will not be like them, living among ruins, bereaved of their national independence. Instead, they "shall grow up amid the grass, like poplars by flowing streams". Again we have a salvation oracle 88 to the people of Jerusalem and Judah, a word of comfort to the city of Jerusalem and her inhabitants, suffering from the humiliation of being deprived of their national independence, their religious, cultural and economic existence.

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88 On this genre in Second Isaiah cf. above n. 55.
CHAPTER IV

THE LEADING OF THE BLIND (YAHWEH AS SHEPHERD). IS 42 : 14 - 16

Above, we have treated in some detail the passage Is 41 : 17 - 20. The discussion arrived at the conclusion that the use of the «water motif» in this text is purely metaphorical, and serves the function of informing the people of Judah and Jerusalem of their prosperous future following Yahweh's intervention. The text, consequently, has fairly little to do with any «new exodus». We find motifs similar to the ones in 41 : 17 – 20 also in another text in the Second Isaian corpus: Is 42 : 14 – 16. No wonder scholars have tried to link also this text with «the new exodus» and the return from exile89. The passage Is 42 : 14 – 16, too, appears in the context of one of the so-called «servant of Yahweh» texts90:

14. I kept quiet for a long
time,
I was silent and I restrained
myself.
Like a woman in labour
I cry,
I gasp, and I pant together.

89 A modification of a commonly held scholarly view in this area is provided by the sound reaction of E. Beauchamp, «Chant nouveau du retour» (Is 42 : 10 – 17). Un monstre de l'exégèse moderne, RevSR 56 (1982) 145 – 58. Beauchamp opposes the assumption that there is any connection between vv. 10 – 12 and vv. 13 – 17.

90 Cf. above, n. 86.

91 For the water motif in connection with fertility, cf. also above pp. 27ff.
15. I will lay waste mountains and
hills,
and all their herbage I will dry up.
I will turn rivers into islands
and I will dry up the marshes.

16. I will lead the blind
on a road which they do not know,
in paths that they do not
know,
I will guide them.
I will turn the darkness before
them into light
and uneven fields into a
plain.
These are the things I will do,
and I will not forsake them.

In the text which we have just quoted, we find several of the different motifs that scholars have referred to as "exodus motifs" in Isaiah 40 – 55. In addition to the water/fertility motif, we also find the motif of turning rough places into level ground, the leading of the blind, as well as the motifs of darkness and light. In the present text, all of


these motifs serve the function of giving literary/poetical expression to negative and positive ideas in life. They should, consequently, all be treated in the same way.

Again, it should be made quite clear that we are dealing with *metaphors*, and not with the description of actual events. The purpose of these descriptions of negative and positive forms is once more to provide illustrations for the prophet's audience relating to their present unfortunate situation, as contrasted to their future national restoration. Again, we have no indications whatsoever in the text itself that the prophet is here thinking of, or referring to, a return of exiles from Babylon through the desert back to Jerusalem.

The very context of the passage Is 42:14–17 gives us a good indication as for how the text should be understood. Chapter 42 starts with a series of words of assurance to the Judeans that they are the chosen people, and that no harm will come to them in the future. After the hymnic requests in vv. 10–12, that the whole world shall take part in the singing of praise to Yahweh, and the introduction of Yahweh as a warrior, setting out to conquer his enemies (in v. 13), there follows the passage vv. 14–17, which we have quoted above. The contents of this passage are made up by a combination of words of salvation for Judah and words of doom against the enemies of Judah and Yahweh, i.e. the foreign nations. The rest of chapter 42, vv. 18–25, conta-

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95 Cf. above notes 5–6 and 53.

96 This interpretation is based upon my view of the «servant songs», in part presented above n. 86.

97 Cf. also below notes 125, 213–215, 221.

98 On the salvation oracle in Is 40–55, cf. also above n. 55.

99 On the foreign nations, cf. also above notes 44 and 54.
ins a mixture of words concerning the Judeans; how they have failed to realize that their present situation should be regarded as punishment from Yahweh for their past sins, and that Yahweh, who was able to bring about the disaster, is also able to undo it. In what follows, I intend to take a closer look at some of the details of the passage 42:14–17.

Vv. 14–15 are basically words against the nations, even though the foreign nations are not mentioned specifically in the text. We notice in these verses, among other things, the contrast of the sentence «I will turn rivers into islands, and I will dry up the marshes», to a passage like, for instance, 41:18–19, quoted above100, whereas the forthcoming salvation of the Judeans is depicted through the metaphor of «opening rivers on bare heights and springs in the middle of the valleys» and the «turning of wilderness into marshland and dry land into springs of water», the destruction of the enemies of Judah is being described by the very opposite metaphor: the taking away of water and fertility and the drying up of the wet land. Also the words against the idols in 42:17 should be seen as a word against the nations and be regarded as closely connected with vv. 14–15101.

In v. 16 we meet with the famous words of the leading of the blind. As one may see, «the blind» takes up much space in the whole of chapter 42. Everywhere it appears, it functions as a metaphorical allusion to the Judeans who are unable to realize that the punishment has now come to an end, and that their suffering has only been temporary. The punishment followed as an inevitable result of their evil deeds of the past. Now, the prophet's audience is unable to realize, or to put trust in, the mighty powers of Yahweh, nor do they acknowledge the fact that everything that happens in history only forms a part of his great saving plan for his chosen people.

Thus, we may find the motif of the blind people also in 42:7102, where we may read about the servant of Yahweh103

100 P. 21.
101 On the words against the idols, cf. above n. 45.
102 That this and related phraseology formed a regular part of the prophet's rhetorical vocabulary may be seen also from Is 43:
that his task is to open blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. What is being meant by this passage is that the prophet's audience, i.e. the people of Jerusalem/Judah, has been chosen by Yahweh for the special task of restoring the nation from their present, miserable condition into what is going to be the new Judah. They serve as the basis of Yahweh's new and wonderful election. Through them, Israel shall once more prosper and become a great and powerful nation. Their present state, however, may appear hopeless. On the one side, they are blind and do not realize what is going to happen to them. On the other, they are presently in prison, that is; they are not a free nation, but suffering under the Babylonian yoke. The image of the prison should at the same time be understood as concrete and as not concrete. The simile concerns the situation in Babylon, but even more it concerns the situation in Judah. Again, the metaphors of blindness and prison are used for the very situation in which the Judean people find themselves. These images, however, have fairly little to do with any 'exodus' from Babylon, or with Judean exiles residing there. Or rather: they bear upon the exiled Judeans only in an indirect manner. Obviously, the return of exiles, not only from Babylon, but from all the places of the diaspora, forms a part of the future restoration plans of Yahweh. In the present context, however, the situation depicted concerns primarily the people of Jerusalem and Judah.

8, where a similar motif appears. A related expression is found also in Is 42:20 (cf. also Is 48:8 where a similar image is applied), where the motif of deafness is used in the same manner. In addition to the passages outside the Second Isaian corpus referred to further below, cf. also Is 56:10.

103 In the view of the present writer, the so-called 'servant of Yahweh' in Is 40 – 55 is a designation for the Judean people, or, more precisely, those of the Judeans who were still living in Jerusalem after the catastrophe of 587/586 B. C. E., i.e. the prophet's own audience. Cf. further above n. 86.

104 Cf. also below n. 143.

105 See above pp. 19 - 20 and below pp. 51, 63, 73.
Further, we find the metaphor of the blind (and the deaf) also in the verses following immediately after the passage 42 : 14 – 17, vv. 18 – 20. Here, too, the servant, i. e. the people of Judah\textsuperscript{106}, is described as blind in the sense that he does not understand the salvation history of Yahweh, his god. The people are unaware of the fact that their present situation, according to the prophet, is brought about by their former sins. Also, they are unable to understand the message which the prophet conveys to them, namely that Yahweh has forgiven his people, and that he is now going to change everything for them and make everything new\textsuperscript{107}. The people of Jerusalem and Judah are in doubt, in serious doubt. And who can blame them for that? When looking around, they could certainly not see too many bright spots on the horizon. And this is exactly the reason why so much of the text of Is 40 – 55 is taken up by arguments aiming at convincing the prophet’s audience that his message is trustworthy and should be paid attention to, and that Yahweh, their god, is not only willing, but also able to help them\textsuperscript{108}. There are many instances in the message of the prophet Second Isaiah where this circumstance is being stressed. In fact, this is basically what the message of the prophet is all about. One typical text would be Is 42 : 23 – 25, a series of rhetorical questions following immediately after the passage of the leading of the blind, Is 42 : 14 – 16:

23. Who among you will hear this?
(Who) will pay attention and listen in the time to come?

24. Who gave Jacob to the spoiler,
and Israel to the plunderers?
Was it not Yahweh? We had

\textsuperscript{106} Cf. above n. 86.

\textsuperscript{107} Cf. below n. 233.

sinned against him.
They refused to walk in his ways,
and they did not listen to his law.

25. So he poured upon him the heat of his anger and the fury of war.
He was set on fire all around, but he did not understand, it burnt him, but he did not take it to heart.

As Yahweh was the one that had brought about the disaster, he was also the one that was going to repair it. If the people start listening to the words of the prophet Second Isaiah, and if they start putting their trust in Yahweh, then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the prisoners will be taken out from the dungeon. Out of the ashes, like a phoenix, the new Israel shall arise.

We find the motif of the blind also outside the Second Isaiah corpus. Thus, we meet with the metaphor of the deaf that shall hear and the blind that shall see in Is 29:18. In this late, «eschatological» passage, describing the wonderful future of Israel, we probably have a reflection of the

109 Cf. also above n. 102. The use of the term «eschatology» and «eschatological» was always felt to be somewhat problematic when applied to Old Testament phenomena (cf. the survey on the debate provided by Eschatologie im Alten Testament. Hg. v. H. D. Preuss. 1978). One should not, however, take this too seriously. Obviously, there will always be «pollution problems» with terminology taken over from doctrinal theology. As long as we are conscious of how we use such terms as «eschatological», «apocalyptic», etc., and as long as we are fully aware of the semantic inadequacy and logical impreciseness of such expressions, we should not necessarily avoid the use of them. With regard to the problem of «eschatology» in Second Isaiah, one may compare two such contrasts as the more «traditional» view of L. Stachowiak, «Das Problem der Eschatologie im Buch Jesaja», CoTh 53 (1983) 133–45, to the somewhat more dynamic and more flexible view of A. Schoors, «L'eschatologie dans les prophéties du Deutéro-Isaïe», Aux grands carrefours de la révélation et de l'exégèse de l'Ancien Testament (1967) 107–28. Cf. also the work by Odendaal, referred to in n. 45 above.
theme expressed in Second Isaiah. In Is 29: 17 we even find a reference to the fertility of the field.

Even more apparent are the similarities between Is 42: 15 – 16 and Is 35. In Is 35, we find not only the motif of blindness, but also several of the other motifs known to us from the so-called -Exodus passages- in Second Isaiah:

35. 1. The wilderness and the dry land shall exult,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the daffodil (?)

2. They shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice and sing for joy.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given them,
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of Yahweh,
the splendour of our god.

3. Strengthen feeble hands,
make strong weak knees.

4. Say to those who are frightened at heart:
Be strong! Do not be afraid!
Look! Your god shall come with vengeance,
with the retribution of God he comes, and he shall save you.

5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened.

6. Then the lame shall run like a deer,
and the tongue of the dumb shall sing with joy;
for water shall gush forth in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.
7. The burning sand shall become a pool,
and the dry ground springs
of water,
the abode of jackals
a resting place,
the grass shall become reed
and papyrus.

8. And it shall be there a track and a way,
and the way shall be called holy.
The unclean shall not pass over it,
nor fools go astray on it.

9. There shall be no lion there,
nor any beast of prey shall come up on it.
They shall not be found (there),
but the redeemed shall walk there.

10. Those whom Yahweh has ransomed shall return,
and they shall come to Zion with joy
and with everlasting happiness on their heads.
Joy and happiness shall reach them,
and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

As we may see, the whole of chapter 35 is quite "Second Isaiah" in outlook. No wonder that so many scholars have assumed that this chapter, too, stems from "Second Isaiah", rather than from "First Isaiah".\textsuperscript{110} We do notice with interest, however, that the phraseology differs somewhat. We can hardly decide with any degree of certainty whether the

\textsuperscript{110} See most recently O. H. Steck, \textit{Bereitete Heimkehr}, 1985. Among the several articles on the subject, we may single out M. H. Pope, "Isaiah 34 in Relation to 35, 40 – 66", \textit{JBL} 81 (1952) 235 - 43. Among the scholars who have considered Is 35 as a part of the Deutero-Isaian tradition we may mention names like e. g. Simon, Smart, and Torrey.
text in question goes back to the same person or persons that are responsible for Is 40 – 55. Thus, it is quite possible that we here have to do with a late reflection of Second Isaiah influence on late exilic prophecy. Or, it may be that we here have another example of a tradition utilized both by Second and First Isaiah, or by some other, late prophet belonging within the same -school.111.

Still another text reflecting the theme of blindness is Jer 31 : 8 112. From the context of Jer 31 : 8, however, it is not quite so clear whether we here have to do with a metaphorical expression, or whether we should understand blindness in a literal sense (compare here also Is 33 : 23, which mentions the lame).113

Further motifs of Is 42 : 16 are the turning of darkness into light and the levelling of rough places. Both of these metaphors are well known both from the Hebrew Bible in general and from the prophet Second Isaiah in particular114, and serve, like other similes in Is 40 – 55, the purpose of illustrating for the prophet's audience how Yahweh will change their situation for the better.

A major motif of Is 42 : 14 – 17 is that of the leading of the people. This motif, of course, also constitutes the main rea-


112 On the many similarities between the message of Second Isaiah and the so-called Book of Consolation, Jer 30 – 33, see W. Lempp, Bund und Bundeserneuerung (1954) passim, E. A. Martens, Motivations for the Promise of Israel's Restoration to the Land (1972) passim, S. Böhmer, Heimkehr und neuer Bund (1976) passim. Cf. also below n. 258.

113 Cf. also below p. 79.

114 See below n. 115.
son why scholars have classified this passage as an «exodus text». The motif is well known from the Hebrew Bible. Again and again we meet with the description of Yahweh who leads his people on the road. This image is especially well known from the Book of Psalms. Thus, in Ps 27:11 the psalmist prays to Yahweh:

Teach me your way, Yahweh, and lead me on a level path, because of my enemies.

And in Ps 143:10 we may find almost exactly the same wording:

Teach me to do your will, for you are my god. Let your good spirit lead me on level ground\

The psalm where the motif of the leading of Yahweh appears most elaborately, however, is Ps 23, a text representing one of the most precious pearls of ancient Hebrew religious poetry:

Yahweh is my shepherd, I shall not want. In meadows of green grass he lets me lie down, to restful waters he leads me, he refreshes my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness, for his name’s sake. Even if I walk in a dark valley,

115 We notice with interest that both of these texts not only use the motif of «leading>, but also the phraseology «level ground>. Again, this language usage demonstrates for us that the usual assumption that the «levelling of the ground> motif found in Is 40–55 should have anything to do with the making of roads in the desert for the exiles to return back to their home land, has failed to understand the metaphorical language used by the prophet. On the «levelling of the ground>, cf. also above pp. 8ff., 17–20, 38, and below pp. 62, 109–110.
I fear no evil,
for you are at my side,
your rod and your staff
they comfort
me.
You prepare before me
a table,
in the sight of my enemies.
You anoint my head with
oil,
my cup overflows...

In this text we find the motif of the leading of Yahweh depicted as a shepherd motif. The phenomenon is very similar to what we find in Second Isaiah. Whereas the two examples from Pss 27 : 11 and 143 : 10 of Yahweh leading the people, quoted above, are more to be regarded as prayers to Yahweh, concerned with correct behaviour (cf. Ps 25 : 4 – 5), the situation described in Ps 23, where Yahweh is leading his flock like a shepherd, is quite similar to what we find in Is 40 : 10 – 11. Rather than to speak about an -exodus motif- in this text in Isaiah, we should use the designation -shepherd motif-. The motif of the king or deity as shepherd, taking care of the people he is responsible for, is a well known metaphor, not only in the Hebrew Bible, but from all over the Ancient Near East116.

In Is 40 : 11 Yahweh is depicted as the good shepherd who looks after his flock. We notice here the strong metaphorical character of the language of the prophet. Even if one may, at first glance, feel sympathetic towards the commonly accepted scholarly view that this motif should here be connected with the triumphant return of the exiles thro-

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ugh the desert back to Jerusalem\textsuperscript{117}, the strongly metaphorical character of the prophet's language, as well as the fact that the return of the exiles from Babylon only plays a minor role in Second Isaiah's message\textsuperscript{118}, make it much more plausible that one should understand the passage which describes Yahweh as a shepherd in a more general way. The text gives expression to the conviction that Yahweh is taking good care of his people, that he puts an end to their distress, and restores them as a nation. It is exactly in such, or similar, connections that we may often find the shepherd motif in the Hebrew Bible.

As in Egyptian and Akkadian texts\textsuperscript{119}, 'shepherd' in the Hebrew Bible can be used as a designation not only for Yahweh, but also for the political leaders of Israel\textsuperscript{120}. The most remarkable passages, however, are the ones that, like Ps 23 quoted above, speak of Yahweh as the shepherd of his flock, the Israelite people. In addition to Ps 23, the motif of Yahweh as the shepherd of his flock is also found in Pss 28:9, 78:52, and 80:2 (cf. also Gen 49:24). Of these texts, only the passage in Ps 78 appears in an exodus context. Vv. 51 - 52 of this psalm reads:

He struck all the first-born in Egypt,
the first fruits of their manhood,
in the tents of Ham.
He led forth his people like
sheep,
he guided them like a herd in the wilderness.

\textsuperscript{117} Cf. above pp. 15ff.

\textsuperscript{118} See above p. 19 - 20, and below pp. 51, 73 - 74.

\textsuperscript{119} That this phenomenon was well known also in the biblical \textit{Umwelt}, may be seen from Egyptian and Akkadian texts. In Egypt, 'shepherd' was quite often used metaphorically as a designation for gods, kings, and officials (cf. W. Helck, \textit{"{H}irt-}, \textit{LÄ} 2 (1977) 12-22). On the rich attestations in Akkadian texts of gods and kings referred to as 'shepherds', see H. Waetzoldt, \textit{"{H}irt-}, \textit{RLA} 4 (1972 - 75) 424 (see for further references \textit{AHw} 2 (1972) 977 - 78.

\textsuperscript{120} See, for instance, Jer 2:8, 3:15, 10:21, 22:22, 23:1 - 4, 50:6.
Obviously, the motif of the shepherd leading his flock is a very appropriate way of describing the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert. We should not fail to notice, however, that, in the psalms, the picture of Yahweh shepherding his people is most frequently found outside of this tradition! For this reason, we should not automatically regard this motif as an «exodus motif».

In the prophets, we find the shepherd motif particularly well represented (outside Second Isaiah) in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In Jeremiah, we meet with the motif of Yahweh shepherding his flock in Jer 13:17, 20, 23:1, 3–4, 31:10, and 50:6. In Jer 23:3 and 31:10 the motif of Yahweh as shepherd is connected with the return of the people from the golah. In the exilic writers we often find references to the return of the people, scattered in the surrounding countries 121. This fact, however, has not always been fully appreciated by the scholars who have commented on Second Isaiah. Thus, those references to the return from the golah that we do find in Is 40–55122 should be regarded within the more natural and broader context of a general return from the whole of the golah, rather than from the point of view of a narrow fixation upon Babylon alone. The shepherd motif in Jer 13:17, 20 and 50:6 also appear against the background of the exile; in Jer 13:17 we have a word of doom where the people are threatened to be taken away into exile, and in Jer 50:6 we have a word against Babylon, where the shepherd motif appears in a reference to the people worshipping deities other than Yahweh.

And in Jer 50:17 Israel is compared to a stray sheep, formerly harassed by the Assyrian king, now by the Babylonians. One could say, of course, that, directly or indirectly, all these texts in Jeremiah more or less concern the return from the golah. Also, there is nothing actually wrong in comparing the shepherd motif in connection with the return

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122 Cf. above n. 105.
from the golah with «a new exodus». This, however, is not done by the texts themselves. In the texts which we have just mentioned, the shepherd motif is many faceted and concerns primarily the relationship between the deity and his people.

Also in the prophet Ezekiel we find the motif of Yahweh as shepherd. In Ez 37:24 the king is referred to as the shepherd of Israel. Much richer in its use of pastoral imagery in order to describe the relationship between Yahweh and his people is Ez 34:1-23. From this chapter in the Book of Ezekiel it becomes even more clear that the strongly metaphorical language taken from pastoral life is much more varied and much more comprehensive than what one might at first be led to believe. From the several isolated occurrences of this motif which we may find scattered around in different parts of the Hebrew Bible we may infer that we are hardly justified in our efforts when or if we try to convert this metaphor into one single formula. In Is 40:10-11 we find the shepherd motif combined with another, well known motif in the Bible; namely that of theophany and holy war:

9. Get up to the mountain top,
   you herald of good
   news for Zion!
   Lift up your voice with strength,
   you herald of good news for
   Jerusalem!
   Lift it up and do not fear!
   Say to the people of Judah:
   Here is your God!

10. Here is Adonay Yahweh! He comes
    with might,
    and his arm rules for him.
    Here! His recompense is with him
    and his reward before
    him.

11. Like a shepherd he will tend
    his flock,
    with his arm he will gather
    them.

123 Cf. above n. 116.
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He will carry the lambs in his bosom
and lead the ewes.124

Again we must notice the complete lack of any reference whatsoever to the exodus or to the return from the golah in this context. The passage in question simply contains a word of salvation to the prophet's audience, informing them that Yahweh is now going to put an end to their misery (cf. vv. 1 – 2).

In Is 42 we find the combination of the theophany/holy war motif125 and the motif of the leading of the blind126, a motif which in the message of Second Isaiah is being used in exactly the same way as the shepherd motif. The theophany/holy war description appears in v. 13:

Yahweh goes forth like
a hero,

124 Concerning the many textual difficulties in this text, see above notes 27 – 28.

125 The institution of holy war plays a role in the biblical literature that can hardly be exaggerated. Two important books on the relationship between holy war and theophany are F. M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (1973) passim, and P. D. Miller, The Divine Warrior in Early Israel (1973) passim. Further monographs treating the subject of holy war are H. Fredriksen, Jahwe als Krieger, 1945, G. von Rad, Der heilige Krieg im Alten Israel, 1969, R. Smend, Jahwekrieg und Stämmebund, 1963, F. Stolz, Jahwe und Israels Kriege, 1972, M. C. Lind, Yahweh is a Warrior, 1980 (Cf. also E. W. Conrad, Fear Not Warrior, 1985). One can hardly touch upon the phenomenon of holy war in ancient Israel without mentioning the breakthrough in research following the article by M. Weippert, «Heiliger Krieg» in Israel und Assyrien, ZAW 84 (1972) 460 – 93. Von Rad had argued that holy war as a phenomenon was unique to ancient Israel. The institution, being closely linked with the amphictyony (an institution that in itself has turned out to be dubious), was a system for defence only, and ceased to exist after the establishment of Israel as a nation. In his article Weippert was able to demonstrate convincingly that von Rad's views concerning the institution of holy war in ancient Israel were untenable. Not only was the phenomenon of holy war widespread all over the Ancient Near East, but it also continued for as long as warfare existed in ancient Israel.

126 On this particular motif, cf. above pp. 38, 40 - 41, 46, 58, n. 93, n. 161.
like a man of war he stirs up
his fury.
He stirs up, he shouts.
Against his enemies he shows
his might.\(^{127}\)

In this text we have the motif of holy war. The motif of holy war appears also in Is 40:10\(^{128}\). In that text, as well, the motif appears in combination with the motif of Yahweh as shepherd. As I have attempted to demonstrate above\(^{129}\), this text does not, as the majority of the scholarly world is inclined to think, refer to the homecoming of the Israelites through the desert. The theophany/holy war descriptions which we find in Is 40:10 and 42:13 are similar to those found also in other biblical texts. As representative texts we may mention Ps 18:7–15 and Hab 3. Another typical text is Nah 1. This latter text, too, ends the theophany description with the description of destruction of enemies and salvation for Israel.

To sum up so far: we have in the context of the two passages Is 40:10 and 42:13 found the combination of the leading of the people (the blind, the flock) and the motif of Yahweh as a mighty warrior who destroys the enemies of Israel in his theophany. None of these metaphorical descriptions can be understood as describing the particular historical event of the return of the Judeans from Babylon. We are hardly justified in speaking of a particular "exodus theme" in connection with these texts. Here, as elsewhere, the basic meaning of these texts is that Yahweh is now going to act to the benefit of his people. He will destroy Judah's enemies and put an end to their misery by restoring the Judean nation. \textit{This} is Second Isaiah's message.


\(^{128}\) Cf. above pp. 15–16. I also believe that there is a reflection of the holy war motif in Is 55:12–13. See below pp. 75ff.

\(^{129}\) Pp. 15ff.
CHAPTER V

GRAZING ALONG THE ROAD. ANOTHER SHEPHERD MOTIF. IS 49:8 - 12

In the previous chapter, we have dealt briefly with how Second Isaiah in his compositions Is 40:10 - 11 and 42:13 - 14 has utilized the ancient Israelite motifs of Yahweh as shepherd and as divine warrior, and re-used them in order to convey his own prophetic message. Both of these two different motifs suit the prophetic message perfectly, the shepherd motif giving expression to comfort and care for Yahweh's people, and the divine warrior motif underlining the mighty power and strength of the deity. Again, we notice the great skill with which this prophet masters his literary heritage\(^{130}\). Also from another passage in the Second Isaiah corpus, in contents very similar to Is 40:10 - 11 and 42:13 - 14, dealt with above, we shall find support for our conclusions regarding these two texts. The text in question, Is 49:8 - 12, reads as follows:

8. Thus says Yahweh:
   In a time of favour I will answer you,
   on a day of salvation I will help you.
   I have looked after you and made you
   a covenant of people\(^{131}\),

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\(^{130}\) Cf. above notes 16, 49, 68, 112 and below notes 174, 255, 275, 279.

\(^{131}\) The expression "covenant of people", רביית אדם, in Is 49:8 is problematic in several respects. Quite a few scholars hold that the idiom is a late insertion in the text, taken over from 42:6, where we also find the expression (cf. n. 54 above). Several of the mod-
to restore the land,
to allot the desolate
heritages,

9. saying to the prisoners: Come out!
And to those who are in the darkness:
Show yourselves!
Along the roads\textsuperscript{132} they will graze,
and on all bare heights\textsuperscript{133} shall their pasture be.

10. They shall not hunger or thirst,
nor shall the scorching wind or the sun plague them,
for he who pities them shall lead them
and guide them to springs of water.

11. I will make all my mountains
to a road,


\textsuperscript{133} The Meaning of the word מַעֲנֵי is uncertain. A. Gelston, comparing with Is 41 : 18, prefers the translation "tracks." «Some Notes on Second Isaiah», \textit{VT} 21 (1971) 518 – 21.
GRAZING ALONG THE ROAD

and my highways shall be raised up.\textsuperscript{134}

Look!

12. These shall come from afar.

Look! These from the north

and from the west,

and these from the land of

Syene.\textsuperscript{135}

This text, too, has by many scholars been characterized as an "exodus text" and understood as a reference to the return through the desert of the exiled Judeans back to Jerusalem. As far as I am able to judge, however, this reading is not warranted by the text itself. The passage 49: 8 – 12 appears in a series of words of comfort to Israel. In 49: 1 – 6 we have one of the so-called "servant songs" in Is 40 – 55.\textsuperscript{136} Israel is here being described as the servant of Yahweh, chosen by him to be his elected people, and with a special mission to the world.\textsuperscript{137} Is 49: 7 contains another word of salvation to Israel, taking into account also the relationship of Israel to the nations.\textsuperscript{138} The very same motifs


\textsuperscript{135} The geographic designation -Sinîm- has caused some speculations. C. R. Conder, "Notes on Bible Geography", PEFQS\textsuperscript{i} (1904) 74, suggested that the reference was to Elam. More far-fetched is the unlikely suggestion that the reference is to China. A good discussion with a survey of the history of research is provided by G. Lambert, "Le Livre d'Isaie parle-t-il des Chinois", NRTh 75 (1953) 965 – 72. Lambert's own suggestion, that the reference is to Syene/Assuan/Elephantine, possibly mentioned also in Is 19: 19 – 20, is probably correct. At least, this possibility suits the historical and geographical situation as we know it.

\textsuperscript{136} On the so-called "servant songs" in Second Isaiah, cf. n. 86 above.

\textsuperscript{137} Cf. above n. 86

\textsuperscript{138} On the relationship of Second Isaiah to the nations, cf. above notes 44 and 54.
which we find in vv. 1 – 7 appear also in the oracle of salvation vv. 8 – 12, quoted above. A further motif of this last passage is the ingathering of the people of Yahweh from the golah\(^{139}\). The passage is rounded off with an exhortation to praise in v. 13, followed by further words of comfort and salvation in vv. 14 – 16. In vv. 16 – 18 there appear still further words of doom against the nations. The rest of the chapter goes on in the same manner, consisting of a mixture of words of salvation for Israel and words of doom against the foreign nations.

As we may see, the passage 49: 8 – 12 contains a rich variety of different motifs, known to us not only from Is 40 – 55, but also from several other parts of the biblical tradition. Again it becomes apparent to the reader of the book of Second Isaiah what a master of style, language and literary tradition this prophet is. Using freely from the whole of the rich and varied arsenal of the traditions that were at his disposal, he constantly rearranges and recreates them, in order that they may suit his own message and train of thought.

With regard to the details of the passage 49: 8 - 12, the most problematic issue of the text is probably the expression \(\text{l"\i}\text{n\text{h}h\text{h} t\text{m}}\) of v. 8\(^{140}\). Further, we notice with interest that we find the motif of the prisoners also in Is 49\(^{141}\). As we have demonstrated above\(^{142}\), it is quite wrong, as some scholars do, to take the reference to "the prisoners" as a literal reference to the Israelites that were in exile in Babylon. Firstly, we have no evidence whatsoever in support of the assumption that the Israelites were suffering under bad conditions in Babylon\(^{143}\). Secondly, the text in question is

\(^{139}\) Cf. below pp. 73 - 74 and above p. 57 and n. 52.

\(^{140}\) Cf. above n. 131.

\(^{141}\) See above pp. 41, 43, 55, and below pp. 58, 61 - 62, 81, 105.

\(^{142}\) Cf. above p. 41.

\(^{143}\) Concerning the actual conditions of the Jewish prisoners of war in Babylon, we may only indirectly make up our minds from what we know of Akkadian laws (see, for instance, E. Szlechter, "Effets de la captivit\" e en droit assyro-babylonien," RA 57 (1963) 181 – 92, I. J. Gelb, "Prisoners of War in Early Mesopotamia," JNES
not about the exiles in Babylon at all. Being concerned with, and addressed to, the people of Judah in Judah, who are suffering in their present situation, Babylon only plays a minor role in the prophet's message. The people of Jerusalem, constituting Second Isaiah's audience, is once again informed by the prophet that Yahweh is going to change their situation and put an end to their troubles. The miserable situation of the people of Jerusalem and Judah is compared to the situation of prisoners. Thus, the phraseology «prisoners» should be regarded merely as a figure of speech, similar to what we find in Is 42:7, where the prophet uses metaphors like prison, darkness and blindness to describe the situation of the Judeans144.

32 (1973) 70 – 98. What we find here, corresponds with the commonly found scholarly view of a rather mild treatment of captives (see, for instance, B. Oded, «Exile and Diaspora», Israelite and Judean History (1977) 480 – 86, Y. Kaufmann, The Babylonian Captivity and Deutero-Isaiah (1970) 6 - 9). Nevertheless, our actual knowledge of the conditions of Judean exiles in Babylonia during the period in question is virtually nil. For a general survey, see I. Ephal, «The Western Minorities in Babylonia in the 6th – 5th Centuries B.C. », Or 47 (1978) 74 – 90. One text from Babylon herself, relating the distribution of oil to certain foreign families during the reign of Nebuchadrezzar, mentions king Jehoiachin and other Jewish names (see E. F. Weidner, «Joaquin, König von Juda in Babylonischen Keilinschriften», Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud... T. 2. (1939) 923 – 35. Cf. also T. Larriba, «Joaquin rey legítimo de Juda en el destierro», ScrTh 4 (1972) 541 – 58. With this exception, we have no written documents related to the Jews in Babylonia before the fifth century, when the so-called Murashu tablets, dating from the reigns of Artaxerxes I and Darius II, provide us with important information on the Jewish colony at Nippur (see with references to the older literature M. D. Coogan, West Semitic Personal Names in the Murašû Documents, 1976, and R. Zadok, The Jews in Babylonia During the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods, 1979 (cf. also by the same author i. a. «Notes on the early History of the Israelites and Judeans in Mesopotamia», Or 51 (1982) 392 – 93). Not only are these sources mainly of an onomastic character, but it would also be impossible to make any statements from them concerning the Jewish colony at Nippur a hundred years before. The tablets are important, however, as they bear witness to the relative prosperity of a Jewish family in Babylonia a hundred years or so «after the exile was over».

144 Cf. above pp. 38, 40 - 41, 46, 52 - 53.
In 49:9b – 10 we meet once more with the «shepherd motif». Again, we have to do with a strongly metaphorical language, well known to us both from the Bible in general, as well as from Is 40 – 55 in particular. Our text, then, should be understood quite along the same lines as the similar «shepherd texts» in Second Isaiah dealt with above. In the present context, the general purpose of using a motif like «grazing along the roads», etc. is clearly to provide a description of the bright future of the inhabitants of Judah; Yahweh, their own god, is now going to look after them, they need worry no more. The motif of protection from the sun is found also in Ps 121:6. The two last motifs of 49:8 – 12, the motifs of the levelling of the mountains (v. 11) and the gathering of the nations (v. 12), have already been treated in some detail above.

There are in the passage Is 49:8 – 12 no allusions to the going out from Babylon, nor to the return of exiles through the desert, nor to the exodus tradition. The only conclusion we are allowed to draw after having read the text in question, is that the purpose of the poetical, and clearly metaphorical, expressions found in 49:8 – 12 is to inform the prophet's audience, in a language that was familiar to them, that Yahweh will now take care of his people and look after them. Forgotten is everything that has happened before. What we find here in Is 49:8 – 12, is, similar to what we find in all the texts in Is 40 – 55, only to be regarded as the natural consequence of what we find in the famous text that has been referred to as the prophet's «program», Is 40:1: «Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her bondage has come to an end and that her sin is paid for; that she has received from the hand of Yahweh double for all her sins.» In order to bring this message out to his fel-

145 See above n. 116 and n. 119.

146 Cf. above pp. 9ff., 17 - 20, 32 - 33, 46 - 47, 50.

147 Cf. also below n. 233.

148 On this text, cf. also above pp. 9ff.
low countrymen in Judah, Second Isaiah again and again utilizes and adapts what ancient traditions were available to him. The assumption that there are no allusions whatsoever in Is 49:8–12 to the exodus tradition or to the return from exile appears as even more likely when we compare the words of the prophetic composition with the very traditions that he has been utilizing. Good illustrations of what the prophet's prototypes may have looked like are provided by Ps 107, an old psalm containing many of the same elements that we find in Is 40–55. We read in vv. 1–11 of this psalm:

1. Give thanks to Yahweh,  
   for he is good,  
   for his goodness endures forever.

2. They shall say so, the redeemed of Yahweh,  
   those whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy  
3. and from the lands he has gathered them,  
   from the east and the west,  
   from the north and the south.

4. They wandered in the wilderness,  
   in the desert they did not find the way  
   to an inhabited city,  
5. hungry and thirsty  
   their life fainted within them.

6. They cried to Yahweh in their trouble,  
   he rescued them from their distress.  
7. He led them by a straight way,  
   leading to an inhabited city.

149 Cf. H.-J. Kraus, Psalmen, 2. Teilb. (1966) 737. Cf. also ibid. under vv. 33 ff. These verses, however, are regarded by Kraus, who follows Duhm, as secondary to the psalm. Kraus is unjustified, however, in this assumption.
8. Let them thank Yahweh for his
goodness, for his wonderful works to the
children of the earth.
9. He satisfies the
thirsty,
and the hungry he fills with
good things.

10. They dwelt in darkness and
gloom,
prisoners in misery and
irons,
11. for they had rebelled against the
words of God,
and scorned the counsel of
Elyon.

And in vv. 33 – 36 we read further:

33. He turns rivers into a wilderness,
springs of water into dry
ground,
34. fertile country into salty land,
because of the wickedness of
those who live on it.

35. And he turns wilderness into pools of
water
and dry land into springs of
water.
36. And there he settles the
hungry
and they establish a city to
dwell in...

This psalm, of which I have quoted approximately one
third, is, in the present writer's opinion, most illustrative if
one wants to grasp some of the essential background for
the message of Second Isaiah. We notice that we in this
psalm find quite a few of the motifs of Is 40 - 55. This, of course,
should not be understood in such a way that we here
have an example of direct literary dependency one way or
the other; we have rather to do with two different, but closely
related literary manifestations within the same cultural
region. Among the many different motifs of Ps 107, the follow-
ning are found also in the message of Second Isaiah: the
gathering from the lands (v. 3)\textsuperscript{150}, the wandering in the wilderness (v. 4)\textsuperscript{151}, hunger and thirst (v. 5)\textsuperscript{152}, the way in the wilderness (v. 7)\textsuperscript{153}, the prison motif (v. 10)\textsuperscript{154}, and the water in the desert (vv. 33 - 35)\textsuperscript{155}. As we may see quite clearly from the text itself, however, the references in Ps 107 to the wandering in the desert, as well as to the water in the desert, cannot be regarded as having anything to do with the ancient Israelite exodus tradition. It appears from the context that these descriptions are meant in a general way. From Psalm 107 we may also learn how difficult it is to distinguish between metaphorical and non-metaphorical language in Hebrew poetry. The language of the psalm in question cannot be said to be strictly metaphorical, but seems somehow to fluctuate between metaphorical and literal expressions. Thus, the reference in v. 4 to the wandering in the wilderness should probably not be taken literally altogether. We find a similar picture described in v. 40 of the text, where it is said of the enemies of Yahweh and Israel: «But he who pours contempt upon princes and makes them wander astray in a trackless waste». Certainly this is not a description of the actual wanderings of foreign princes through the desert, but rather a metaphor aiming at describing the general negative state of Israel's enemies in the future (among the more literal descriptions of Ps 107 are probably the references to certain diseases in vv. 17 ff.). It would certainly have been to no one's surprise if this particular phraseology had appeared somewhere in Is 40 - 55.

From the use of metaphors in Ps 107 we may learn not a little about the way similar, or the same, metaphors are being used in Is 40 - 55. The «author» of Ps 107, too, adapts

\textsuperscript{150} Cf. also above pp. 19 - 20 and 50 - 51, below pp. 73 - 74.

\textsuperscript{151} Cf. also above pp. 37ff.

\textsuperscript{152} Cf. Is 41:17, 48:21, 55:1.

\textsuperscript{153} Cf. also above pp. 9ff.

\textsuperscript{154} Cf. also pp. 41, 43, 55, 57 - 58, 81, 105.

\textsuperscript{155} Cf. also pp. 27 - 36, 47, 67 - 68, 71, 77, 90 - 92, 109.
freely from the rich and varied traditional resources of the ancient Hebrews, making such combinations as will suit his general message. This is exactly the same "compositional technique" that we will find also in the much greater, unknown poet behind Is 40 – 55. Obviously, in the context of the message of a prophet like Second Isaiah, descriptions of desert wanderings may easily bring one's mind to the return of exiled Judeans from Babylon, as well as to the exodus traditions of ancient Israel. There is not, however, even the slightest hint in Is 49 : 8 – 12 that this is what the prophet himself had in mind. Consequently, we, too, should refrain from reading the text in this manner.

From the above, it must clearly be concluded that it would be incorrect to name what we find in the passage Is 49 : 8 – 12 an "exodus motif". In fact, we find in this text no references whatsoever to the exodus event. Nor do we find any references to the home-coming of the exiles through the desert from Babylon. As we do find, however, the motif of the ingathering from the lands156, it is legitimate, of course, to claim that the text does refer also to the exiles of Babylon. But this is clearly a different matter. The interest of the prophet is not directed specifically against the Babylonian exiles. They only make up a part of the restoration of the Judean nation, comprising the whole of the golah. This fact appears clearly from the standard phraseology of the text: "... These from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene". The exiles of Babylon, consequently, are not being referred to specifically, nor are they in the present context of any particular interest to the prophet.

In sum, we note again how the passage 49 : 8 – 12 is typical to the message of the prophet Second Isaiah. The purpose of this text is to comfort the prophet's audience, the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and to inform them that Yahweh, their god, is with them, and that he himself is now going to put an end to their misery.

156 On this motif, see also above pp. 19 - 20, 41, 51, and below pp. 73, 100.
CHAPTER VI

MANIFESTATION THROUGH CREATION.
IS 50:1-3

One further text in the Second Isaian corpus that has been regarded as reflecting an "exodus motif" is Is 50:2. Is 50:1 – 3, a passage appearing within the wider context of a so-called "servant song" 157, reads as follows:

1. Thus says Yahweh:
   Where is the bill of divorce
   of your mother,
   with which I sent her away?
Or which of my creditors is it
   to whom I have sold you?
It was for your sins that you
   were sold,
   and for her transgressions
   that your mother was sent away!

2. Why was it that when I came there was
   no one there,
when I called there was no one
   who answered?
Is my hand too short
   to ransom?
Or have I no strength to deliver?
   With my rebuke I dry up
the sea,
   I turn rivers to wilderness.
Their fish rot158 for lack of water,
   and die of thirst.

157 Cf. above n. 86.

158 A more correct meaning of שׁנָק is probably "stink."
3. I dress the heavens in black, and make sackcloth their covering.

In 50:1 the prophet reminds the people that Yahweh has not forgotten them, and that the reason for the destructions and deportations of 587/586 B. C. E. should be regarded only as a natural consequence of the transgressions of the Judean people. We notice once more how Second Isaiah again and again repeats the same message by expressing himself through a variety of different metaphors. Here, he compares the relationship between the Judeans and Yahweh with a divorce, and with a sale to creditors160. In v. 2 the prophet is contemplating why his (i.e. Yahweh's) audience did not believe him when he brought forward the message that Yahweh was now going to help them: did they not believe that Yahweh really had the power to help? Again, this is a well known theme in Is 40-55161. The small "unity" 50:1–3 ends with the underlin-


160 The divorce motif is found also in Jer 3:1. 8 (cf. also Hos 2). Cf. also M. Burrows, The Basis of Israelite Marriage (1938) 32, and in more detail H. J. Hendriks, Juridical Aspects of the Marriage Metaphor, passim.

161 Against the background of the historical situation, as well as against the background of Ancient Near Eastern history of religion in general, we may easily understand why this matter takes up so much of the prophet's message. When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, this meant not only the end of the Judean kingdom, but also that the national deity of Judah, Yahweh, had not come to the rescue of his people. In the eyes of the prophets of Yahweh, this could only mean that Yahweh had punished his people for their sins. This is also the argument found in many places in Is 40 - 55. But among the people, and, something which is not of little importance, among the inhabitants of the surrounding countries, this could also be understood in the way that Yahweh was unable to help, and that the Babylonian gods were mightier than him. It is precisely this dangerous possibility of doubt that Second Isaiah wants to eliminate. And it is for this reason that the words against the idols so frequently found in Is 40 - 55 should be taken as an integral part of the prophet's message (cf. above n. 45). With reg-
ing of the mighty powers of Yahweh, pictured with cosmic metaphors: Yahweh's drying up the sea and covering the heavens in sackcloth. As it is the case also with the drying up of the water and the turning of dry land into wet land, motifs that are treated in some detail above, these poetic descriptions all bear witness to the mighty powers of Yahweh and his ability either to bring forth or to withdraw fertility and prosperity among men. As such, their sole purpose is to bear witness to the deity's mighty powers. As we shall see below, the motif of «drying up the sea», reflects a very old, mythological theme. Thus, already from a superficial glance at Is 50:1–3, it becomes evident that we have no «exodus motif» in this text. Not only is there a complete lack of any reference to the exodus event – or to any return of exiles through the desert, for that matter – but also can there be little doubt that the purpose of the use of the somewhat «apocalyptic»-mythological motif of the «drying up of the sea», is solely to underline the might and splendour of Yahweh in a general sense. In Is 44:27 we find an expression quite similar to the one in Is 50:2. The context is one of hymnic praise to Yahweh162. It is here said of Yahweh:

...who says to the deep:
Be dry!
I will dry up your rivers.

Also this verse appears in a series of hymnic expressions concerning Yahweh, all of which are presented in order to convince the prophet's audience that Yahweh is now going to act in favour of his people and restore

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162 The context is one of the so-called self predication texts in Second Isaiah. On these texts, cf. H. M. Barstad, «On the So-Called Babylonian Literary Influence in Second Isaiah», SJOT 2 (1987) 100 – 10. In addition to the literature referred to in this article, one may also note M. Dijkstra, Gods voorstelling, 1980. Cf. also above n. 63.
Jerusalem and Judah. Also in the context of Is 44:27 we find no reference to any "exodus motif". We have here an old "mythological" theme, frequently found in the Hebrew Bible. This, and similar formulas, reflect literary reminiscences of the ancient mythological fight between the "storm god" and the "sea god". In most biblical occurrences this motif, which is basically an old creation motif, appears strongly "de-mythologized", and should be regarded purely as hymnic appraisals of the deity. As we shall see, the motif appears also in connection with references to the exodus event. In fact, it would have been very strange indeed if this had not been the case. In what texts we have referred to so far, however, we have not found any reference to the exodus event. Consequently, the designation "exodus motif" for what we find in these texts is not very appropriate, to say the least. On the other hand, it is not surprising to find that the motif of the chaos fight, or rather the somewhat faded literary remains of this fight, may easily mix also with other biblical motifs where water is mentioned in connection with the underlining of the mighty powers of Yahweh. One typical example of this would be Ps 74:13–17. In this hymnic outburst in praise of Yahweh the motif of the dragon fight or sea fight is combined with the heavenly control of water and fertility in a phraseology not unlike the one we find in Second Isaiah (Ps 74:15). Also in Ps 74, incidentally a public lament, there are no references whatsoever to any exodus event:

13. You divided Sea by your power,
you broke the heads of Tanninim on the sea.

14. You crushed the heads of Leviathan, and gave him שִׁלְחוֹת נָא לְאַרְחִי 165 to eat.

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163 Cf. above pp. 25, 27, 39.
164 See above n. 71 and below n. 168.
165 I do not quite know what to make of these two Hebrew words.
15. You opened up spring and torrent, you dried up eternal rivers.

16. Yours is the day, indeed, yours is the night, you established light and sun.

17. You fixed all the limits of the land, you made summer and winter.

Still another text that gives us a good illustration of how the biblical authors may utilize the old motif of the dragon fight is provided by Ps 77:17–21. The text reads as follows:

17. The waters saw you, God.
The waters saw you, and they shivered; indeed, the depths were disturbed.

18. The clouds poured down water, the skies gave forth voice, and your arrows went forth everywhere.

19. The sound of your thunder rolled (?), the lightening lit up the world. The earth trembled and quaked.

20. Your way was in the sea, and your path in the great waters, but your footprints were not known.

21. You led your people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.
Here we find the motif of the dragon fight combined with the exodus motif. It is important, however, to be aware of the fact that these two motifs do not originally belong together. The motif of the cosmic sea fight is not only secondary in exodus texts, but it is also only very late that it appears in this combination166. One should, consequently, take care not to consider all references to the old mythological motif of creation through dragon fight as «exodus motifs». That this actually has been done, may easily be seen from the fact that scholars have designated such texts as Is 44:27 and 50:2 «exodus texts», which, of course, is quite inappropriate. As these, and related texts, represent reflections of ancient creation myths, they might possibly be designated «creation texts». In fact, creation does play a major role in the message of Second Isaiah167.

166 On this, see in particular the article by T. Fenton, referred to in n. 168 below.

whole, however, one should not pay too much attention to the background of the several motifs used by the prophet. It is hardly of any major importance whether or not we refer to what faded reminiscences of the dragon fight we may find in Is 50 : 2, or 44 : 2, as «creation motifs». Viewed against this background, it seems more appropriate to regard them as specimens of hymnal spice in an otherwise very rich poetic herbarium.

As literary reminiscences of the Ancient Near Eastern dragon myth frequently appear in the Hebrew Bible, however\(^1\), and more often than not in a more conspicuous

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\(^{1}\) Schöpfungsvorstellungen in Jesaja 51 : 9 – 16«, BZ 21 (1983) 116 – 34. Compare also: M. Weinfeld, «God the Creator in Gen. I and in the Prophecy of Second Isaiah», TARBIZ 37 (1967 – 68) 105 – 32. Weinfield attempts to demonstrate that there exists an antagonism between the creation theology of Second Isaiah and that of Gen 1, which the prophet, finding it primitive and outdated, deliberately seeks to replace. N. C. Habel, «He Who Stretches Out the Heavens», CBQ 34 (1972) 417 – 30, treats in some detail the formula of stretching out the heavens, which appears 7 times in Second Isaiah used of Yahweh (Is 40:22, 42:5, 44:24, 45:12, 48:13, 51:13. 16). T. M. Ludwig, «The Traditions of the Establishing of the Earth in Deutero-Isaiah», JBL 92 (1973) 345 – 57, maintains that the different traditions concerning the establishing of the earth in Second Isaiah have little direct relationship with the exodus tradition, but must be regarded as an independent creation element! This conclusion is of some relevance also for the arguments put forward in the present chapter. Cf. also n. 168 below.

168 We may here in particular mention the «Rahab texts»: Is 30 : 7, 51 : 9, Ps 87 : 4, the «Leviathan texts»: Is 27 : 1, Pss 74 : 14, 104 : 26, Job 3 : 8, and the «Tannin texts»: Is 27 : 1, 51 : 9, Ps 74 : 13. The secondary literature on the phenomenon is extensive. In addition to the works on the subject mentioned above n. 71, one may also consult the surveys in C. Westermann, «תנין», THAT 2 (1976) 1026 – 31, and H. Ringgren, «תנן», ThWAT 3 (1982) 645 – 57. One further article worth mentioning is T. L. Fenton, «Different Approaches to the Theomachy Myth in the Old Testament Writers», Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East (1978) 337 – 81. In addition to its giving valuable bibliographical information, the article by Fenton is worth noticing because it lays stress on the fact that one should take great care to distinguish between the combat myth and the exodus motif, the former being only secondary to the exodus tradition. A similar view was taken i. a. by T. M. Ludwig in the work mentioned in n. 167 above. Cf. also
and more comprehensive way than in the example we have quoted from Is 50:2 above, it is certainly not remarkable that we find such texts also in the message of Second Isaiah. In 51:9–11\textsuperscript{169} we find the old motif of the combat myth in combination with a reference to the exodus event:

9. Awake, awake, put on strength,  
    arm of Yahweh\textsuperscript{170}.  
Awake, like in the days of old,  
in ages long ago!  
Was it not you that cut  
Rahab in pieces,  
that pierced Tannin?  
10. Was it not you that dried up  
    Sea,  
the waters of the great Tehom,  
that made the depths of the  
sea a way  
for the redeemed\textsuperscript{171} to pass over?\textsuperscript{172}

the discussion of the role of the chaos fight in different biblical passages in J. Jeremias, *Theophanie* (1965) 90–97. The most recent contribution to the debate, also this work rich in bibliographical information, is W. Herrmann, «Das Aufleben des Mythischen unter den Judäern während des babylonischen Zeitalters», *BN* 40 (1987) 97–129. For a survey of the extra-biblical material, one may also consult M. Burkelter-Trachsel, *Der Drache*, 1981.

\textsuperscript{169} Further on the creation theology in this text, see the works by Ringgren and Seidl referred to in n. 167 above. For a discussion of the literary structure of the text, see F. Holmgren, «Chiastic Structure in Isaiah 51:1–11», *VT* 19 (1969) 196–201.


\textsuperscript{171} This theological key term in the message of Second Isaiah has been discussed in detail by J. Dobladez, «El termino g’ol en el Deutero-Isaías», *EstFr* 78 (1977) 371–411. For further literature, as well as for a survey of the biblical texts, see H. Ringgren, *ThWAT* 1 (1973) 884–90.

\textsuperscript{172} Cf. also vv. 15–16.

\textsuperscript{173} Cf. above n. 6.
11. Those whom Yahweh has ransomed shall return, and they will come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

The similarities between this text and the part of Ps 74 which I have quoted above, are striking. As a great master of language, and with a solid knowledge of ancient Israelite traditions, Second Isaiah utilizes and adapts freely from the bulk of traditions available to him. In addition to his great mastery of the Hebrew language, it is in particular his abilities of imagination and correlation, hall-marks of the creative mind, that impresses the modern reader of his work. Drawing from the rich traditions of ancient Israel, Second Isaiah is able to present us with his own, distinct message about Yahweh, the god of Israel, and Yahweh's love, comfort and concern for his people, the people that he is now going to restore to nationhood. Throughout his message, the prophet is able to utilize not a few of the traditions found in the Hebrew Bible, including also the Pentateuch.

For this reason, it is only to be expected that we can find references also to the exodus event in Second Isaiah. In the text which I have quoted above, Is 51:9–11, however, the reference to the combat myth, and in that

connection also the passing of the Israelites through the sea, serves the function of underlining, in a hymnic/rhetorical way, the mighty powers of Yahweh. In no way does the author of Is 51:9 – 11 intend any connection between the references to the combat/creation and the exodus with the exiles in Babylon, or with their home-coming alone. The home-coming, foreseen in v. 11, concerns the home-coming of exiles from all over the diaspora, forming a part of the restoration of the Judean nation. By referring to the mighty acts of salvation of Yahweh in the past, the prophet seeks to convince his audience of the reality of his saving words to Jerusalem and Judah, as well as of his words of doom regarding the foreign nations. So we do find an exodus motif in this text, but this is not an exodus motif relating to the concrete return of the exiles of Babylon through the desert back to Jerusalem. What is intended, is the restoring of the nation, brought about by, among other things, the destruction of the enemies of Israel175, and the return of all exiles from the whole of the diaspora176. As Is 51:11 clearly shows, the return to Zion177 does play an important role in this eschatological178 national restoration program of Second Isaiah:

175 On the enemy nations in the Book of Second Isaiah, cf. also above notes 44 and 54.

176 Cf. also above notes 52 and 121.


178 Concerning the term eschatological, cf. also above p. 43, n. 109 and below pp. 85 - 86, 106.
Those whom Yahweh has ransomed shall return, and they will come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning shall flee away.  

179 We have here a reflection of a holy war motif. Cf. above n. 125 and below notes 213 – 215, 221.
CHAPTER VII

HOLY WAR AND REJOICING. IS 55:12–13

One further text that scholars have referred to as reflecting the «exodus» of the exiled from Babylon is Is 55:12–13:

12. For in joy you shall go out,
and in peace you shall be led forth,
the mountains and the hills
shall break out in song
before you,
and all the trees of the field
shall clap their hands.

13. Instead of the thornbush, the cypress
shall grow,
instead of nettles,
the myrtle;
and it shall be for Yahweh a
memorial,
an everlasting sign which
shall not be cut off.

This text has quite often been regarded by scholars as referring to the going out from Babylon. When we take a closer look at these two verses and their context, however, it will soon turn out that this is not so certain after all.

Is 55:12–13, which I have quoted above, ends not only the Book of Second Isaiah, but the passage also ends the unit Is 54–55, consisting of a mixture of words of salvation and words of admonition. In chapter 56 there starts a totally new section, dealing with the problem of proselytes180.

180 With chapter 56 the scholarly world has, ever since the days of Bernhard Duhm, seen the beginning of the work of still another unknown prophet, «Trito-Isaiah» or «Third Isaiah». If the Deu-
chapter 54 the prophet addresses Jerusalem. In chapter 55, where we mostly find the Second person plural\textsuperscript{181}, the address is partly Jerusalem and partly the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

One major problem of our passage concerns the word «to go out». It is precisely this word that has led scholars to believe that we have a reference to the going out from Babylon in this passage\textsuperscript{182}. What, then, is the meaning of «to go out» in this passage? From the context, it may appear that we here once more have to do with one of the many metaphorical expressions in Is 40–55. Consequently the seemingly wise thing to do is probably to look for the solution to the problem of the meaning of «to go out» in the nearest context.

In Is 55:13 we have a description of the desert becoming fertile land. The motif is very similar to other descriptions found in the Hebrew Bible, not least in Second Isaiah\textsuperscript{183}, where this, or similar, phraseology is used in order to designate future prosperity and well-being. One typical example from Is 40–55 would be Is 41:19\textsuperscript{184}:

tero-Isaian thesis has been under discussion (cf. above n. 2), this has even more so been the case with Trito-Isaiah. There seems to be a tendency to day, however, in accordance with such works as those mentioned in n. 111 above, more and more to regard Is 40–66, and in fact also the whole of the Isaian corpus, at least as a compository «unity». A good survey of the discussion of Trito-Isaian research up till 1970 is found in K. Pauritch, \textit{Die neue Gemeinde} (1971) 1-30. As a typical commentary that has opposed the traditional Trito-Isaian thesis, one may mention P.-E., Bonnard, \textit{Le Second Isai'e}, 1972. Important articles, opposing the Trito-Isaian thesis, are F. Maas, «Tritojesaja? Das Ferne und Nabe Wort (1967) 153-63, and A. Murtonen, «Third Isaiah - Yes or No?» \textit{Abr-n} 19 (19-80 - 81) 20 – 42.

\textsuperscript{181} Cf. K. Kiesow, \textit{Exodustexte im Jesajabuch} (1979) 123.

\textsuperscript{182} Among the rare exceptions from the scholarly consensus one may here note J. M. Vincent, \textit{Studien zur literarischen Eigenart und zur geistigen Heimat von Jesaja Kap. 40 – 55} (1977) 102–03.

\textsuperscript{183} Cf. above pp. 5 - 6, 27 - 36, 47, 61 - 62, 67 - 68, 71, and below pp. 81, 90 - 92, 97, 100 - 101, 109.

\textsuperscript{184} On this text, see further above pp. 21ff.
17. The wretched and the poor seek water, and there is none. Their tongues are parched by thirst. I, Yahweh, will answer them, (being) god of Israel, I shall not abandon them.

18. I will open rivers on bare heights and springs in the valleys. I will turn wilderness into marsh-land and dry land into springs of water.

19. I will put cedar, acacia, and myrtle, and olive in the wilderness. I will set cypress, plane and pine together in the desert;

20. so that they will see and know, observe and understand, that the hand of Yahweh has done this, and the holy one of Israel has created it.

Also the motif of the singing of praise of the mountains, the hills, and the trees (v. 12) is known from the message of Second Isaiah in similar contexts.

As the present context indeed is quite metaphorical, one should suspect the use of the verb מלח to be metaphorical, as well. One interesting thing about the word מלח is that it is often appears in the Hebrew Bible as a terminus technicus for «going to war». What we should do first of all, consequently, is to consider the possibility that the use of the

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185 See above n. 81.

186 See, for instance, such texts as Deut 20 : 1, Am 5 : 3, Prov 30 : 27, etc.
word הָעַמָּה in the present context may ultimately be taken from the language of war. From several, similar references to holy war terminology in Second Isaiah\(^{187}\), it lies near at hand to assume that this is correct, and that we, here, too, have literary/poetical reminiscences of the cosmic/eschatological or cultic (?) battle. There is, however, also another possibility that lies near at hand when we seek for an explanation for the occurrence of the word הָעַמָּה in Is 55. Thus, we have a very interesting parallel to Is 55: 12 in Jer 31: 4. As this text in Jeremiah shows several close similarities to the message of Second Isaiah in general, it may be of interest to quote the text in some length\(^{188}\). Jer 31: 2 – 6 reads as follows:

2. Yahweh says this:
   They have found pardon in the wilderness,
   those who have survived the sword.
   Israel is marching to his rest.

3. Yahweh has appeared to him from afar:
   I have loved you with an everlasting love,
   so I am constant in my affection for you.

4. I build you once more; you shall be rebuilt,
   virgin of Israel.
   Adorned once more, and with your tambourines,
   you will go out, dancing gaily.

5. You will plant vineyards once more on the mountains of Samaria
   (the planters have done their planting:
   they will gather the fruit).

\(^{187}\) Cf. above n. 125 and below notes 213 – 215 and 221.

\(^{188}\) Cf. also above n. 112 and below n. 258.
6. Yes, a day will come when
the watchmen shout
on the mountains of Ephraim,
-Up! Let us go up to Zion,
to Yahweh our God!

In this text we find apparent similarities not only to the
going out in joy in 55:12–13, but if we take a further glance
at the context of these verses in Jeremiah 31, we will find
also several other similarities between the two prophets:
The motif of the gathering from the lands\(^{189}\), the motif of
the blind and the lame\(^{190}\), the motif of leading by brooks
and on a straight path\(^{191}\), the shepherd motif\(^{192}\), and the re¬
ference to the nations\(^{193}\). As it was also the case with the
texts in Second Isaiah that we have treated in some detail
below\(^{194}\), however, the reference to the exodus event in
Jer 31:2, quoted above, has nothing to do with the golah,
but should be understood as a reference to the great deeds
of Yahweh towards his chosen people in the past.

What is of particular interest to us in the present Jeremiah
text, however, is the use of יָד in Jer 31:4. In this text
too, the motif of -going out-, -going forth-, is connected with
joy and merriness, similar to what we find in Is 55:12.
Sometimes, we find the motif of -going out- in connection
with the mythological -holy war- terminology in the
psalms. A text like Ps 68, for instance, contains not a few of
the elements which we are dealing with in the present context. In vv. 2 – 10 of this very old\(^{195}\) psalm we may
read:

\(^{189}\) Cf. above pp. 19 - 20, 37, 41, 45, 50 - 53, 56 - 57, 59, 62 - 63, 73
- 74, and below 87 - 88, 90, 92, 97, 105, 109.

\(^{190}\) Cf. above pp. 38, 40 - 44, 46, 52 - 53, 58.

\(^{191}\) Cf. above e. g. pp. 37ff.

\(^{192}\) Cf. above pp. 14, 17, 47 - 53, 59, and below p. 82.

\(^{193}\) Cf. above notes 44 and 54.

\(^{194}\) See, for instance, below pp. 96ff.

\(^{195}\) Whereas we in this psalm find references to the wanderings
of the Israelites in the wilderness, and to the mountain of Sinai,
there are no references to the going out of Egypt. Thus, we
2. Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered, and let those who hate him flee before him.

3. As smoke is driven away, they drive away. As wax melts before fire, the wicked perish before God.

4. But the just rejoice and triumph before God, and they exult with joy.

5. Sing to God, play music to his name, build a road to the rider upon clouds, to him whose name is Yahweh, exult before him.

6. Father of orphans and protector of widows; God in his holy dwelling.

7. God lets the lonely live in a house, he leads out prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious live in parched land.

8. God, when you went out at the head of your people, when you marched in the wilderness, the earth quaked, indeed, heaven let it rain at the presence of God, the god of Sinai, in the

have here an example of a very early form of Israelite tradition, from the time before the two originally different traditions of the Sinai event and the event of going out from Egypt had melted together in the tradition process.
presence of God,  
the god of Israel.

10. Rain in abundance  
you let it rain, God.  
You restored your faint  
inheritance.

In v. 8 we find the word **šām** used of Yahweh who goes forth in front of his people. The motif of holy war is here completely mixed with mythological theophany motifs. Also the reference to the praising of Yahweh in v. 5 and the mentioning of his road in the same verse, are motifs which remind us of holy war descriptions in the Hebrew Bible.

In Ps 68 we find also several other features of great interest in relation to the message of the prophet Second Isaiah. Remarkable is the reference to the building of a road in Ps 68:5. This motif may be compared to a text like e. g. the description of the road in the wilderness in 40:3ff. The exhortation to praise may be compared e. g. to Is 42:10-12, also this a pericope appearing in a clear holy war context. And in v. 7 we find the picture of the freeing of the prisoners, a metaphor well known to us from Is 40-55. In the same verse we also find the metaphor of the parched land, not unsimilar to some of the passages in Second Isaiah, mentioned above. If we take a look further on in the

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196 On this, see further above n. 125 and below notes 213-215, 221.

197 So, probably the road of Is 40:3 (cf. above pp. 9ff.) echoes a holy war motif.


199 Cf. above pp. 8ff.

200 Cf. above p. 39.

201 Cf. above pp. 41, 43, 55, 57-58, 61-62.

202 See above pp. 27, 30-32, 35-36, 44-45, 61, 77, and below 90-92, 97, 109.
text of Ps 68, we find in vv. 22 - 24, depicted in a vivid language, several words concerning the destruction of the enemies of Yahweh. In Second Isaiah, too, the destruction of the enemies of Yahweh is sometimes depicted in quite a robust language203. In Ps 68 : 8 - 10, quoted above, we find the motif of theophany and rain/fertility, also well known to us from the Book of Second Isaiah204. In v. 12, we meet with the well known messenger/victory motif205, and, finally, in v. 14, we find the motif of the shepherd, also well known to us from Is 40 - 55206.

From the passages in Jeremiah and Ps 68 that I have referred to above, it becomes more and more evident how interwoven is the whole of Is 40 - 55, and the message found there, with other biblical texts. Even if the prophet makes use of these traditions quite freely, we begin to suspect a certain pattern, which may help us to throw some light upon the message of Second Isaiah, and in this particular instance upon his use of קָרָא in Is 55 : 12.

As they contain several of the same elements which we have found in relation to the use of the verb קָרָא as a terminus technicus for going to war207, also other psalms in the Hebrew Bible are of interest to us. Among these, we may in particular note Pss 105, 108, and 114. In Ps 114 : 1, the motif of going out to war is connected with the exodus and the escape from Egypt. We notice with interest that Ps 114 has many of the same motifs that we find in Second Isaiah: the cosmogonic chaos combat, creation motifs, fertility and water motifs208.

203 One may here compare with a text like Is 49 : 26. Cf. also above pp. 52 - 53 and below pp. 93 - 94.
204 Cf. e.g. above pp. 27 - 28, 30 - 32, 35 - 36, 44 - 45, 67 - 68, 71, 77, and below pp. 90 - 92, 95, 97, 109.
205 Cf. above p. 13 and below p. 103.
207 See above n. 186.
208 See index of subjects for references.
1. When Israel left Egypt,
   the house of Jacob a people
   of strange language (?),
2. Judah became his holy one,
   Israel his dominion.
3. The sea saw (it) and fled,
   Jordan turned back.
4. The mountains skipped like
   rams,
   the hills like lambs.
5. Why was it, you sea, that you
   fled;
   Jordan that you turned back?
6. That the mountains skipped like
   rams,
   hills like lambs?
7. Before the face of יִרְאָה, tremble,
   earth!
   Before the face of the god of
   Jacob!
8. Who turned the rock into a marsh of
   water,
   the hard cliff into springs of water.

And in Ps 105:43 we may read how Yahweh leads his
people forth in song:

   And he led his people forth in
   joy,
   his chosen ones with cries of joy.

The context here is the exodus event, and from v. 44 it
appears how this motif is clearly connected with holy war.
Ps 108:11 provides us with another, and somewhat different,
motif of Yahweh leading his chosen people against
their enemies (vv. 10 – 14). This text, at least, makes it quite
apparent that there is no necessary connection between
holy war traditions and the exodus. As the motif of the
dragon fight\textsuperscript{209}, so the motif of Yahweh as warrior is de-

\textsuperscript{209} Cf. above notes 71 and 168.
eply embedded in Canaanite culture and religion\textsuperscript{210}, and it was only at a later stage that it was incorporated into the exodus tradition to such a degree that exodus texts should come to represent one of the most important contexts of holy war imagery\textsuperscript{211}. Using freely from among the motifs of ancient Israelite tradition that were available to him, Second Isaiah was able to utilize also holy war imagery without necessarily connecting it to exodus traditions. This is, in my view, the case in Is 55:12, where we have no reference to the going out of the exiles from Babylon, nor to the exodus tradition\textsuperscript{212}.

One further detail should also be mentioned in relation to the expression -going out- in holy war contexts. The matter is not least relevant for the passage Is 55:12–13. From the text that I have quoted above, we may see that Jer 31:3 mentions the adorning with timbrels and the going forth in the dance with merrymakers. A similar text is found in Ps 68:26, with the mentioning of singers, minstrels, and maidens walking in solemn procession\textsuperscript{213} into the temple:

The singers lead, the minstrels after, in the middle maidens play on timbrels.

The text is cultic, and the context of the passage in question demonstrates clearly that the language use derives from the context of holy war (cf. vv. 24–25). The phenomenon may or may not be related to the -going in and going out- of Ps 121:8. From these texts consequently, we may seem to have a totally different, -cultic-, meaning of the verb נָעַר.  

\textsuperscript{210} Cf. also above n. 125. 

\textsuperscript{211} Cf. n. 215 below. 

\textsuperscript{212} Cf. also Ps 121:8 (in vv. 5–7 is mentioned also sunsmitting. Cf. above p. 59). 

\textsuperscript{213} That this phenomenon formed a regular part of holy war rituals, may be seen also from such texts as 1 Sam 18:6, where we may read how the women greeted the return of the victorious soldiers with music and dance, and also from the stories of Jephtah's daughter in Judg 11:34, and of Miriam in Ex 15:20–21.
We should not forget, however, that the phenomenon of holy war in itself is a highly cultic event, and that Pss 68 and 121 are examples of late combinations of formerly separate traditions. It was only at a late stage, however, that the motif of holy war was completely received into the cult. On the other side, we should not fail to recognize that the phenomenon of holy war in itself always formed an inherent part of the ancient Israelite cult, and that we cannot at any stage in the history of religion of ancient Israel distinguish sharply between the two. That some development in the direction from more "primitive" holy war phenomena into a fully developed total cultic system took place, however, can hardly be denied. In this way, the cult should come to function as the intermediate stage between the earlier phases of the holy war phenomenon and the much later eschatological and apocalyptic development of this phenomenon within late Judaism.

214 According to the views of F. M. Cross in his article "The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult", Biblical Motifs (1966) 19 – 30, this is, for instance, in all likelihood how a text like Ps 24 should be understood. I believe that Cross has a very strong argument here. Another very important psalm from our point of view would be e. g. Ps 60.

215 One should here also mention the work by F. M. Cross, who in a most interesting and very stimulating chapter of his book Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (1973) writes about the phenomenon of «Ritual Conquest» (pp. 99 – 101). I find many of the observations of Cross in this chapter sound and to the point. This goes also for his remarks in the same chapter concerning Second Isaiah. I must disagree with Cross, however, in his view that the normal locus of holy warfare is rooted in the Exodus/Conquest, rather than in the primordial battle of creation (Cross op. cit. p. 100.). As I have mentioned above, I feel quite convinced of the opposite; in my view holy war terminology derives from Canaanite religious lore and is only secondary to the Exodus tradition. From what I have written in the present monograph, I would not have any objections to using Cross' terminology «ritual conquest», only I would not refer to it as «Exodus imagery», nor as «Second Exodus», nor as «Second conquest». When Cross, for instance, states (ibid. p. 109 n. 57), referring to H. W. Wolff, that we can find the motif of the «Second Exodus» as early as Hosea, and point to a text like Hos 2:16 – 17, he is, in my view, wrong. Hos 2:16 – 17 has nothing whatsoever to do with any «Second Exodus».
In Is 55:12 we find that the motif of "going out" is connected to the motifs of joy (חגוג) and peace (שלום). It could be that we, from our modern, western point of view, should have some difficulties in understanding that these very motives may easily be linked with motifs ultimately stemming from the traditions of holy war. If we take a closer look at the texts of the Hebrew Bible, however, we will soon find that this is not so unusual.

The motif of joy plays an important role in the Bible, not least in war contexts. Thus, we find the word חגוג, "joy", in a war context in Is 9:2. In e.g. 1 Sam 19:5, 2 Sam 1:20, and Am 6:13 we find חגוג in connection with victory over the enemy. And from Is 14:8 we learn of the rejoicing following the death of the tyrant; this, too, of course, being a warlike event. Also the rejoicing over salvation in Is 25:9, appearing in an "eschatological- on that day-" statement, should be read as part of a holy war context (cf. vv. 10–12). In Is 30:29, again, we meet with the expression "gladness of heart" (:NSUTF opportunities) in connection with the cultic sound of the flute calling the procession to set forth. Above, we have mentioned that the holy war motif is deeply embedded in ancient Canaanite /Israelite cultic traditions. From the context of Is 30:29, too, it becomes apparent that the wider perspective of this passage is theophany and holy war, and we may, consequently, suspect possible holy war overtones also in the expression "gladness of heart". One of the most interesting of the biblical passages relating the phenomenon of war to that of joy and happiness is Zech 10:7:

>Then Ephraim shall become like a mighty warrior, and their hearts shall be glad as with wine. Their children shall see it and rejoice,

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217 Cf. n. 216 above.

218 Cf. also the contrast, Is 24:6ff.
One quite interesting detail about the passage which I have just quoted, is that it appears in a traditional word concerning the ingathering of Judah/Joseph from the nations. The text mentions more specifically the return from Egypt and from Assyria (cf. also v. 9). Details of this text, in particular the reference to «the sea» in v.11, may easily lead to the assumption that we have an example of an «exodus motif» in this passage. When we take a closer look at the text, however, we shall see that this is not the case. A major motif of this text is the well known, late biblical motif of the ingathering from the golah. The references to Yahweh in v. 11 are of a more general cosmical/mythological character. Thus, it would not be correct to refer to this text as an «exodus text». The phenomenon should rather be compared to what we have found also in some of the so-called «exodus texts» of Second Isaiah which are treated in the present work. With regard to Is 55, furthermore, this text is solely concerned with the rebuilding of Judah as a nation by Yahweh's strong hand. Here, we find no references whatsoever to any ingathering from the golah, nor to any going out of Babylon, nor to any return to Zion.

Also the occurrence in a war-like context like Is 55:12 of the word «peace» (מָאָס) may at first glance seem somewhat surprising. It should be quite clear, however, that the Hebrew word מָאָס has very little indeed to do with what we would refer to as a state of non-war. In contrast, the word מָאָס may even appear in direct war texts.

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219 The fact that we also in Zech 10:7 (and not only in 10:3-5) find holy war overtones was denied by M. Soebo, Sacharja 9-14 (1969) 220. He is hardly justified in this, however.


Our conclusions concerning the text Is 55:12-13, consequently, may be summed up in the following way: We do not find in this passage, nor in its context, any references whatsoever to the going out of the exiles from Babylon, nor to any tradition related to the exodus event. Rather, we find in this passage in Second Isaiah a mixture of several different traditions, mostly related to holy war, all of which are well known to us also from other passages in the message of this prophet. All motifs utilized by Second Isaiah in this text represent metaphorical descriptions of the future salvation of the Judean people. As we have found it in so many texts in Is 40 – 55, the salvation consists of the re-establishing and the restoring of the Judeans into a powerful nation, as well as the destruction of the Babylonians and the other foreign nations that witnessed the downfall and ignominy of the Judean kingdom.

Above222, I have mentioned the fact that the majority of the prophets of the exilic period mention in their message the ingathering of the Israelites from the foreign nations. Second Isaiah makes no exception in this respect. Is 43:1 – 7 provides us with an illustrative example of this. Also this text, however, has been assumed by many scholars, eagerly hunting for “exodus motifs” in Is 40 – 55, to refer to the return of the exiled Judeans through the desert back to Jerusalem. By doing so, however, I suspect that these scholars may have misinterpreted the basic message of this text. The text Is 43:1 – 7 reads as follows:

1. But now, thus says
    Yahweh,
    who created you, Jacob,
    who formed you, Israel:
    Fear not, for I have redeemed
    you.
    I have called you by name,
    you are mine.

2. When you pass through the
    water, I will be with you,
    and in the rivers, they
    shall not swallow you.

222 N. 52 and n. 121.
When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

3. For I am Yahweh your god, the holy one of Israel, your saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

4. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.

5. Fear not, for I am with you. I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you.

6. I will say to the north: Give, and to the south: Hold not back. Bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth,

7. all those who are called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

Again, it must be made quite clear that we have no references to the "exodus event" in this context, and that we, consequently, are not allowed to speak of any "exodus motif".

223 On this formula in Second Isaiah, cf. above n. 84.

In the whole of Is 43:1–7, only v. 2 contains a motif that could possibly be taken as referring to the exodus event. The rest of the passage consists solely of different words of confidence. In v. 1, Israel is referred to as the chosen people\textsuperscript{225}. Further, we find assurances that the nations, here exemplified by Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba, shall now face destruction instead of Israel (v. 4). In vv. 5–6 we find again\textsuperscript{226} the well known motif of the ingathering from the go- lah, and, finally, in v. 7, we are once more reminded of the fact that Israel is the chosen people, and that she for that reason needs have no fears whatsoever\textsuperscript{227}.

Also the expressions -waters-, -rivers-, -fire-, and -flame- in the present text should not be regarded as references to the traditions of exodus or wilderness wanderings, but they are simply metaphors for the frightful powers of destruction that may threaten the chosen people in the future. Even if the image of the water may very well stem from the primordial chaos combat myth, one should, at least in this particular context, avoid looking in any such direction. What is roughly meant here is that Yahweh is going to protect his chosen people from all future danger.

Water as a metaphor of the threatening forces in life is well known from the Hebrew Bible. One of the best examples is probably provided by Ps 69, where the psalmist in vv. 2–3 and 15–16 in his despair compares himself to a drowning man\textsuperscript{228}:


\textsuperscript{226} Cf. above n. 220.

\textsuperscript{227} Cf. also above notes 16, 87, 171.

\textsuperscript{228} Cf. further on this P. Reymond, \textit{L'eau, sa vie, sa signification dans l'Ancien Testament} (1958) 74.
2. Save me, God,
   for the water threatens
   my life.

3. I am sinking in deep swamp,
   and there is no foothold.
   I have reached the depths of the
   water, and the
   flood sweeps over me.

15. Save me from the mud,
    that I do not sink.
    Let me be saved from
    those who hate me,
    and from the depths of the sea.

16. Let not the flood of water sweep
    over me,
    and let not the deep swallow me,
    and let not the pit close its mouth
    over me.

That we find the elements of water and fire mentioned to¬
gether in Is 43:2 should surprise no one. The same combi¬
nation of these two extreme elements of natural life is fou¬
nd also in Ps 66:12. Here, too, the elements of fire and wa¬
ter are used as descriptions of distress and disaster, as op¬
posed to the intervention and relief of Yahweh. In Ps 66:6
there is a reference to the Red Sea event, as well. But there
is no genetic connection between these two motifs in this
psalm. As in other psalms of the Hebrew Bible, and similar
to what we find in Is 40–55, the authors of these texts uti¬
ilize many different motifs, mingling freely from the old re¬
ligio-poetic traditions of ancient Israel, in order to get
their message through. If one wants to look for the back¬
ground of the compository technique of the prophet Sec¬
ond Isaiah, the Book of Psalms of the Hebrew Bible is, as
the present work tends to demonstrate, certainly the best
place to start the search. One further metaphor which
may interest us in relation to Is 43:2 is found in Is 30:27,

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229 In fact, a major part of the present investigation shows quite strongly the importance of the psalms for a better understanding of Is 40–55. Cf. also below n. 255.
where, in a word of doom, among other similes, Yahweh's tongue is compared to the devouring fire, and in Is 30:28, where his breath is compared to a stream that destroys the nations. A similar picture is found in Hos 5:10, where we may read that Yahweh is going to pour our wrath like water. Also in Job 22:11 we find a variation of the 'water motif'. Here, water and darkness are mentioned together, symbolizing the threatening situation. Reference could also be made to Ps 18:5, where the psalmist refers to his former desperate state through the expression 'torrents of perdition'.

In conclusion, we see that we have no references in Is 43:1-7 to any home-coming from Babylon, nor to the exodus tradition. What we do find in this passage are, as in other texts in Second Isaiah,230 references to the ingathering from the golah. This, however, is something quite different. If one should want to do so, one may, of course, refer to this ingathering from the golah as a 'new exodus'. But then one should be well aware of the fact that this motif does not form a very important part of the message of Second Isaiah. Through the use of such motifs as fire and water, motifs well known from the ancient Hebrew literature as expressions for life-threatening forces, the poet-prophet behind Is 40-55 once again gives expression to his favourite message: From now on all threats to life and prosperity will be taken away from the chosen people; i.e. the Judeans living in Jerusalem and Judah. Yahweh has forgiven his people. The future is theirs. Again we notice the richness and the amazing variety and great beauty in poetic expression in the language of the prophet Second Isaiah. Yet, the very message itself is quite simple. In order to understand adequately the rich metaphorical language of Is 40-55 we must always read the text against its context. With regard to Is 43:1-7, as we have also seen it with regard to many other passages in the Second Isaian corpus, it has been to great disadvantage that the scholarly world has been so eager to press these beautiful and rich poetic verses into the irrelevant common mound of the exodus event. Being above all poetry, these texts have to be treated as poetry

230 Cf. above n. 220.
and not primarily as references to specific historical events. In any case, they should not be interpreted as references to the homecoming of exiles from Babylon, an event that could hardly be said to play any major role in the message of the prophet Second Isaiah at all.

We have by now quite briefly discussed the majority of the texts which scholars have taken to contain a so-called -exodus motif- in Is 40 - 55, and have arrived at the conclusion that none of these texts can be said to refer specifically to the home-coming of exiles from Babylon, thus constituting a -new exodus- in the salvation history of the Jewish people. In fact, the texts treated so far do not refer to the exodus traditions of the Hebrew Bible at all. Having learnt, however, how the person behind Is 40 - 55 ingeniously masters a variety of ancient Israelite poetical forms and traditions, one should, in fact, by now start wondering whether or not he did refer to the exodus tradition? The exodus tradition, being one of the most important and most influential of all the ancient biblical traditions, is, of course, also to be found in Is 40 - 55. If this had not been the case, it would indeed have been remarkable. Thus, we may read in Is 43 : 14 - 21, a text following the one which we have quoted above:

14. Thus says Yahweh,
    your redeemer, the holy one
    of Israel:
    For your sake I will send to
    Babylon

231  Pp. 88 - 89.

232  The expression -send to Babylon-, is one of several clear indications that the situation is presented from the point of view of being in Judah, and not in Babylon. As mentioned above (see above n. 9) the present author has strongly favoured Judah and Jerusalem as the natural location of the prophet Second Isaiah. Those scholars who have favoured a Babylonian setting for the prophet behind Is 40 - 55, have had real problems with Is 43 : 14. The main problem with this text, however, is that v. 14 apparently is corrupt. For a thorough discussion of the text critical problems involved here, see W. E. Barnes, The Masoretic Reading of Isaiah 43 : 14, JThS 29 (1928) 252-55. How difficult the text is, may be seen from the completely differing translation of A. Guillaume:
HOLY WAR AND REJOICING

and break down all the bars,
and the shouting of the
Chaldeans will be turned to
lamentations.

15. I am Yahweh, your holy one,
the creator of Israel,
your king.

16. Thus says Yahweh,
who made a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,

17. who led forth chariot and
horse,
army and warrior.
They laid down, they could not rise,
they were snuffed out,
quenched like a wick.

18. Remember not the former
things\(^{233}\),
nor consider earlier events.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{233}}\) The problem of -the new things- and -the old things- in Second Isaiah, referred to in Is 41:22 - 23, 43:9, 43:18, 44:6 - 8, 45:21, 46:9 - 11, and 48:3 - 8, have been widely discussed (see, for instance, F. Feldmann, "Das Frühere und das Neue. Ein Beitrag zur Jesajakritik", Festchrift Eduard Sachau (1915) 162 - 169, Aa. Bentzen, "On the Ideas of -the Old- and -the New- in Deutero-Isaiah", StTh 1 (1947) 183 - 87, C. R. North, "The Former Things and the -New Things- in Deutero-Isaiah", Studies in Old Testament Prophecy (1950) 111 - 126, A. Schoors, "Les choses antérieures et les choses nouvelles dans les oracles deutéro-isaïens", ETI 40 (1964) 19 - 47, Th. M. Ludwig, "Remember not the Former Things", Transitions and Transformations in the History of Religions (1980) 25 - 55). I am not going into any discussion here, but should like to state quite briefly that I believe that the solution is not a very intricate one. Here, too, the prophet Second Isaiah must be said to have a rather one track mind, despite all his brilliance in mastering the subtleties of the poetical Hebrew language. With -the former things- he simply refers to everything that was before and which led to the catastrophe of 587/586, including the punishment for the transgressions of the people, mentioned al-
19. See, I am doing something new. 
   Now it springs forth. Do you not perceive it? 
   I will make a way in the wilderness 
   and rivers in the desert.

20. The wild beasts will honour me, 
    the jackals and the ostriches, 
    for I give water in the wilderness, 
    rivers in the desert, 
    to give drink to my chosen people,

21. the people whom I formed for myself, 
    that they may proclaim my praise.

As we may see from v. 14, we have here a word of the prophet against Babylon. Strangely enough, Babylon is not mentioned often in the Second Isaian corpus. But then, of course, this was hardly necessary. It is self evident that the Babylonians and their invasion of Jerusalem in the year 587/586 B.C.E. formed an inherent part of the historical

ready in Is 40:2 (cf. above pp. 9ff.). With the new things he is simply referring to his own message: Yahweh has forgiven his people their sins, and they can now look forward to a bright future under his mighty protection.

234 The word הָדוֹן appears ipsissimum verbum only in Is 43:14, 47:1, and 48:14. 20.

situation in which the Judeans found themselves in the lifetime of the prophet Second Isaiah. Indirectly, in one way or another, the Babylonians did form the very background of the whole of the message of this prophet. Thus, even if Babylon is hardly mentioned specifically, we must assume that everyone present among the prophet's audience knew only too well what the situation, to which Second Isaiah was referring throughout his message, was like. Also, it should be kept in mind that the prophet, conforming to what was normal procedure for the production of literature in the Ancient Near East in his times, and despite for his mastery of language composition, was not entirely free to produce his message the way the readers of the twentieth century might like to have it. As much as the document Is 40 - 55 consists of religious and political propaganda, it is above all poetry. In other words: the text reveals its message much more in an indirect that in a direct manner. Knowing how far away the ancient Hebrew prose traditions may appear from our modern, historico-logical requirements236, how much more then would this not be the case with poetic texts?

Following the word against Babylon in 43 : 14 - 15, we get a word of salvation for Israel237. Whereas the word against Babylon is emphasized through the use of the so-called self presentation formula -I am...238, the word in favour of Judah is being underlined through an epithetical reference to the mighty deeds of Yahweh in the past, namely the story

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237 Cf. also above pp. 22, 24, 36, 39, 56 - 57, 73.

238 Cf. above pp. 25 - 26, 66, 98.
told in Ex 14 – 15 of how Moses, fleeing from the Egyptians, miraculously escapes as Yahweh divides the Red Sea, so that the Israelites were allowed to pass across dryshod, whereas the Egyptians were all drowned. We have here, unmistakably, a reference to the exodus event. It must, however, be quite clear that this has nothing whatsoever to do with any «second exodus». In the present connection the motif of the passing through the Red Sea only serves the function of a hymnic Göttlerpithet, aiming at convincing the prophet's audience that Yahweh, the mighty god that once saved his people from the Egyptians in a miraculous way, again will act on behalf of his chosen people. He shall now save them from the Babylonian yoke: he will «send to Babylon and break down all the bars and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be turned to lamentations». As we may see from the context of this verse239, there is no relating of the exodus event to the actual release of the Israelites from Babylon, nor any reference to any wandering through the desert back to Jerusalem, modelled on the wilderness wanderings of the Pentateuchal traditions.

We notice further that we in Is 43 : 14 – 21 also find other motifs, well known to us from the Second Isaian corpus: the reference to the old and the new things240, to the way in the desert241, to the water in the wilderness242, and to Yahweh's election of the Israelite people243. But again, none of these different motifs has anything to do with any «new exodus». They are all poetical metaphors, giving expression to the future salvation of the Judean people, i.e. their national restoration244, their ingathering from the golah

239 On this verse, see above pp. 43, 93 - 94.
240 Cf. above n. 233.
241 Cf. above pp. 8ff., 17 - 20, 38, 47, 62, and below 109 - 110.
243 Cf. above notes 16, 87, and 225.
244 Which, of course, is what the message of Second Isaiah is really all about.
(not only from Babylon)\(^{245}\) and, last, but not least, victory over their enemies\(^{246}\). In sum, all of these ideas constitute the theological and political program of the prophet Second Isaiah. Rather than to any «new exodus» we find in these texts allusions to the «new Israel».

Also in Is 48: 20 – 21 we find references to the Red Sea event. And in this particular text the motif is actually combined with an exhortation to go out from Babylon. The prophet, living in Judah\(^{247}\), is here addressing the exiles in Babylon. We have here one of the very rare instances in the Deutero-Isaian corpus where the prophet is really addressing the exiles in Babylon\(^{248}\). As the message of the prophet is obviously delivered to the prophet's audience in Judah/Jerusalem\(^{249}\), however, the message of the prophet is twofold, partly directed to the Judeans at home, and partly to that minority\(^{250}\) of the people who had been taken away to Babylon\(^{251}\). We read in Is 48: 17 – 21:

17. Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, the holy one


\(^{247}\) Cf. above pp. 5 - 7, 18, and below pp. 103, 110.

\(^{248}\) Cf. also above p. 95.

\(^{249}\) Cf. above pp. 6 - 7, 18, and below pp. 103, 110.

\(^{250}\) It is a fact that the amount of people that were taken away to Babylon, as well as their significance for the religious and cultural development in Judah after the exile, has been widely overestimated by many biblical scholars. Further on this, see the article by the present writer, referred to in n. 3 above.

\(^{251}\) We should not fail to remember, however, that the problem of Israelite/Judean settlement in Babylon is not as simplistic as some students of the Hebrew Bible seem to assume. The later history of this settlement, being the result not only of one, but of several deportations, as well as of voluntary migration, has been treated thoroughly in the now classical study by J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*. Vols. 1 – 5. 1966 – 70.
of Israel:

I am Yahweh, your god, who teaches you to do what is good for you, who leads you on the way you should go.

18. If only you had hearkened to my commandments,
your peace would have been like a river,
and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

19. And your offspring would have been like the sand,
and your descendants like its grains.
Their name would never be cut off,
or blotted out before me.

20. Go forth from Babylon, flee from Chaldea.
Proclaim this with a shout of joy, declare it,
send it forth to the end of the earth.
Say: Yahweh has redeemed his servant Jacob!

21. They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts.
He made water flow for them from the rock.
He split the rock, and the water gushed out.

In the passage which we have just quoted, we find a clear reference to the tradition of the exodus from Egypt. We notice with interest that we find the very same, or similar,

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252 Concerning the so-called self predication formula in Is 40 - 55, cf. above pp. 25 - 26, 66, 96.

253 Again (cf. above pp. 6 - 7, 18, and below 103, 110), one should not fail to notice that the whole situation is being viewed from the point of view of being situated in Judah, looking towards Babylon!
phraseology as that used by the prophet here in Is 48: 21 (e.g. מַלְאָךְ) both in Ps 78: 20 and in Ps 105: 41. Both of these psalms belong to the so-called ·historical· psalms of the psalter, bearing witness to the salvation history of the Israelite people. Thus, we are here once more reminded of the close relationship between the psalmodic literature of the Hebrew Bible and the message of the prophet Second Isaiah. What is of particular interest in the text which we have just quoted, Is 48: 17 – 21, is the combination of the exhortation to go out from Babylon in v. 20 and the reference to the exodus motif in v. 21. No doubt, it lies near at hand to take the reference to the leading through the desert in v. 21 as an allusion to the going out of Baby-

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Ish 55:12-13

Isaiah, modelled on the going out from Egypt in the exodus tradition. Contrary to all the texts which we have dealt with above, the passage Is 48:20-21 could be read as a reference to a new exodus the way some scholars have understood this particular motif. But this is not what the passage is all about. The basic context of these verses is not the return of the chosen people to Zion an sich, but rather a word of doom against Babylon. When the prophet addresses his fellow countrymen in Babylon with the request: "Go forth from Babylon, flee from Chaldea", this should not be regarded as a request to run away from their captivity. We must here keep in mind that the context is that of a word of doom against Babylon. The meaning of the prophetic word is rather this: As Babylon is going to be destroyed by Yahweh, those of the people of Yahweh who soujourn there, either as a result of deportations, or as a result of voluntary migration, had better leave Babylon at once, or they will suffer with the Babylonians when the Babylonian empire succumbs, following Yahweh’s intervention on behalf of his chosen people. What we have here, is an indirect word of doom against the Babylonians rather than a reference to a "new exodus". This interpretation is favoured also by another prophetic tradition, from which Second Isaiah may have been influenced. I am, of course, referring to the phraseology found in the words against Babylon in Jer 50:8, 51:6, and 51:45. In these texts in Jeremiah, the very same exhortation to flee from Babylon appears. If the people follow the request of the prophet, they will not die when Yahweh destroys the Babylonians, Yahweh’s enemies. The prophetic exhortation is

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256 It is certainly no coincidence that the passage Is 48:20-21 appears not long after the word of doom against Babylon, Is 47.

257 Cf. above n. 143.
expressed in a style and phraseology very similar to what we find in Is 48: 20\(^{258}\) (cf. also Zech 2: 10 – 13).

One last text which it may seem appropriate to deal with in connection with Is 48: 17 – 21, and that has also been regarded by scholarly consensus to be a prime example of a «new exodus» motif in the Second Isaian corpus, is Is 52: 11 – 12:

11. Depart, depart, go out from there,
touch no unclean thing.
Go out from her,
purify yourselves,
you who carry the weapons\(^{259}\) of Yahweh.

12. For you shall not hurry out,
and you shall not go in flight,
for Yahweh will go in front of you,
and the god of Israel will be your rear guard.

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\(^{258}\) That this word in Second Isaiah is building upon the Jeremia-

\(^{259}\) On this translation, cf. further below pp. 104 - 105.
In the present writer's view, the whole of Is 52 constitutes a "compositional unit", and it is impossible to comment satisfactorily upon 52:11 - 12 without taking the whole of this textual unit into proper consideration. However, as this would imply going into great detail concerning the problems of the so-called "servant song", Is 52:13 - 53:12, it simply cannot be done here. What I hope to be able to do here, consequently, is simply to argue that scholarly consensus, reading the text Is 52:11-12 as a reference to a "second exodus", i.e. the mass return in solemn procession from Babylon of exiled Judeans through the desert back to Jerusalem, is basically wrong. First and foremost, there is the matter of the context. What kind of context do we have in Is 52? The language context of Is 52 is, as also elsewhere in Is 40 - 55, that of holy war. The holy war terminology starts already with the two first words of chapter 52, and may further be spotted several places in the text, e.g. in v. 7, and in v. 10. Holy war terminology is also precisely what we find in vv. 11 - 12.

It is further quite clear from the context that the prophet is here basically addressing Zion/Jerusalem (see in particular vv. 1 - 2 and 8 - 9). Again, we have here an indication that the prophet's audience is in Jerusalem and not in Babylon.

260 Cf. above n. 86.


262 With regard to the expression 'usher, ירוש שיר עון זיון, the closest parallel from the classical holy war tradition of ancient Israel would be Judg 5:12 (cf. also Is 51:9 and 51:17, as well as above pp. 71 - 72).

263 On this verse, having its background in the messenger bringing back the good news of victory, cf. above p. 13.

264 On this expression, cf. above n. 170.

265 Cf. above pp. 6 - 7, 18, 98 - 99.
Incidentally, the expression כַּ֥רְשֶׁת in v. 11 has been used by most of the scholars who have favoured a Judean setting of the prophet as a reference to the going out of the exiles from Babylon from the point of view of those standing in Jerusalem. In an earlier article I have argued along the same lines²⁶⁶. Today, however, I am not so convinced anymore that we in vv. 11 – 12 have a reference to the going out of the exiles from Babylon at all.

We notice with interest the similarities in phraseology and contents between vv. 1 – 2 and vv. 11 – 12. In addition to such similarities in style as the double imperative רֵאֵ֣ת וְרַעַת and רֵאֵת וְרַעַת, both places have references to holy war and to cultic uncleanness in relation to the same. The common translation into English of כַּ֥רְשֶׁת in Is 52 is -the vessels of Yahweh-. With the -vessels of Yahweh-, of course, one is thinking of the vessels from the temple that were taken away by the Babylonians after the catastrophe of 587/586 B.C.E. and to which we find references in Jer 27 : 16, 28 : 3, 6, and Ezra 1 : 7. One should not fail to notice, however, that these passages have all of them כַּ֥רְשֶׁת, the vessels of the house of Yahweh, i. e. the vessels of the temple. As the only passage in the Hebrew Bible Is 52:11 has כַּ֥רְשֶׁת alone. I believe that this difference may be of some importance.

Against the background of the overall importance of holy war traditions in the Hebrew Bible in general²⁶⁷, and not least in Is 40 – 55²⁶⁸, one cannot help noticing the strong holy war overtones of the whole of chapter Is 52²⁶⁹. Following this, I suspect that there are reasons to assume that we in the expression כַּ֥רְשֶׁת in Is 52 : 11 have a reference to the -weapons of Yahweh- rather than to the -vessels of Yah-
weh-. כֵּלֵם being also a designation for "weapons" and "weaponry" in the Hebrew Bible, this should surprise no one. In fact, the very expression כֵּלֵם appearing in Is 52:11 is a *terminus technicus* for a weapon carrier\(^{270}\). And in Ps 7:14, in a context heavily embedded in holy war phraseology, מַלְאָכָּה is used as an expression for Yahweh's weapons.

So we should not understand the words of the prophet "depart, depart" as a reference to the going out from Babylon. Rather, we should read this text in the light of Is 52:1-2, which clearly indicates a holy war context. These texts again should be compared to a Second Isaian passage like 51:9 and its context, a holy war text relating to the enemies of the chosen people\(^{271}\), and other passages in Second Isaiah embedded in holy war terminology, like, for instance Is 55:12-13.

Also 52:7-9 is closely related to the holy war and describes the victory over the enemies in battle\(^{272}\). The meaning of Is 52:11-12, then, is not that the exiles shall go out of Babylon, but that the new Israel shall go forth in holy war against her enemies and not, as the last time they went out of Jerusalem, as fugitives and prisoners(v. 12).

Again we are reminded of the fact that the language of the prophet is through and through metaphorical, and that one cannot and should not accept the first literal interpretation that may come into one's mind. We have no "exodus motif" in Is 52:11-12. Rather, we find an exhortation to go out to war, similar to what we find also in other passages in the message of the prophet Second Isaiah. Yahweh, having returned to Zion, i. e. having chosen once more to take care of his chosen people, will lead his people forth as he did before. Using a language extremely rich in metaphors, the prophet can inform his audience, the people of Jerusalem, that they can now expect their situation to change complet-

\(^{270}\) Judg 9:54, 1 Sam 14:1.

\(^{271}\) Cf. above pp. 71 - 72.

\(^{272}\) Cf. also above pp. 16, 22, 24, 26, 39, 53, 56 - 57, 73, 79, 81 - 82, 88, 90, 97, 101.
HOLY WAR AND REJOICING

ey. Yahweh has forgiven his people for all their former sins. He is once more going to act on their behalf.

No wonder that the kind of language used by this prophet before long was turned into pure «eschatology». Even in its present form the message of the Second Isaiah is unreal, half informing his audience what is going to befall them, and half poetic/eschatological. To put it bluntly, we may say that we are here witnessing the «beginning of eschatology». It would hardly be correct to state that the prophet Second Isaiah is «eschatological»\(^{273}\). His language is that of metaphors and poetic artistry, the purpose of which it was to lend support and comfort to his fellow country men in one of the most difficult periods in their history\(^{274}\).

\(^{273}\) Cf. above n. 109.

\(^{274}\) Thus it is somewhat rationalistic when R. P. Carroll in his article «Second Isaiah and the Failure of Prophecy», *SiTb* 32 (1978) 120 claims that there exists a conflict between aroused expectation and historical fulfilment after 538 B.C.E., as a result of the *grandiose language* used by the prophet to predict the restoration. Carroll has here failed to recognize the strongly poetical character of the message of the prophet. Again, one must take care not to interpret the metaphorical language of Is 40 – 55 literally.
CHAPTER VIII
SUMMING UP

In the present work, I have treated in some detail all the passages in the message of the prophet Second Isaiah which commentators have regarded as so-called «exodus texts». By this expression, they often mean texts that refer to a «second exodus», i.e. the return of exiles from Babylon through the desert to Judah, modelled on the ancient Israelite tradition of the flight from Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness275. In the present summing up, I must

275 The exact duration of the so-called «exilic period» is still under scholarly discussion. According to the more acceptable speculations, the «exile» lasted from the summer of 587, or 586, to 538, which leaves us a period of 48 years. The seventy years period mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, consequently, should not be taken as an exact reference to the duration of the «exile», but must be understood as a round, or symbolic, figure for a certain period of importance. This view was taken i. a. by E. Vogt, -70 anni exsiliis, Bib 38 (1957) 236, P. R. Ackroyd, «Two Old Testament Historical Problems of the Early Persian Period», JNES 17 (1958) 23 – 27 (cf. also R. Borger, «An Additional Remark on P. R. Ackroyd JNES 17 (1958) 23 – 27», JNES 18 (1959) 74). This is hardly the place for going into details concerning this discussion, but it could be mentioned, in passing, that the symbolic use of the figures 7 and 70, so frequently found in the Ancient Near East, makes the assumption of Ackroyd (as well as of other scholars who do not take the «seventy years» literally) quite probable (cf. here A. S. Kapelrud, «The Number Seven in Ugaritic Texts», VT 18 (1968) 494 – 99, F. C. Fensham, «The Numeral Seventy in the Old Testament», PEQ 109 (1977) 113 – 15). For a different view and other attempts to solve the problem of the «seventy years», see i. a. C. F. Whitley, «The Term Seventy Years Captivity», VT 4 (1954) 60 – 72, «The Seventy Years Desolation», VT 7 (1957) 416-18, A. Orr, «The Seventy Years of Babylon», VT 6 (1956) 304 – 06, G. Larsson, «When Did the Babylonian Captivity Begin?», JThS 19
summing up conclude that I have not succeeded in finding one single text that qualifies for the designation -exodus text-, in the accepted meaning of the phrase. What I have found, however, is that the prophet Second Isaiah, when expressing his particular message to the Judeans, used a rich variety of the different ancient Israelite traditions that were available to him, to some degree including also the exodus tradition.

The language of the prophet behind Is 40 – 55 is poetic and incredibly rich. When delivering his message to his audience, he draws heavily on the storehouse of the ancient Israelite traditions, one of his main sources of inspiration being the Hebrew Psalter. This, of course, does not imply that this prophet in some way or another was connected with the cult. In the same way as the message of the prophet Second Isaiah, the Hebrew psalms also represent poetry on a very high artistic level, and it should surprise no one when this master of the Hebrew language took this literary gold mine to be his main source of inspiration when expressing his message of hope and comfort to his fellow countrymen in Judah.276

276 On the relationship between Is 40 – 55 and the psalms, cf. above n. 255. As I have mentioned earlier in this book, however, ancient Israelite psalmody were not the prophet's only source of inspiration. Above, I have mentioned that scholars have seen similarities between the message of Second Isaiah and such different works as the Book of Jeremiah (cf. above note 112), and the Pentateuch (cf. above notes 49, 68, 174), not to mention, of course, the Isaiah tradition (cf. above notes 110 – 111). Among the authors who have pointed to similarities between Is 40 – 55 and other biblical books are also: U. Cassuto, «On the Formal and Stylistic Relationship Between Deutero-Isaiah and Other Biblical Writers», *Biblical and Oriental Studies I* (1973) 141 – 71 (This work, originally published sixty years earlier, treats in some detail the relationship between Second Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nahum, and Zephaniah), S. Terrien, «Quelques remarques sur les affinités de
The main problem with the book of Second Isaiah is that the language is strongly metaphorical/not concrete. Metaphorical and poetical language does not in the same way as concrete language give away the historical situation in which it has come to be. For this reason the given historical situation has first to be reconstructed. It is for the same reason, of course, that poetry can be interpreted and reused again and again to suit any historical situation.

As we have seen, we find among the most important traits of the message of the prophet Second Isaiah the return of Yahweh to Zion^277, the return of the Judeans from the gol¬ah^278, and the destruction of the enemy nations^279. Taken together, all of these different subjects express one and the same basic message of the restoration and the future prospering of the Judean nation^280. Among the different motifs used by the prophet to express his message we find e. g. the underlining of the incomparability of Yahweh^281, the

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277 Cf. above n. 177.


280 Here, too, the prophet is working in continuity with a broad prophetic tradition. Whereas the average scholarly assumption has regarded prophetic restoration theology as being concerned primarily with Judah, the recent work by T. A. Boogaart, Reflections on restoration (1981), has shown that there existed a prophetic restoration tradition also with regard to the northern kingdom.

281 Notes 43 and 45.
SUMMING UP

creation motif[^282], the water motif[^283], the levelling of the ground[^284], and the desert motif[^285]. It is not correct, however, to regard the motif of a "second exodus" as prominent in this prophet[^286].

The present writer has, during the last ten years or so, spent many hours in the company of the prophet Second Isaiah. Over the years, the studies have resulted in several smaller works, most of them still unpublished. The present monograph may well be read as an independent contribution to one particular topic within the message of Is 40 – 55, but it originally grew out of my preoccupation with the problem of the domicile of the prophet Second Isaiah[^287].

Biblical scholarship is a fascinating, yet intriguing field. Again and again, one is struck with wonder at the ways in which some views can reach the state of scholarly consensus. In my 1982 article, I attempted to demonstrate that a Babylonian setting of this prophet is a misunderstanding. There is simply nothing in the chapters 40 – 55 of the Book of Isaiah that points towards the fact that the originator of this text should have had far away Babylon as his residence. Elsewhere[^288], I have also attempted to show that two

[^282]: Cf. above pp. 28ff., 31ff., 69, 71, 82, 89..


[^284]: Cf. above pp. 8ff., 17 - 20, 38, 47, 62, 97.


[^286]: In fact, this motif has only been found in 43: 14 – 23 and 48: 17 – 21 (but see above pp. 93 - 101.

[^287]: Unfortunately, so far I have been unable to treat this problem in any length. A short article, "Lebte Deuterojesaja in Judâa?", appeared in VETEROTESTAMENTICA (1982) 77-87.

of the major suppositions leading to the assumption of a Babylonian setting of Second Isaiah, namely that of an assumed Babylonian literary influence upon Is 40 – 55, and that of demographic, religious and cultural impoverishment in the Judean home country, are untenable.

The people in Judah during the time of the exile were a people in great distress. Religious syncretism289 was, as a result of the catastrophe of 587/586290, prospering as never before291. The whole population was suffering from the shock of national disaster, as well as from economic poverty. In particular the first period following the destruction of Jerusalem must have been difficult. The beautiful and tragic book of Lamentations provides us with a deeply moving picture of how the Judean population were experiencing the first difficult time after the catastrophe. Even if the nation slowly recovered over the years, the situation under the Babylonians cannot have been easy. In addition to the difficult material situation, it was in particular the loss of national independence that was felt as a heavy burden. The need for support and comfort in times like these is self evident. The need for a great prophet is obvious. Such was the situation in which the prophet Jeremiah found himself after the fall of Jerusalem, when being approached by the leaders who wanted him to intervene with Yahweh of their behalf (Jer 42). Very illustrative indeed is the answer from Yahweh, communicated through the prophet (v.10):

If you remain in this land,
then I will build you up
and not tear you down.
I will plant you, and not uproot


290 On the circumstances around the Babylonian invasion, cf. above notes 161 and 235.

291 The phenomenon is richly attested in the very book of Second Isaiah itself. One may here compare the many words against the non-Israelite deities in this work (cf. above notes 45 and 161).
you. For I repent the evil
I did to you.

Jeremiah, however, was taken to Egypt. Thus, he was unable to offer his people the comfort of Yahweh. Almost 50 years later there should arise another great prophet in Judah, who would take up the words of Yahweh to Jeremiah, and who should really give comfort his people. His name is unknown to us, but his message has been handed down to posterity within the corpus of that great prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem, and we know him only as the Second Isaiah.
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