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*Archaeological Backgrounds of the
Exilic and Postexilic Era*
Part 3:

The Archaeological Background of Ezra

Edwin M. Yamauchi

The Babylonian Exile

Whereas the population of Israel (the northern kingdom) in the eighth century has been estimated at 500,000 to 700,000, the population of Judah in the eighth to the sixth centuries has been estimated at between 220,000 and 300,000.¹ Population estimates for cities are made on the basis of forty to fifty persons per dunam or one thousand square meters. As there are four dunams per acre, this would be an estimate of 160 to 200 persons per acre.

Broshi suggests that Jerusalem was swelled by refugees from the north when Samaria fell in 722 B.C.² and expanded to 500 dunams or 25,000 persons. At the time of Nehemiah the city had contracted to 120 dunams or 6,000 persons.³

Judah had escaped the attacks of Tiglath-pileser III when Azariah (Uzziah) paid tribute to the king,⁴ though Gezer was captured. But when Sennacherib attacked Judah in 701, he deported numerous Jews especially from Lachish. His annals claim that he deported 200,150 from Judah,⁵ but this is no doubt an error for 2,150.⁶

The biblical references to the numbers which were deported by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar are incomplete and somewhat confusing. They have given rise to conflicting interpretations as to the actual number of Judeans and the percentage of the population deported.

Until 1956 no extra-biblical evidence was available to confirm the attack on Judah in Nebuchadnezzar's first year.⁷ Either in

that year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign or soon after, Daniel and his companions were carried off to Babylon.⁸

In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar carried off "all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans — a total of 10,000" (2 Kings 24:14). "The king also deported to Babylon the entire force of 7,000 fighting men . . . and 1,000 craftsmen and artisans" (24:16). If these figures represent only the heads of households, the total may have been closer to 30,000.⁹

On the other hand, Jeremiah enumerates for 597 B.C. only 3,023 captives (Jer. 52:28), and for 586 B.C.¹⁰ 832 captives from Jerusalem (Jer. 52:29). In 582 after the murder of Gedaliah, 745 were deported for a grand total of 4,600 (Jer. 52:30). The smaller figures of Jeremiah probably represent only men of the most important families.

Albright accepted only the figures of Jeremiah and explained the discrepancy with the larger figures as due to losses suffered during the trek to Babylon.¹¹ He furthermore estimated the total population of Judah when the exiles returned at between 20,000 and 50,000. Such a radically minimalist view makes it impossible to accept the large number of returnees listed in Ezra 2 (= Neh. 7).¹²

Other scholars assume that the numbers mentioned in 2 Kings and in Jeremiah are to be added, giving a total of about 15,000 deportees.¹³ Kreissig estimates a total of 15,600 deportees.¹⁴ Weinberg estimates that ten percent of the population or about 20,000 may have been deported.¹⁵

Impressed by the descriptions of widespread devastation found in 2 Kings 25:11; 2 Chronicles 30:20; and Jeremiah 39:9-10, earlier scholars had proposed very high figures by multiplying the numbers in Jeremiah and 2 Kings by a factor as high as five for family members. Meyer, Kittel, Sellin, and Smith calculated that as many as 40,000 to 70,000 were deported, or up to one-third of the population of Judah.

A factor which is overlooked by most scholars is the fact that no explicit figures are given in the Scriptures for the earlier deportation(s) before 597 B.C., for example, by Sennacherib from Judah.

Depending on one's estimate of the numbers deported and the number of returning exiles, widely varying estimates for the population of postexilic Judah are given: 20,000 to 50,000 by Albright, 60,000 by Kreissig, 50,000 to 80,000 by de Fraine, 85,000 by Kittel, 100,000 by Mowinckel, 150,000 by Wein-

berg, and 235,000 by Schultz. This writer would suggest with Weinberg that an estimate of 150,000 is more probably correct than Albright's low estimate.

An important difference between the deportations by the Assyrians and the Babylonians was that the latter did not replace the deportees with pagan newcomers. Thus Judah, though devastated, was not contaminated with polytheism to the same degree as was Israel.¹⁶

According to the biblical record, the Babylonian armies smashed Jerusalem's defenses (2 Kings 25:10), destroyed the Temple and palaces (2 Kings 25:9, 13-17; Jer. 52:13, 17-23), and devastated the counjjer. 32:43). Many of the leaders and priests were killed (2 Kings 25:18-21).

Though these biblical statements have been denied by skeptical scholars such as Torrey, the severity of the devastation wrought by the Babylonians has been amply confirmed by archaeology. Weinberg concludes:

A rapid review of the archaeological evidence from Judah of the sixth century B.C.E. thus gives a picture wholly in keeping with the literary evidence: thorough destruction of all fortified towns and cities by Nebuchadnezzar's forces in 586, a great decrease in population due to slaughter, deportation, pestilence, flight and the resultant complete collapse of the economy, which continued, but at a very low ebb, through the efforts of those who remained behind and those who slowly drifted back, so rudimentary must this existence have been that it has proved extremely difficult to pick up its traces in material remains.¹⁷

Evidences of the Babylonian attacks have been uncovered at Arad, Beth-Shemesh, Beth-Zur, Eglon, En Gedi, Gibeah, Ramat Rahel, and Tell Beit Mirsim. Recently archaeologists have recovered for the first time dramatic evidence of the final attack on Jerusalem, including Scythian-type arrowheads.¹⁸

The archaeological picture of the period after the destruction of Jerusalem has yet to be fully clarified by excavations. The Israeli surveys of Judah in 1967-68 noted hundreds of new sites which date from this era. According to Weinberg:

Most of these are villages or small towns, largely nameless and therefore not the kind of site that has hitherto attracted the archaeologists interested in biblical places. Yet a number of these have yielded material from the sixth century, and it now seems clear that it was in such places that most of the remaining inhabitants of Judah lived after the most important centers were destroyed by the Babylonians.¹⁹

During this time some limited forms of worship were continued in the ruined area of the Temple (Jer. 41:5). The Scriptures themselves pass over developments in Palestine and stress the contribution of the returning exiles from Babylonia.

Some have questioned this emphasis. Noth comments that though "very important developments in life and thought took place among those deported to Babylon . . . nevertheless even the Babylonian group represented a mere outpost, whereas Palestine was and remained the central arena of Israel's history."²⁰

In light of the fact that the intellectual and spiritual leaders were the ones who were deported, the Scriptures reflect the historical situation. As Gowan comments, "There does not exist sufficient evidence or probability of an active, creative group in the land during the exile, although the continuance of some form of Yahwism is not to be doubted."²¹

Most of those who were deported were from the upper classes and from cities. Judging from earlier Assyrian reliefs and texts,²² the men were probably marched in chains, with women and children bearing sacks of their bare possessions on wagons as they made their way to Mesopotamia.

The exiled Jewish king, Jehoiachin (2 Kings 25:29-30), was maintained at the Babylonian court and provided with rations, as a text from Babylon explicitly confirms.²³

After some years of initial hardship, the exiles made adjustments and even prospered (Jer. 29:4-5). They were settled in various communities, for example, on the River Kebar near Nippur, sixty miles southeast of Babylon (Ezek. 1:1-3; cf. Ezra 2:59 [= Neh. 7:61]). When the exiles returned, they brought with them numerous servants and animals, and were able to make contributions for the sacred services (Ezra 2:65-69, 8:26; Neh. 7:67-72).

A fascinating light on the Jews in Mesopotamia is shed by the Murasû Tablets. In 1893 inscribed clay tablets were found at Nippur. Hilprecht and Clay published 480 of these texts in 1898 out of a reported total of 730 tablets. In 1974 Stolper wrote a dissertation using 179 hitherto unpublished Murasû texts from the University Museum in Pennsylvania and four from the British Museum.²⁴ He reports that there are an additional 152 unpublished tablets and fragments in the Istanbul Museum. These texts date from the reigns of Artaxerxes I (464–424) and Darius II (423–404) — exactly the era of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Murasû and his sons were wealthy bankers and brokers who loaned out almost everything under the sun at a price. Among

their customers are listed about sixty Jewish names from the time of Artaxerxes I and forty from the time of Darius II.²⁵ These appear as contracting parties, agents, witnesses, collectors of taxes, and royal officials. There seems to have been no social or commercial barriers between the Jews and the Babylonians. Their prosperous situation may explain why some chose to remain in Mesopotamia.²⁶

With the birth of a second and third generation, many Jews established roots in Mesopotamia. Josephus declared that “many remained in Babylon, being unwilling to leave their possessions.”²⁷ During World War II Japanese immigrants and their American-born children were deported from the West Coast and placed in relocation camps. Given the opportunity to return to Japan after the war, few of the older Japanese did because of the superior conditions of their new home.

The spiritual life of the Jewish community in Mesopotamia is documented by Ezekiel, who was taken into exile about 597. Ezekiel 8:1 refers to the prophet sitting “in my house, with elders of Judah sitting before me” (cf. Ezek. 3:15; 14:1; 20:1; 24:18; 33:30). Deprived of the Temple, the exiles laid great stress on the observation of the Sabbath, on the laws of purity, and on prayer and fasting. It has often been surmised that the development of synagogues may have begun in Mesopotamia during the Exile. The reading, interpreting, and possibly the translating of the Scriptures into Aramaic — which were to be important features of the later synagogue service — were part of the great meeting described in Nehemiah 8. Archaeological and inscriptional evidence for synagogues has not yet appeared from the exilic period in Mesopotamia; the earliest evidence is from Ptolemaic Egypt.²⁸

The trials of the Exile purified and strengthened the faith of the Jews, curing them of idolatry.

The external grandeur of the 55 temples (of Babylon) devoted to the worship of the great gods . . . doubtless infused many a Judean onlooker with a sense of inferiority and shame. Nonetheless, Jewish survival owes itself, paradoxically enough, not to those who remained at home but to the nationalistic vitality of those living so precariously in Exile.²⁹

Cyrus

Cyrus was the founder of the Persian Empire and the greatest Achaemenid king. He reigned over the Persians from 559 to 530

B.C. He established Persian dominance over the Medes in 550, conquered Lydia and Ionia in 547–546, and captured Babylon in 539.³⁰

Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1 speak of Cyrus as the Lord's "shepherd" and His "anointed."³¹ Daniel (Dan. 1:21; 6:28; 10:1) was in Babylon when Cyrus captured it.

Josephus has Cyrus declaring, "I am persuaded that He is the god whom the Israelite nation worships, for He foretold my name through the prophets and that I should build His temple in Jerusalem, the land of Judaea."³² These things Cyrus knew from reading Isaiah. Myers comments:

It is not beyond comprehension that he may have heard about the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah, particularly those that referred specifically to him as the liberator of the Jews, the anointed of Yahweh. Had not the priests of Marduk said the same things about him with reference to Babylon?³³

It is known that the Persian kings paid close heed to prophecies: Cambyses to Egyptian oracles, and Darius and Xerxes to Greek oracles.³⁴

Most scholars, including Jackson, Herzfeld, Nyberg, and Christensen, believe that Cyrus was an Iranian polytheist. A number of scholars, noting the continuity of religious thought between Cyrus and Darius, have sought to attribute the magnanimity of Cyrus to the teachings of Zoroaster. Among those who suggest that Cyrus may have been a Zoroastrian are Jirku, Smith, Mallowan, and Stronach.³⁵

Whether from religious motives or not, Cyrus reversed the policy of his predecessors — the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Instead of deporting the people he conquered, he permitted the Jews to return to their homeland. A Hebrew copy of the decree of Cyrus is found in Ezra 1:1-4, and a record of the Aramaic memorandum is given in Ezra 6:3-5.³⁶ The New International Version renders Ezra 1:1-4, "In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: 'This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you — may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. And the people of any

place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.””

“In the first year” means the first regnal year of Cyrus, beginning in Nisan 538, after his capture of Babylon in October 539. During these same months following the capture of Babylon, cuneiform texts record the Persian king’s benefactions to Mesopotamian sanctuaries.

Earlier scholars (Wellhausen, Kosters, Vernes, Torrey, Holscher, Pfeiffer, Oesterley, Gallig) had questioned the authenticity of the decree because of the Jewish phraseology of the document.³⁷ But documents from the Persian period and archaeological evidence have provided convincing evidence of its authenticity.³⁸

Parallel to the phrase, “The LORD, the God of heaven,³⁹ has given me all the kingdoms of the earth” (Ezra 1:2), is the statement of an inscription of Cyrus from Ur, which reads, “The great gods have delivered all the lands into my hand.” Frye, the Persian scholar from Harvard University, notes a distinctive feature of Cyrus’s proclamations: “although his inscriptions are in Akkadian⁴⁰ for local consumption, one misses any mention of his own gods in them, so characteristic of older conquerors in the Near East.”⁴¹ The later Achaemenids explicitly acknowledge Ahura Mazda, the supreme Persian deity.

Especially impressive corroborative evidence of Cyrus’s policy of toleration are the “Verse Account of Nabonidus” and the “Cyrus Cylinder,”⁴² which indicate that one of the first acts of Cyrus was to return the gods which had been removed from their sanctuaries by Nabonidus. The latter document relates, “I (also) gathered all their (former) inhabitants and returned (to them) their habitations.” A fragment of the Cyrus Cylinder, identified in 1970, also states that Cyrus restored Babylon’s inner wall and moats.⁴³ Excavations at Uruk and Ur reveal that Cyrus also made restorations in temples there.⁴⁴

Persian Taxes and Subsidies

The Persians collected a great variety of taxes from their subjects (Ezra 4:13).⁴⁵ It has been estimated that between \$20 million and \$35 million in taxes were collected annually by the Persian king. Priests and other temple personnel were often given exemptions from enforced labor or taxes (Ezra 7:24). The Gadatas

Inscription of Darius I to a governor in Ionia in western Turkey reveals Darius's concern for the priests of Apollo at a temple near Magnesia.

But in that you are causing my intention on behalf of the gods to be forgotten, I shall give you, if you do not change your course, cause to know that I am angered; for you have levied tribute from the sacred gardeners of Apollo, and ordered them to dig unhallowed soil, not knowing my feeling towards the god, who spoke all truth to the Persians⁴⁶

Antiochus III granted similar exemptions of the Jews.⁴⁷

According to Ezra 6:8, Cyrus not only permitted the Jews to return, but also gave them *carte blanche* authorization for funds from the imperial treasury. As the accounts in Haggai and Zechariah do not speak of support from the Persian treasury, some have questioned the promises made in this verse. Extra-biblical evidence, however, makes it quite clear that it was a consistent policy of Persian kings to help restore sanctuaries in their empire.

A memorandum concerning the rebuilding of the Jewish temple at Elephantine and written by Bagoas, the Persian governor of Judah, and Delaiah, governor of Samaria, relates their intention: "to rebuild it on its site as it was before, and the meal-offering and incense to be made on that altar as it used to be."⁴⁸ Kraeling interprets this passage to mean that this was "a directive presumably suggesting that the rebuilding be done at government expense," with a hint of government subsidies for the offerings.⁴⁹

Hensley observes, "The gods of the foreign workmen at Persepolis received commodities from the Persepolis treasury equally with the Persian Ahuramazda."⁵⁰ Cyrus repaired the Eanna temple at Uruk and the Enunmah at Ur.⁵¹ Cambyses gave funds for the temple at Sais in Egypt.⁵² The temple of Amon at Hibis in the Khargah Oasis, excavated in 1941 by Winlock, was rebuilt from top to bottom by order of Darius.⁵³ Darius also restored the temple of Ptah in Egypt.⁵⁴

Other critics question how literally the Persian king's promise should be taken as it is clear from Haggai 1:8-15 that work on the Temple was delayed because of a lack of contributions from the Jewish community. Work on the Temple was begun around 536 B.C. (Ezra 3:1), but was stopped because of opposition (3:7). It was then renewed under Darius I in 520 (5:1; Hag. 1:1, 14-15) and finally completed in 515 (Ezra 6:15).

It may have been that the provincial officials did not cooperate in carrying out the royal commands. Commenting on Cyrus's decree, North suggests that "Cyrus merely said the Jews could draw on tax-funds paid in by the Syrian population; . . . ultimately their disbursement would depend much on the good will of local Samaritan treasurers."⁵⁵

In 1973 French archaeologists discovered at Xanthos on the Lycian coast in southwest Turkey a cult foundation charter which provides some striking parallels with the decree of Cyrus. It is a text in Greek, Lycian, and Aramaic, dated to 358 B.C.⁵⁶ This is still within the period when the area was controlled by a Persian satrap.

Among the parallels are these: (a) It is a document issued in response to a local request, but one which would have received ratification from the Persian court. (b) As in Ezra, amounts of sacrifices, names of priests, and the responsibility for the upkeep of the cult are specified. (c) As in Ezra, the gods who are invoked to curse those who disregard the decree are local gods. Millard concludes:

Most obvious is the similarity of wording between Greek and Lycian requests and the satrap's Aramaic answer. Such resemblances in the Ezra passages, thought to show a forger's hand, are signs of normal practice. This practice explains how the Persian king or officer appears to know in detail about the cult in question; his information stems from its adherents The further objection that the Persians would have paid no attention to such details falls away.⁵⁷

Rebuilding the Temple

When opposition to the Jewish attempt to rebuild the Temple reached the ears of Tattenai, the governor of the province,⁵⁸ he sent a letter to Darius I (Ezra 5:7-12) and got back a response from the king himself (6:6-12).

Some writers have questioned whether the Persian kings would have been personally interested in the affairs of the Jews in far-off Palestine, and whether they would have intervened directly. That such inquiries were sent directly to the king himself has been vividly confirmed by the publication of the Elamite texts from Persepolis.

In 1933-34 several thousand tablets and fragments were found in the fortification wall of Persepolis.⁵⁹ About two thousand of these Fortification Tablets were published in 1969 by Hallock.⁶⁰

They date from the thirteenth to the twenty-eighth year of Darius (509–494 B.C.). Between 1936 and 1938 additional Elamite texts were discovered in the treasury area of Persepolis. A little over a hundred of these texts were published by Cameron in 1948, 1958, and 1965.

These Elamite texts from Persepolis reveal the close attention paid to minute details by the king himself.

Thus the complaints of the Apollo priests against Gadatas, the keeper of the royal paradise near Magnesia, were directed to the king and were judged by him. Thus, too, the governor of the province "Across the River," Tattenai, . . . appealed directly to Darius I, and Darius II curtly intervened in the religious affairs of an obscure settlement of Jews in Egypt.⁶¹

Both Cyrus's original decree (Ezra 6:7) and Darius's renewal of the permission to rebuild the Temple specify that it should be refounded "on its site." This was a matter of special concern in the restoration or rebuilding of ancient temples.

An inscription of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon describes the rebuilding of the Inanna temple at Nippur.

At that time E-bara-KU-garra, the house of the Great-Mistress of Nippur, the great lady, . . . had become old so that its walls threatened to collapse. I sought out its ground plan, removed its fallen brickwork, viewed its foundation and rebuilt it completely to the old specifications with the skill of Kulla, and raised its top like a mountain.⁶²

When Neo-Babylonian kings like Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus rebuilt temples, they also searched carefully to discover the exact outlines of the former buildings. An inscription of Nabonidus reads, "I discovered its [i.e., the Ebabbara in Sippar] ancient foundation, which Sargon, a former king, had made. I laid its brick foundations solidly on the foundation that Sargon had made, neither protruding nor receding an inch."⁶³ The general plan of the second Temple built under Zerubbabel was similar to the first built under Solomon.⁶⁴ But the holy of holies was left empty as the ark had been lost through the Babylonian conquest. According to Josephus the high priest on the day of Atonement placed his censer on the slab of stone that marked the former position of the ark (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:21; 4:49-51). The holy place was furnished with a table for the shewbread, the incense altar, and one menorah instead of Solomon's ten.⁶⁵

Kenyon has identified as the only visible remains of Zerubbabel's building a straight joint of stones with heavy bosses about

thirty-three meters north of the southeast corner of the Temple, a feature which Dunand compared to Persian masonry found in Phoenicia.⁶⁶

According to Haggai 2:3 the older members who could remember the splendor of Solomon's Temple were disappointed when they saw the smaller size of Zerubbabel's Temple (cf. Ezra 3:12). Yet the second Temple, though not as grand as the first, enjoyed a much longer life. Frank observes:

. . . it was large and so well built as to serve as a fairly successful fortress on several occasions over the next five hundred years. The longevity of this Temple and the fact that the Maccabees undertook only strengthening of its defenses and no thoroughgoing rebuilding bespeak of adequacy and also of accumulated splendor.⁶⁷

Ezra and the Renewal of the Law

The fact that Artaxerxes I⁶⁸ commissioned Ezra the scribe⁶⁹ to administer the Law to his people has troubled some critics. But this fits in perfectly with Persian policy. A very close parallel is a similar commission given by Darius I to Udjahorresenet, an Egyptian priest and scholar. Darius commanded the codification of the Egyptian laws in Demotic and Aramaic by the chief men of Egypt — a task which took from 518 to 503 B.C. On the reverse side of the Demotic Chronicle, Darius ordered "that the wise men be assembled . . . from among the warriors, the priests and the scribes of Egypt so that they may set down in writing the ancient laws of Egypt."⁷⁰

Frye places the commission to Ezra in its broader historical context.

Darius was actively concerned not only with his own "imperial" laws, to be promulgated throughout the empire, but also with the local laws and traditional practices in various provinces. . . . Darius wrote to his satrap in Egypt Aryandes to collect the wise men of the realm to make a new code of laws. Although the work was not finished before his death, the successors of Darius continued to be interested in the codification of the laws of their subject peoples. It is in this light that one must understand the efforts of Ezra (7, 11) and Nehemiah (8,1) to codify the Mosaic law, which was not accomplished until the reign of Artaxerxes I.⁷¹

Four views have been suggested as to the identity of "the book of the law of Moses" which Ezra read (Neh. 8:2-15) to the assembled multitude for about five hours.

1. *A collection of legal materials*: Kittel, von Rad, Noth.
2. *The priestly code*: Kuenen, Stade, Koster, Meyer, Oesterly, Lods, Kraus.
3. *Deuteronomic laws*: Browne, Bowman, Scott, Kellermann.
4. *The Pentateuch*: Wellhausen, Sellin, Schaeder, Eissfeldt, Rudolph, Galling, Mowinckel, Albright, Bright, Cross, and Sanders.⁷²

There is no reason to doubt that Ezra could have brought back with him the Torah, that is, the Pentateuch. Waltke, who has made an important study of the Samaritan Pentateuch in an unpublished Harvard dissertation, writes:

Finally, the Pentateuch itself must be older than the fifth century. If the scribal scholars of the second Jewish commonwealth found it necessary to modernize the Pentateuch to make it intelligible to the people (cf. Neh. 8) in the fifth century, then obviously the original Pentateuch antedates this period by many years.⁷³

Conclusion

The Book of Ezra reveals the providential intervention of the God of heaven on behalf of His people. The Lord, being sovereign over all kingdoms, moved even the heart of a pagan ruler to fulfill His will (Ezra 1:1-2). He likewise stirred the heart of His people to respond and raised men of God to lead His people (1:11).

Ezra was one who experienced "the good hand of God" upon him (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; Neh. 1:8, 18). As a scribe he was more than a scholar. He was one who was a fervent expounder of the Scriptures (Ezra 7:6, 12; Neh. 8). As an inspired leader he was able to enlist others and to assign trustworthy men to their tasks (Ezra 7:27; 8:15, 24).

Editor's Note

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Notes

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- 3 M. Broshi, "The Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh," *Israel Exploration Journal* 24 (1974):21-26; M. Broshi, "La population de l'ancienne Jerusalem," *Revue biblique* 92 (1975):5-14.
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- 7 Donald J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings* (London: British Museum, 1956).
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- 9 A. Malamat, "The Last Wars of the Kingdom of Judah," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 9 (1950):223.
- 10 Scholars such as Albright, Freedman, Tadmor, and Wiseman, who believe that the Jews used a calendar beginning in Nisan (March/April), date the fall of Jerusalem to the summer of 587. Others such as Thiele, Malamat, Horn, Redford, and Saggs, who believe that the Jews used a calendar beginning in Tishri (September/October) date the fall of Jerusalem to the summer of 586.
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- 12 According to Ezra 2:64-65 about fifty thousand responded. On the discrepancies between Ezra 2 and its parallel in Nehemiah 7, see H. L. Allrik, "The Lists of Zerubbabel (Nehemiah 7 and Ezra 2) and the Hebrew Numeral Notation," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 136 (1954):21-27.
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- 24 M. W. Stolper, "Achaemenid Babylonia: New Texts from the Murasû Archive" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1974), 1:6-7.
- 25 See M. W. Stolper, "A Note on Yahwistic Personal Names in the Murasû Texts," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 222 (1976):25-28; M. D. Coogan, "Patterns in the Jewish Personal Names in the Diaspora," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 4 (1973):184-91; M. D. Coogan, *West Semitic Personal Names in the Murasû Documents* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975); M. D. Coogan,

"More Yahwistic Names in the Murashu Documents," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 7 (1976):199-200.

26 M. D. Coogan, "Life in the Diaspora: Jews at Nippur in the Fifth Century B.C.," *Biblical Archaeologist* 37 (1974):6-12.

27 Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 9.8.

28 M. Hengel, "Proseuche und Synagoge," in *Tradition und Glaube*, ed. G. Jeremias et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), pp. 157-84; J. Gutmann, "The Origin of the Synagogue: The Current State of Research," *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 87 (1972):36-40; J. Koenig, "L'origine exilique de la synagogue," in *Mélanges d'Histoire des Religions* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), pp. 33-55.

29 S. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 9 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 1:105.

30 A. Champdor, *Cyrus* (Paris: Michel, 1952); J. Harmatta, "The Rise of the Old Persian Empire: Cyrus the Great," *Acta Antiqua* 19 (1971):3-15; W. Hinz, "Reichsgründer Kyros," in *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfester Irans*, ed. W. Eilers (Stuttgart: Hochwacht, 1971), pp. 55-63; M. Mallowan, "Cyrus the Great," *Iran* 10 (1972):1-17; *Commemoration Cyrus (Actes du Congrès de Shiraz 1971)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974).

31 C. E. Simcox, "The Role of Cyrus in Deutero-Isaiah," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 57 (1937):158-71; E. Jenni, "Die Rolle des Kyros bei Deuterojesaja," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 10 (1954):241-56; J. Morgenstern, "The Message of Deutero-Isaiah in Its Sequential Unfolding," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 29 (1958):1-67; 30 (1959):1-102; M. Smith, "II Isaiah and the Persians," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1963):415-20; John C. Whitcomb, Jr., "Cyrus in the Prophecies of Isaiah," in *The Law and the Prophets*, ed. John Skilton (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 388-401.

32 Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 11.3-4.

33 J. M. Myers, *The World of the Restoration* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 51.

34 Herodotus 8.133; 9.42, 151.

35 On the vexing question of the religion of the Achaemenids, see A. V. W. Jackson, "The Religion of the Achaemenian Kings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 21 (1900):160-84; V. Strouve, "The Religion of the Achaemenids and Zoroastrianism," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 5 (1959-60):529-45; D. Stronach, "A Circular Symbol on the Tomb of Cyrus," *Iran* 11 (1971):155-58.

Meshorer suggests that a well-known coin showing a deity on a winged wheel may be a representation of Jehovah as the Persians pictured Him (Y. Meshorer, *Jewish Coins* [Tel-Aviv: Am Hassefer, 1967], p. 37, plate 1, fig. 4).

36 The memorandum was found at ancient Ecbatana, or Hamadan (AV, "Achmetha"), the ancient capital of the Medes. See Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The Achaemenid Capitals," *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin* 8 (1976):15-20. De Vaux observes, "Now we know that it was the custom of the Persian sovereigns to winter in Babylon and depart in the summer to . . . Ecbatana. . . . A forger operating in Palestine without the information which we possess could hardly have been so accurate" (Roland de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, trans. Damian McHugh [Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1971], p. 89).

The proclamation in Hebrew of Cyrus's decree and its recording in Aramaic for the repositories is entirely in accord with Persian customs. Darius had copies of his Behistun Inscription sent throughout the empire as copies in Akkadian have been found in Babylon and in Aramaic in Egypt (see D. B. Welsberg, *Guild Structure and Political Allegiance in Early Achaemenid Mesopotamia* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967], pp. 14-15).

37 See note 57 below for a source that gives an answer to this objection.

38 Supporters of the authenticity of Cyrus's decree include these: E. J. Bicker-

man, "The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 65 (1946):249-75; Roland de Vaux, "The Decrees of Cyrus and Darius," pp. 63-96; C. G. Cameron, "Ancient Persia," in *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, ed. R. C. Dentan (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1955), p. 85; Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 131; M. Meuleau, "Mesopotamia under Persian Rule," in *The Greeks and the Persians*, ed. H. Bengtson et al. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), p. 378; G. Widengren, "Persian Period," in *Israelite and Judaeon History*, ed. J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 519.

In a recent dissertation under A. Millard, Hensley has examined the seven official documents in Ezra (1:2-4; 4:11-16; 4:17-22; 5:7-17; 6:2b-5; 6:6-12; 7:12-16) in the light of thirty-two contemporary Persian documents and letters. He concludes that "linguistically, stylistically, and historically the ED (Ezra Documents) correspond perfectly to the non-Biblical documents of the Achaemenid period" (C. Hensley, "The Official Persian Documents in the Book of Ezra" [Ph.D. diss., University of Liverpool, 1977], p. 233).

39 See D. K. Andrews, "Yahweh the God of Heavens," in *The Seed of Wisdom*, ed. W. S. McCullough (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), pp. 45-57.

40 A few brief trilingual (Old Persian, Akkadian, Elamite) inscriptions in which Cyrus speaks in the first person have been found at his capital, Pasargadae. See R. G. Kent, *Old Persian*, 2d ed. (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1953), p. 107. R. Borger and W. Hinz attribute these inscriptions to Darius ("Eine Dareios-Inschrift aus Pasargadae," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 109 [1959]:117-27). On the other hand other scholars believe that these are properly attributed to Cyrus. See R. Ghirshman, "A propos de l'écriture cunéiforme vieux-perse," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24 (1965): 244-50; and R. Hallock, "On the Old Persian Signs," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29 (1970):52-55.

41 R. N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1963), p. 82.

42 Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 312-16.

43 J. Harmatta, "The Literary Patterns of the Babylonian Edict of Cyrus," *Acta Antiqua* 19 (1971):217-31; W. Eilers, "Der Keilschrifttext des Kyros-Zylinders," *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten*, pp. 156-66, n.26; P.-R. Berger, "Der Kyros-Zylinder mit dem Zusatzfragment BIN II Nr. 32. . .," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 64 (1975):192-234; C. B. F. Walker, "A Recently Identified Fragment of the Cyrus Cylinder," *Iran* 10 (1972):158-59.

44 C. L. Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees* (reprint ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965), p. 205; C. L. Woolley and M. E. L. Mallowan, *Ur Excavations IX: The Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods* (London: British Museum, 1962).

45 On the terms found in Ezra 4:13 see J. N. Postgate, *Taxation and Conscriptations in the Assyrian Empire* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1974), p. 119; S. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 44.

46 Cited by A. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962), p. 114.

47 Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 12.142-43. Some seven centuries after Ezra, Jewish Rabbis cited Ezra 4:13 to claim exemption from the taxes of the Parthians (third century A.D.) (see J. Neusner, *There We Sat Down* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972], p. 64).

48 Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 492.

49 E. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Aramaic Papyri* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 107.

50 Hensley, "The Official Persian Documents," p. 202.

51 See note 44 above.

52 De Vaux, "The Decrees of Cyrus and Darius," p. 71; A. Gardiner, *Egypt of the*

Pharaohs (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 366-67.

53 M. F. Gyles, *Pharaonic Policies and Administration 663-323 B.C.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 70; R. Parker, "Darius and His Egyptian Campaign," *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 58 (1941):373-77; G. Cameron, "Darius, Egypt and the Lands Beyond the Sea," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 2 (1943):307-13. A headless statue of Darius inscribed in four languages, including Egyptian, was found recently at Susa (see M. Kervran, D. Stronach, F. Vallat, and J. Yoyotte in *Journal Asiatique* 260 [1971]:235-66).

54 George Buchanan Gray, "The Foundation and Extension of the Persian Empire," in *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1939), 4:25; cf. de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, p. 76.

55 R. North, "Civil Authority in Ezra," *Studi in onore di Edoardo Volterra* (Milan: Casa Editrice Dott. A. Guiffrè, 1971), 6:388.

56 J. Teixidor, "The Aramaic Text in the Trilingual Stele from Xanthus," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 37 (1978):181-86; T. R. Bryce, "A Recently Discovered Cult in Lycia," *Journal of Religious History* 10 (1978):115-27.

57 A. R. Millard, "A Decree of a Persian Governor," *Buried History*, June 1974, p. 88.

58 See A. F. Rainey, "The Satrapy 'Beyond the River,'" *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology* 1 (1969):51-78.

59 On Persepolis, see Yamauchi, "Achaemenid Capitals," pp. 26-52.

60 R. T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

61 G. Cameron, *Persepolis Treasury Tablets* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 12.

62 A. Goetze, "Esarhaddon's Inscription from the Inanna Temple in Nippur," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 17 (1963):130; cf. Francis R. Steele, "Esarhaddon's Building Inscription from Nippur," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 70 (1950):69-72; V. E. Crawford, "Nippur, the Holy City," *Archaeology* 12 (1959):74-83; D. P. Hansen and G. Dales, "The Temple of Inanna, *Queen of Heaven*, at Nippur," *Archaeology* 15 (1962):75-84.

63 Cited by R. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 181.

64 See J. Ouellette, "The Basic Structure of Solomon's Temple and Archaeological Research," in *The Temple of Solomon*, ed. J. Gutmann (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), pp. 1-20.

65 B. Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1975), pp. 104-5. Cf. C. L. Meyers, "Was There a Seven-Branched Lampstand in Solomon's Temple?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 5 (1979):47-57; C. L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976).

66 Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Royal Cities of the Old Testament* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 38-41; Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Digging up Jerusalem* (London: Benn, 1974), pp. 111-12, 177-78; M. Dunand, "Byblos, Sidon, Jerusalem," in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 17 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), pp. 64-70.

67 H. T. Frank, *Bible, Archaeology, and Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 220.

68 The traditional order assumes that Ezra preceded Nehemiah in the reign of Artaxerxes I. Though the reverse order which places Ezra in the reign of Artaxerxes II has had a considerable following, the traditional order has recently gained the adherence of many notable scholars. A discussion of this problem will appear in the next issue (October-December, 1980) of *Bibliotheca Sacra*.

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70 Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, pp. 366-67.

71 R. N. Frye, "Institutions," in *Beiträge zur Achämenidengeschichte*, ed.

G. Walser (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1972), p. 92.

72 S. Mowinckel, *Studien zu dem Buche Ezra–Nehemiah III: Die Ezrageschichte und das Gesetz Moses* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1965); U. Kellermann, "Erwägungen zum Esragesetz," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 80 (1968): 373-85; J. A. Sanders, "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon," in *Magnalia Dei*, ed. Frank M. Cross et al. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1976), p. 550.

73 Bruce K. Waltke, "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament," in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1970), p. 234.