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### The Books of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah as a Project of New Future for Israel<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** 1–2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah express a different approach to the future of Israel to that provided in the Earlier Prophets. Firstly, the nature and the dating of this part of the Hebrew Bible are discussed, suggesting the end of the fifth and the very beginning of the fourth century B.C. as the time of its origins. Secondly, the retrospect of the past in 1–2 Chronicles is presented with a very specific attitude towards the Exile. The article focuses on the detailed analysis of Ezra 4:1–5, a passage representing the very core of this book. Against the backdrop of the identity of the deputation visiting Jerusalem as seen by the author of Ezra and the completely different self-presentation of the envoys from the north, the serious conflict that ensues is described. It bears analogies with the former antagonisms and tensions between the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel. On the basis of this conflict, a new reality emerges, namely Judaism. The religion of the preexilic Israel was profoundly transformed, having been exclusively limited to those Judeans who had come back from the Exile. As a result of this separation, the question of the “true Israel” became more crucial, setting new direction for the project of the national and religious identity of biblical Israel.

**Keywords:** 1–2 Chronicles, Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Jerusalem Temple, Babylonian exile, Persian period, Samaritans

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After a period of extensive research on the Deuteronomistic History (DH), biblical scholars and historians of ancient Israel have been increasingly shifting their focus towards the Books of the

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Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah, referred to jointly as the Chronicle History (CH). The latter expresses an attitude towards Israel's past distinct from that dominating throughout the group of books that includes Joshua and Judges, as well as 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings. The most significant, albeit still underestimated, difference lies in a more pronounced orientation of the retrospect provided by the Chronicler towards shaping the future, whose characteristics introduce new elements compared to the situation from before the Babylonian captivity. It was a sign of a profound transformation of the Israel's religion, that resulted in the emergence of a new form thereof: Judaism.

### **The Books of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah**

The discussions surrounding the historical reliability of the Chronicles, taken as the first part of the Chronicle History, have a long lineage, dating back to the origins of contemporary biblical criticism.<sup>2</sup> After initial reluctance and some more or less reserved suggestion, these gained momentum in the nineteenth century. Their shape was particularly influenced by J. Wellhausen, who claimed that 1–2 Chronicles were a midrash written during the times of the so-called Soferim (scribes), and hence that in this autonomous work we encountered a mixture of the old and new.<sup>3</sup> Several decades later, T. Willi expressed his belief that both books had been the product of an exegesis, or a commentary, of the earlier sources, mainly of Deut. Within new circumstances and in order to meet the new demands that arose during the Persian period the latter were reinterpreted; therefore, we are not dealing here not as much with their extension or continuation, as with an exposition and elucidation – the result of a deliberate study.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, R.J. Coggins<sup>5</sup> and P.R. Ackroyd<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> S. Japhet, "The Historical Reliability of Chronicles. The History of the Problem and Its Place in Biblical Research," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (1985): 83–107; idem in: J. Cheryl Exum, ed., *The Historical Books*, The Biblical Seminar: 40, Sheffield 1997, 258–81.

<sup>3</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, Berlin <sup>2</sup>1883.

<sup>4</sup> T. Willi, *The Chronik als Auslegung*, FRLANT 106, Göttingen 1972.

<sup>5</sup> R.J. Coggins, *The First and Second Books of Chronicles*, Cambridge 1976.

<sup>6</sup> P.R. Ackroyd, *The Chronicler in His Age*, JSOTSupp 101, Sheffield 1991.

consider 1–2 Chronicles to have been a theology, that is, a coherent religious synthesis of history, performed with the Jewish postexilic community in mind. Conversely, I. Kalimi believes that these books in fact constitute a history, an opinion supposedly corroborated by the fact that they were listed among the historical books in the Septuagint.<sup>7</sup> K.G. Hoglund is of a similar opinion, emphasising the fact that the historical retrospect was performed not in the spirit of the Semitic “Deuteronomistic History,” but rather in line with the Hellenistic historiography, borrowing its models and methods therefrom.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, G.N. Knoppers regards 1–2 Chronicles as a “renewed/repeated Bible,” intended to provide a coherent interpretation of the earlier biblical text. That is why, instead of inquiring about its literary genre, we should focus our efforts on deciphering the intention of the Chronicler.<sup>9</sup> His work should be considered to have been an early reinterpretation of 1 Samuel – 2 Kings, in fact congruent with Deut and the priestly tradition of understanding and expounding the Law.<sup>10</sup> The divergences and emphasis placed differently between the Deuteronomistic and the Chronicle retrospects of the past stem from the fact that the latter had not only experienced the tragedy of the Temple having been demolished, but also the definitive end of the forced expulsions, and the return from the exile.<sup>11</sup>

As regards the relationship between 1–2 Chronicles with Ezra-Nehemiah, contrary to various presumptions and suggestions, the view expressed in the first half of the nineteenth century by

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<sup>7</sup> I. Kalimi, “Historia, historiografia a wiarygodność historyczna. Księga Kronik na tle starożytnego piśmiennictwa bliskowschodniego i grecko-rzymskiego,” *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 23 (2009): 7–25; idem, *Starożytny historyk izraelski. Studium o Kronikarzu, jego epoce, miejscu działalności i dziele*, Kraków 2016 [see a review in: *Collectanea Theologica* 87, no. 2 (2017): 243–7].

<sup>8</sup> K.G. Hoglund, *The Chronicler as Historian: A Comparative Perspective*, in: M.P. Graham et al., eds., *The Chronicler as Historian*, Sheffield 1997, 19–29.

<sup>9</sup> G.N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9*, The Anchor Bible 12, New York 2003; idem, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, The Anchor Bible 12A, New York 2004.

<sup>10</sup> B.D. Giffone, “According to Which ‘Law of Moses’? Cult Centralization in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles,” *Vetus Testamentum* 67 (2017): 432–47.

<sup>11</sup> E.H. Merrill, “The Theology of the ‘Chronicles’: What Difference Does It Make?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59 (2016): 691–700.

L. Zunz<sup>12</sup> has remained valid: namely, that it is a work of the Chronicler, a single anonymous author or a group of authors. This evaluation remains vindicable in spite of major linguistic and theological differences between the two parts. First of all, what dominates throughout the Chronicles is the emphasis on David and the covenant with David, that is absent in Ezra-Nehemiah; secondly, the tradition of the Exodus in Ezra-Nehemiah is missing in 1–2 Chronicles; thirdly, the prohibition of intermarriages in Ezra-Nehemiah is irreconcilable with the narrative of the Chronicles; fourthly, the motif of God’s direct punishment, found in 1–2 Chronicles cannot be identified in Ezra-Nehemiah. However, the differences presented above do not automatically entail an entirely separate origin of 1–2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. Both the former and the latter focus on two protagonists each: in Chronicles these are David and Salomon, while in the other pair—their title characters, that is, Ezra and Nehemiah. The narrative of the second part presupposes the continuation of the previous one (2 Chr 36:22–23, and Ezra 1:1–3a). Other links include the marked recognition of the Persian dominance (2 Chr 36:20), and the books’ shared focus on the temple and the cult. Of no small significance is the fact that in the synagogal liturgy both parts of the “Chronicle History” were read together.

There is no universal agreement as to the dating of the CH; however, it is commonly accepted to be a work unique in the entire Hebrew Bible. Its specificity becomes particularly apparent in the context of other writings from the period following the Babylonian captivity. For not only does it differ from the prophetic books created and edited at that time, which record much earlier traditions (Isa, Ezek, Joel, Jonah), and the books that featured the message of the postexilic prophets (Hag, Zech, Mal), but also from the P document compiled after the exile, as well as the extensive collection of Scriptures (Prov, Job, Esth, Ruth, Song). 1 Chronicles – Nehemiah is the only work of historiography having analogies in deuterocanonical books and in the writings by Greek and Latin

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<sup>12</sup> L. Zunz, “Dibre hajamim oder die Bücher der Chronik,” in: idem, *Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt*, Frankfurt 1832, 20–22.

authors, a testament to a successful encounter between the Semitic culture and that of the ancient West. It had been created (*terminus ante quem*) by the second century B.C., as it was included in the Septuagint, while its other books (e.g., Sir 47:8–10) presuppose familiarity therewith. The internal data point to the end of the fifth century B.C.; the last descendant of David mentioned here is Ananias, born ca. 445 B.C., whereas the last name cited in Neh 12:11 is that of the priest Jaddua, that is in all likelihood, Jaddua II, born ca. 420 B.C. The same is suggested by the quotation of Zech 4:10 in 2 Chr 16:9, as well as such anachronisms as darics in 1 Chr 29:7 donated for the service of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the mention of the “old standards” made in 2 Chr 3:3.

The most plausible and tenable dating of CH is the turn of the fifth and the fourth century B.C., when all matters of the Temple in Jerusalem and the cult performed therein were very recent and very significant. Its author was an anonymous writer(s) from the early Second Temple period, who—with the radical social, political, and religious transformations in mind—attempted to reconcile the various theological traditions, much like the author of the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees*.<sup>13</sup>

### Retrospect of the Past in 1–2 Chronicles

1 Chronicles opens with a collection of lineages and registers (1 Chr 1–9), not always congruent with one another, which originated from various sources, that is, most of all from the Torah/the Pentateuch, and the Deuteronomistic History.<sup>14</sup> The collection is intended to highlight the connection between the

<sup>13</sup> J. Tiño, “An Elaboration of Some Theological Issues of Second Temple Judaism in Chronicles and Jubilees,” *Communio Viatorum* 59 (2017): 25–47.

<sup>14</sup> H. Langkammer, “Kwestia źródeł w 1 i 2 Księdze Kronik i technika ich opracowania,” in W. Chrostowski, ed., “*Pan moim światłem*”. *Księga pamiątkowa dla Księdza Profesora Jerzego Chmiela w 65. rocznicę urodzin*, Ad Multos Annos 4, Warszawa 2000, 214–18; S. Schweitzer, “The Genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9: Purposes, Forms, and the Utopian Identity of Israel,” in: P.S. Evans, T.F. Williams, eds., *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography*, Winona Lake (Ind.) 2013, 9–17; K. Bodner, “Reading the Lists: Several Recent Studies of the Chronicles Genealogies,” in: *ibid.*, 29–41.

history of Israel as God's chosen people and the origin of the world and man, as well as the beginning of man's belief in the only God, and the identity of the religious community founded upon faith in God.<sup>15</sup> The dominating aspect is the stress put on the significance and role of the descendants of David as a lasting confirmation of the faithfulness of the God of Israel. A clearly defined composition of this passage is the result of a carefully elaborated intention. Here are the various sections thereof:

1. From Adam to the patriarchs of Israel (1:1–27).
2. The patriarch of Israel and the ancestors of its neighbours (1:28–2:2).
3. The descendants of Judah (2:3–4:23).
4. Tribal lineages (4:24–9:44).

When it comes to the first section, we cannot but notice a gradual, yet very consistent, directing and narrowing of focus. At the very outset (vv. 1–4), there is Adam, the first man, and that corroborates the “canonical” status of the Genesis, opening the Torah. The section of Gen 5:1–32 was rendered faithfully, with minor discrepancies introduced by subsequent copyists. The lineage includes only the names of male descendants, without the additions found in the Genesis. Following that, (vv. 5–23) the lineage, based on Gen 10:2–29, while underscoring the fact that all the nations of the earth in have descended from Noah (“the new Adam”), goes on to list three groups: the descendants of Japheth (1:5–7), of Ham (1:8–16), and of Shem (1:17–23). Not all of those are listed, but only a selection—frequently but not exclusively—of firstborns. Meanwhile, vv. 24–27 focus on the progeny of Shem as the primogenitors of Israel. In a reference to Gen 11:10–26, the passage does not list the ancestors of other Semitic peoples, focusing solely on the descendants of Abraham, and reminding the reader that Abram is in fact Abraham (Gen 17:5), the man opening the time of

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<sup>15</sup> M. Münnich, “O pokusach uświęcania historii, albo o nadgorliwości biblijnego Kronikarza słów parę,” in: U. Borkowska, ed., *Peregrinatio ad veritatem. Studia ofiarowane profesor Aleksandrze Witkowskiej OSU z okazji 40-lecia pracy naukowej*, Prace Wydziału Historyczno-Filologicznego 111, Lublin 2004, 315–24; H. Langkammer, “Historia teologizowana. Fenomen interpretacji historii w 1-2 Krn,” *Quaestiones Selectae* 17, no. 26 (2010): 87–106.

Israel. Another important element is the *inclusio* (bracketing) used in the first section: ten generations from Adam to Noah (vv. 1–4), and ten generations from Shem, Noah’s son, to Abraham (vv. 24–27).

The following three sections establish a further narrowing of the view. After a brief reference to the patriarchs of Israel and the ancestors of their neighbours (1:28–2:2), our attention is shifted to the enumeration of the descendants of Judah (2:3–4:23), whereas the tribal lineages (4:24–9:44) bring to the foreground on two instances (7:6–12, and 8:1–40) the tribe of Benjamin. Towards the end of the opening section, the Chronicler’s intention becomes clearly visible: he means to present as something absolutely privileged the origin and the role of two tribes, namely: that of Judah and that of Benjamin, both in Israel’s past, and in the history of mankind. In spite of the fact that the enumeration of the tribes of Israel is featured in other passages in the Bible, their unique sequence marks a striking divergence, as it prioritises Judah and Benjamin at the expense of the other tribes.<sup>16</sup>

The further content of 1–2 Chronicles corroborates and specifies the intention behind the records featured in section one. At the centre of our interest there now is the temple and the cult, and that in turn justifies an absolutely exceptional emphasis on two figures from the history of the preexilic Israel. The first of those, spoken of in 1 Chr 10–29, is David, presented as the originator of the liturgy, to whom Israelites owe the Psalms. The other, mentioned in 2 Kgs 1–9, is Solomon as the first builder of the Temple in Jerusalem. Whereas in 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings there are four main figures: Samuel—Saul—David—Solomon, in 1–2 Chronicles only two remain: David and Solomon. The Chronicler is not interested in them as persons or politicians, but in their merits for the cult and the Temple. It is for that reason that all rulers from the house of David mentioned in 2 Kgs 10–36 are commended or reprimanded for their attitude towards the Temple and the cult, with the key position being given to a pair of particularly well-deserved kings, who had more space

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<sup>16</sup> E. Viezel, “The Order of the Tribes in 1Chron 2–8 according to the Commentary on Chronicles Attributed to Sa’adia Gaon’s Student,” *Biblische Notizen* 174 (2017): 91–105.

devoted to them than all the others, that is, Hezekiah (2 Chr 29–32), and Josiah (2 Chr 34–35).

At the heart of the design driving 1–2 Chronicles, as a fundamental point of reference, there is the underscoring of Israel's identity and of the role of the monarchy and the Temple in Jerusalem within the circumstances emerging after the Israelites' return from the captivity. What is important here is whether or not the respective rules from the preexilic period managed to rise to the responsibility and commitment resultant from Israel's election by and their covenant with God.<sup>17</sup> Against such a backdrop, all the more noticeable becomes the question whether in this new reality the Chronicler recognises a possibility of restoring the Davidic dynasty and their return to the throne. The answer is negative, with several factors having a decisive importance thereto.<sup>18</sup> First of all, an emphasis is placed upon the people/the nation and not upon the king; secondly, it was the cult performed at the Temple and not political power that was powerfully highlighted; thirdly, there appears the motif of Israel being governed by foreign rulers; fourthly, there is a belief that presiding over Israel, that is, reigning over it, is the prerogative of God, not of a human ruler; furthermore, the Davidic lineage ends with a mention of it in the final verse of 2 Chr; ultimately, the cult is to be continued regardless of (the lack of) the institution of the monarchy. Such a retrospect does not only record the past—it also shapes the future, by selecting from the past what ought to be adopted, preserved, developed, and by condemning or ignoring whatever was deemed unworthy of continuation.

What sets apart the lineages by the Chronicler, drawing upon those featured in the Torah, is the fact that they do not stop at determining their relation to other peoples and nations, but they are markedly different from them. His attitude towards and treatment of the subject matter taken over from the Deuteronomist History goes even further. In spite of it being the basic source for the Chronicler,

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<sup>17</sup> G.N. Knoppers, "Judah, Levi, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, and the Temple: Election and Covenant in Chronicles," in: N. MacDonald, ed., *Covenant and Election in Exilic and Post-Exilic Judaism*, Tübingen 2015, 139–68.

<sup>18</sup> M.J. Lynch, "The Davidic Covenant and Institutional Integration in Chronicles," in: *ibid.*, 169–88.



he almost entirely passes over the importance of the kingdom of Israel between the death of Solomon and the fall of Samaria, referring to it only where absolutely necessary. Thus, he does not limit himself to separating Israel from their closer and more distant neighbours, but he advances much further, by opting for a separation within the very nation of Israel. In Ezra-Nehemiah, the notion of “Israel” indicates solely the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with instances of it being even more limited in scope when it refers only to the repatriates, who have returned from the Babylonian captivity.

A separate mention is due to the Chronicler’s attitude to the said Babylonian captivity, a period in principle either shunned, or rationalised in a rather particular manner.<sup>19</sup> A convincing explanation of this situation was provided by E. Ben Zvi.<sup>20</sup> The time when the Chronicler was working on his writings, when the canon of the sacred scriptures was being formed, and the institution of the synagogue was emerging, saw also the increase in the awareness that whatever was recorded in writing and accepted by the community would be regularly read and pondered upon, and therefore also memorised. The more frequent the reading, the better the memory thereof, and the greater its influence on the collective consciousness. The Chronicle History leaves out the dramatic and humiliating period of the exile, suggesting that it did not leave a mark on the continuity of Israel’s memory and identity before and after the event. In that way, the relatively small community of Judean repatriates was able to appropriate the entire past of Israel from before the Babylonian captivity, and having thus radically reinterpreted it, it paved the way for the Jewish identity.

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<sup>19</sup> D.F. Murray, “Dynasty, People, and the Future: The Message of Chronicles,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 58 (1993), 71–97; idem in: J. Cheryl Exum, *The Historical Books*, 286–90.

<sup>20</sup> E. Ben Zvi, “Towards a Sense of Balance: Remembering the Catastrophe of Monarchic Judah/(Ideological) Israel and Exile through Reading Chronicles in Late Yehud,” in: P.S. Evans, T.F. Williams, *Chronicling the Chronicler*, 247–65.

### **“The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin” Approach Zerubbabel (Ezra 4:1–2)**

The opening two chapters of Ezra present the return from the exile as a mass-scale undertaking, not a drawn-out process entailing the coming of small groups of repatriates. The elements of the history and memory were remade into a single, coherent history, which served to legitimise Ezra’s actions. A more extensive, and hence in a sense also “more complete” version of the Cyrus’s decree (1:1–4) than the one featured at the close of 2 Chronicles, presenting the “good” Cyrus opposing the “evil” Nabonidus, is followed by an idealised, and thus ideological description of the reaction of the leaders and the neighbours (1:5–8), narrating their enthusiastic and remarkable favourable response to the decree issued by the Persian ruler. The mention of the return of the temple inventory (1:9–11) highlights the special position of Judah and Benjamin, as well as of the priests and Levites, the sympathy of the pagan neighbours, and the continuity of the cult (terminology drawn from Exod 11:2; 12:35–36). The dominating feature is an ideological view based of a reference to the past (the tradition of the Exodus), and the promise given to the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 29:10). The return from the exile is presented not as much in political, social, and economic as in religious and spiritual terms.

The second chapter of Ezra features a list of the people coming back/repatriates. They are led (vv. 1–2) by twelve headmen, led by Zerubbabel (= Sheshbazzar?), and Joshua, the grandson of the High Priest Seraiah (2 Kgs 25:18.21; 1 Chr 5:40–41); however, they do not represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Verses 3–20 underscore their kinship and family ties, while verses 21–35 shift the stress from the kinship to their villages of origin (fellow countrymen). The goal is to retrieve the same land by its rightful owners, but it is exclusively the land of Judah and Benjamin. Furthermore, “the poorest people of the land” (2 Kgs 25:12), that is, those who had avoided deportation to Babylon, are perceived as having no claim to the land. By specifically listing priests (vv. 36–39), Levites (vv. 40–42), and the temple servants (vv. 43–58) the limits of belonging were established (vv. 59–63) for those who, though admittedly having been related to the exiles, could not prove their

rightful descent, resulting in their being excluded from the priesthood. The indication of the total number of the returning exiles (vv. 64–67), and the praise of the generosity of the rulers, who willingly made their donations (vv. 68–69), frames the settlement in Jerusalem and in its vicinity in terms of actual events, and not merely a symbolism of return (v. 70).

The first and second chapters of Ezra do not feature a description of the return, as is the case in Exodus–Deuteronomy.<sup>21</sup> The preeminent element is the emphasis on the restoration of the cult, both regarding the inventory and the personnel, which indicates the continuation of the religious situation from before the captivity. The inclusion of some “foreigners” is potentially admissible; however, there is an appropriate position in the new community devised for them. The motif of a foreign ruler does appear, but Cyrus’s role is radically different than that of Nebuchadnezzar, and before that of the (anonymous) pharaoh, who had been the foes of God and of His chosen people.

Much space is devoted to the narrative of the reconstruction of the Temple and of the walls of Jerusalem (Ezra 3–6). The reconstruction of the Temple is regarded as the main condition of preserving and developing the postexilic community centred around the city. First, according to the actual historical circumstances, the reconstruction of the sacrificial altar is mentioned (3:1–7). Thus, the performance of the cult would have been restored before the reconstruction of the Temple, which begs the question whether the sacrificial cult had been entirely abandoned during the exile and had to be restored on the return, or whether we are dealing with its continuation within the new circumstances. By underscoring the unity and solidarity of the entire community, the role of Joshua (religious leader), and of Zerubbabel (lay leader), acting during the reign of Darius (522–486 B.C.) in reinstating the cult and fulfilling the command given in Exod 20:25. One notices the emphasis placed upon strict abidance by the regulations laid down in the Torah, which is said to exist in a written form (the Torah of Moses). Similarly to the times of Solomon (1 Kgs 8:2), this takes place on

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<sup>21</sup> B. Becking, “Does Ezra Present the Return from Exile as a Second Exodus?” *Biblische Notizen* 177 (2018): 65–73.

the Feast of the Tabernacles (Lev 23), a fact modelled according to the cultic calendar. Personal, that is, voluntary sacrifices (Lev 22:17–25; Num 15:1–10; Deut 12:17) constitute another element corroborating the continuity of the cult.

In the second month, as in the times of Solomon (2 Kgs 3:2), in the second year after the return from the exile, that is in April-May 537/536 B.C., a solemn ceremony of laying the foundation of the Temple was held (3:8–13), fashioned after the first one, before the captivity. No details of the restoration are provided; however, a festival heralding its consecration receives a mention (cf. 2 Chr 7:6). Sacrifices are made in a manner prescribed by Moses, meanwhile the cult is performed as prescribed by David (1 Chr 15–16; 23–26). Liturgical celebration is accompanied by a spontaneous reaction of the people, expressing their gratitude, joy, and admiration. The time of God's punishment is over, the new era has come, that is, the Second Temple period.

At this juncture, we encounter a short narrative (4:1–5), which provides a plausible account of the conflict that surrounded the project of Temple restoration.<sup>22</sup> It opens with a twofold presentation of an envoy arriving in Jerusalem. Verse 1 presents it from the point of view of the author of the Book of Ezra, whereas v. 2 retained its auto presentation. The two perspectives differ greatly.

<sup>1</sup> When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to Yahweh (the Lord), the God of Israel,

<sup>2</sup> they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of families and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we worship [seek – NKJV] your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of King Esar-haddon of Assyria who brought us here."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> W. Chrostowski, "Konflikt wokół odbudowy świątyni (Ezd 4,1-5). Przyczynnik do transformacji religii biblijnego Izraela i narodzin judaizmu," *Collectanea Theologica* 89, no. 3 (2019): 43–83.

<sup>23</sup> Translator's note: in all Bible quotations throughout the text of the article the New Revised Standard Version was used. When the need to use of any other translation arises, these are indicated in the text; see the citation above.

The tidings of the rebuilding works on the temple performed by the repatriates who had arrived back from Babylon spread rapidly not only in the close vicinity of Jerusalem, but also throughout the entire territory of the former kingdom of Israel. The news of the altar being built and the sacrificial cult restored sent shockwaves among the inhabitants, who had a keen interest in whatever was happening in Jerusalem. The image of the actual situation in the lands of the former kingdom of Israel differs vastly from the Bible's silence on the issue. The Assyrian province of Samerina, established in 721 B.C., enjoyed some political and economic autonomy, providing an important buffer in the confrontation between Assyria and Egypt.<sup>24</sup> Before the Babylonian captivity, its inhabitants maintained relationships with Jerusalem, and visited the temple in order to offer their sacrifices. King Hezekiah (727–697), celebrating Pesach when the kingdom of Israel had already ceased to exist, “sent word to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord the God of Israel” (2 Chr 30:1). The response was varied. “So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Only a few from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem” (30:10–11). Several decades later, king Josiah (640–609), when introducing a profound religious reform, implemented it also in the territory inhabited by the Northern Tribes, that is, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, all the way to Naphtali (34:4–7). Having ordered for the temple to be renewed, he collected the funds also from Manasseh and Ephraim (34:9–11). Once the exile was over, the altar rebuilt and the sacrificial service restored, the representatives of the populace inhabiting the territories north of Jerusalem came offering their cooperation in rebuilding the sanctuary. As the restoration of the altar had been a relatively small-scale undertaking, carried out over a short period of time, they had not been able to participate therein. Their religious motivation was in all likelihood matched by their political intentions. The inhabitants

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<sup>24</sup> R. Gane, “The Role of Assyria in the Ancient Near East during the Reign of Manasseh,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 35 (1997): 21–32.

of the former kingdom of Israel might have been concerned that the repatriates, when the temple has been rededicated and Jerusalem fortified, could wish to extend their hegemony further northward.<sup>25</sup>

In verse 1, the newcomers are referred to as *šārê yəhūdā<sup>h</sup> ūbinyāmīn*, that is, the “adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,” a reflection of the unfavourable attitude towards those living in the lands north of Judah. It shifts onto them the stereotypical resentments, treating “Judah and Benjamin,” much like the case was in 2 Chr 11:1; 3:10.12.23, and 2 Chr 15, as the community from before the exile, limited to the territory of Judah with its capital in Jerusalem. Already in Mesopotamia, major tensions had arisen between the two main groups of exiles from the two regions of Palestine – the north, and the south.<sup>26</sup> These were a continuation of earlier antagonisms and increasing hostility, many attestations of which can be found in DH (Josh – 2 Kgs). In spite of mutual antagonisms and frictions between them, both chief waves of exiles were able to avoid being assimilated, a fact indicated by their significant economic success and a frequent choice of Yahwist names.<sup>27</sup> We are unable to determine the extent of ethnic continuity between the repatriates and their ancestors expelled from Judah to

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<sup>25</sup> H. Langkammer, “Księgi Ezdrasza-Nehemiasza. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz – ekskursy,” *Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu* II/3, Poznań–Warszawa 1971, 139.

<sup>26</sup> W. Chrostowski, “Ezechiel jako świadek asyryjskiej diaspory Izraelitów,” in: idem, *Asyryjska diaspora Izraelitów i inne studia*, Rozprawy i Studia Biblijne 10, Warszawa 2003, 55–68; idem, “Wizja ożywienia wyschniętych kości (Ez 37,1-14) jako świadectwo asyryjskiej diaspory Izraelitów,” in: idem, *Babilońskie deportacje mieszkańców Jerozolimy i Judy oraz inne studia*, Rozprawy i Studia Biblijne 34, Warszawa 2009, 80–108; idem, “Asyryjska diaspora Izraelitów w świetle Księgi Ezechiela. Wojciechowi Pikorowi w odpowiedzi,” in: idem, *Trzecia Świątynia w Jerozolimie i inne studia*, Rozprawy i Studia Biblijne 44, Warszawa 2012, 84–107.

<sup>27</sup> E. Yamauchi, “The Eastern Jewish Diaspora under the Babylonians,” in: M.W. Chavalas, K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds., *Mesopotamia and the Bible. Comparative Explorations*, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 2002, 356–77; R. Zadok, “Judeans in Babylonia – Updating the Dossier,” in: U. Garbay, Sh. Secunda, eds., *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon. Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 160, Tübingen 2014, 109–29.

Mesopotamia,<sup>28</sup> the fact remains, however, the former did consider themselves to be the heirs of the latter. Having arrived in Jerusalem with a sense of no immediate community with their compatriots taken captive during the Assyrian reign, they distanced themselves from the mixed populace inhabiting the territory of the former kingdom of Israel, and from the inhabitants of Judah who had not been deported to Babylonia. They saw themselves as an entirely distinct community, coalesced during their exile, who with Persian dominance and in collaboration with the new governors had assumed the responsibility for organising anew the religious and political life in Jerusalem and Judah.

The “adversaries of Judah and Benjamin” came to meet Zerubbabel and the heads of the families. Contacting him they were aware of his high political ambitions.<sup>29</sup> Having descended from royal lineage and serving as the lay leader, he was deemed to be to appropriate addressee of the offer of cooperation in restoration of the temple, a deed requiring great financial outlay, and human resources, such as stonemasons and craftsmen. Their declaration of involvement in the task of reinstating the temple heralded their successful introduction into a joint effort to carry out a lofty undertaking.

Verse 2 conveys the core of the offer presented to Zerubbabel and the Elders of Jerusalem by the visitors from the northern part of the country. Who were they? First of all, to replace the deported Israelites, Assyrians brought a foreign populace; however, despite the collapse of the state, local places of worship did survive, and hence the newcomers would adopt local beliefs and rituals. Secondly, even during the Babylonian period the majority of that populace comprised Israelites, the worshippers of Yahweh.<sup>30</sup> As between the eighth and the sixth century B.C. Samaria was the

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<sup>28</sup> B. Becking, “Ezra’s Re-enactment of the Exile,” in: L.L. Grabbe, ed., *Leading Captivity Captive. “The Exile” as History and Ideology*, JSOTSuppl. 278, European Seminar in Historical Methodology 2, Sheffield 1998, 40–61.

<sup>29</sup> J. Ciecieląg, “Zerubbael and His Role in the Creation of Yehud Province,” *Polish Journal of Biblical Research* 10 (2011): 57–62.

<sup>30</sup> A. Zertal, “The Province of Samaria (Assyrian “Samerina”) in the Late Iron Age (Iron Age III),” in: O. Lipschits, M. Oeming, eds., *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, Winona Lake (Ind.) 2006, 377–412.

administrative centre that Jerusalem depended upon, the visitors feel obliged to participate in the execution of a momentous decision regarding the religious and political realms. Thirdly, many native Israelites mixed with Judeans, which resulted in family migrations from Jerusalem and Judah to the province of Samerina. Thus, the ethnic background of the subsequent Samaritan schism was extremely diverse.<sup>31</sup>

The declaration “let us build with you” (*nibne<sup>h</sup> ʿimmākem*) unequivocally indicates whose is the primacy and the leadership in the temple restoration programme. The newcomers are merely willing to join in the execution of plans that had already been made, and cooperate therein. Justifying their wish to collaborate, they explain: “for we worship [seek – nkjv] your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him” (*kī kākem nidrōš lēʾlōhēkem [wəlōʾ] [wəlō] ʾānāhnū zōbhīm*). The continuation of the sacrificial cult was probably ensured in the very centres that had served as the places of worship during the era of the kingdom of Israel. The visitors are not driven by ethnic nor political considerations, but solely by religious solidarity.<sup>32</sup> The past efforts of winning them over for the faith in God and His worship in Jerusalem, dating back to the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, start to bear fruits. The expression “we worship [seek – NKJV] your God as you do” takes up the formula known from Deuteronomy (4:29; 12:5), and the teaching of the prophets calling the people to “seek Yahweh,” that is, to abandon the practice of ensuring merely political security, and to terminate the worship of pagan deities (Isa 8:19; 31:3, Jer 8:2). In 1–2 Chronicles, the “seeking [*drš*] of Yahweh” points to the identity of His worshippers,<sup>33</sup> and an honest desire to only adhere to the Lord.<sup>34</sup> Even though 2 Kgs 17, presenting the situation after the

<sup>31</sup> R. Irudaya, “Who are the Samaritans?” *Vidyajyoti* 68 (2004): 576–94.

<sup>32</sup> D.J. Shepherd, “Commentary on Ezra,” in: D.J. Shepherd, Ch.J.H. Wright, eds., *Ezra and Nehemiah*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 2018, 21.

<sup>33</sup> D. Denninger, “*drš*,” in: W.A. VanGemeren, ed. in ch., *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1, Carlisle 1996, 996–7.

<sup>34</sup> C. Begg, “«Seeking Yahweh» and the Purpose of Chronicles,” *Louvain Studies* 9 (1982): 128–42; D. McCarthy, “Covenant and Law in Chronicles-Nehemiah,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982): 31.



fall of Samaria and the kingdom of Israel, accuses the inhabitants of the northern part of the country a reprehensible and contemptible religious syncretism, when the Babylonian captivity has ended the newcomers to Jerusalem declare their belief in God. Such was the case in spite of their having developed the awareness of their own ethnic distinctiveness, as indicated in the expressions *‘immākem i kākem* and *ʾānāhnū i ʾōtānū*, that is, “with you” and “as you,” as well as “we” and “us.” The newcomers are of the opinion that ethnic differences do not nullify the common element that should unite both parties, namely, the belief in Yahweh, worshipped in Jerusalem. The second part of the visitors’ declaration focuses on the legitimacy (correctness) of their cultic practices. At this point, we are dealing with a radical intrusion in the text made by the Masoretes, who provided their own vocalisation for the passage.<sup>35</sup> By negating the auto-presentation by the newcomers, they completely reversed its meaning; however, their involvement is too intrusive to avoid being called out.

As to the phrase: “ever since the days of King Esar-haddon of Assyria who brought us here” (*mîmê ʿēsar ḥaddōn mēlek ʾaššūr hammaʿāleḥ ʾōtānū pōḥ*), the Bible speaks of forced deportations, carried out by the Assyrians shortly before the fall of Samaria, under the rule of Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727), and Shalmaneser V (727–722), and after it under Sargon II (722–705).<sup>36</sup> It does not mention later deportations, which are alluded to in the words of the deputation to Jerusalem and in extrabiblical testimonies. These were of a bidirectional character. According to 2 Kgs 17:24, faced

<sup>35</sup> W. Chrostowski, *Konflikt wokół odbudowy świątyni*, 48–9.

<sup>36</sup> K. Lawson Younger, “The Deportations of the Israelites,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 201–27; B. Oded, “The Settlements of the Israelite and Judean Exiles in Mesopotamia in the 8th-6th Centuries BCE,” in: G. Galil, M. Weinfeld, eds., *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography Presented to Zecharia Kallai*, Vetus Testamentum Suppl. 81, Leiden et al. 2000, 91–103; W. Chrostowski, “«Nic nie zostało, jak tylko samo pokolenie Judy» (2Krl 17,18n.) – czy naprawdę?” in: idem, *Asyryjska diaspora Izraelitów i inne studia*, 35–54. S.H. Horn, P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *Podzielona monarchia. Królestwa Judy i Izraela*, in: H. Shanks, ed., *Starożytny Izrael. Od Abrahama do zburzenia świątyni jerozolimskiej przez Rzymian*, Pol. transl. and ed. W. Chrostowski, Podręczniki Biblijne 1, Warszawa 2018, 245–59.

with the depopulation of the country, Sargon II performed a partial repopulation of Samaria and its surroundings. This policy came to be pursued also by his successors, that is, Esarhaddon (681–668), and Ashurbanipal (669–629).<sup>37</sup> A difficult to establish, but certainly high number of people arrived in the Assyrian province of Samerina from various regions of Mesopotamia.<sup>38</sup> Adapting themselves to their new environment, they adopted the faith in Yahweh and local observances. 2 Kings (17:24–28) specifies that it occurred with the consent of the ruler of Assyria. The local populace of the former kingdom of Israel, who had survived the deportations, and the deported thereto part of the populace of Mesopotamia of different origin would mix with one another, and received a priest once carried away from Samaria to Mesopotamia, who “lived in Bethel; he taught them how they should worship the Lord” (v. 28). Hence, the members of the deputation to Jerusalem were the descendants of the people brought ca. one and a half of century earlier from Mesopotamia into the territory of the former kingdom of Israel, intermingled with Israelites, who had survived the Assyrian onslaught, and had not gone into exile. By declaring their belief in Yahweh and their willingness to worship Him in the Jerusalem Temple, they did not regard themselves as pagans, thus their religious identity must have been formed. It was their desire to collaborate on the execution of the restoration programme for the sanctuary and to confirm the unity of the worshippers of one God.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> N. Na'man, “Population Changes in Palestine Following Assyrian Deportations,” *Tel Aviv* 20, no. 2 (1993): 104–24.

<sup>38</sup> On the Assyrian settlers in Samaria see for instance: E. Nodet, *A Search for the Origins of Judaism. From Joshua to the Mishnah*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 248, Sheffield 1997, 154–60.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. an opinion expressed by H. Langkammer: “One should not assume that it was since the outset that the settlers entertained the thought of assuming total control over the construction works. Though they probably never abandoned the hope it would one day come to pass. Perhaps the leadership was to be transferred to the Persian authorities of the province of Samaria, considering that Judeans—emphatically rejecting the proposal put forth by their enemies—invoked the highest authority of the Persian state, i.e., the king himself. Now, Cyrus had ordered Judeans to rebuild the temple, but it was exclusively them. That is why they categorically excluded any alien tribes from collaboration in the task; their fundamental

Their attitude was not hostile, nor their intentions wicked. The circumstances of their arrival accord with the tradition of religious contacts with Jerusalem, dating back to the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, a tradition which was maintained during the Babylonian captivity.<sup>40</sup> The envoys may have been associated with the Bethel sanctuary, which survived the Assyrian invasion and Josiah's reform, who expressed their desire to join in a task they deemed much needed and significant. There are no grounds for assuming that "their proposal of assisting with the restoration of the temple was not honest."<sup>41</sup> In spite of all the above, the nomenclature referring to them in v. 1 does not leave any doubts that they were not looked upon with a favourable eye in Jerusalem; moreover, the pejorative expression *cārê* — "adversaries," "foes"—assumes their hostility and evil intent.

### **Response of the Elders at Jerusalem (Ezra 4:3–5)**

Admittedly, the Yahwist cultic practices north of Judah differed from those performed in the temple; nevertheless, the Elders at Jerusalem exerted no effort to rectify or improve them. Had their answer been positive, the subsequent history of Israel and its religion would have been different altogether. However, whereas the visitors had religious motivation, the leaders of Jerusalem expressed a predominantly ethnic and politically-oriented attitude.

<sup>3</sup> But Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the rest of the heads of families in Israel said to them, "You shall have no part with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus of Persia has commanded us."

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motivation was different though: they constituted the authentic Israel, that is, a cultic community returning from captivity, and completely sovereign in deciding on its fate and on its undertakings."

H. Langkammer, *Księgi Ezdrasza-Nehemiasza*, 139.

<sup>40</sup> W. Chrostowski, *Konflikt wokół odbudowy świątyni*, 50–7.

<sup>41</sup> J.H. Walton, V.H. Matthews, M.W. Chavalas, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Biblii Hebrajskiej*, Prymasowska Seria Biblijna 24, Warszawa 2005, 519.

<sup>4</sup> Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and made them afraid to build.

<sup>5</sup> And they bribed officials to frustrate their plan throughout the reign of King Cyrus of Persia and until the reign of King Darius of Persia.

Verse 3 conveys the information about the persons answering the newcomers: Zerubbabel, Joshua, and other heads of families in Israel. The first interlocutors of the envoys, as indicated in v. 1, were Zerubbabel and the heads of the families of Israel, that is, the leading representatives of the lay authority. The expression *rā'šê hā'ābôt* ("the heads/leaders of the fathers/families"), found in v. 3, as well as in Ezra 2:68; 8:1, and Neh 8:13; 11:13, and others, refers to the "Elders of Judah" mentioned in the Aramaic fragment of Ezra (5:5.9; 6:7.8.14), who took the lead during the return from the exile, and made the decision to restore the temple.<sup>42</sup> There is no mention of Joshua, the religious leader, in v.1 alongside the indication of the first addressees of the deputation. There is no need to reconcile v. 1 with v. 3, for the briefly discussed event occurred in three stages: 1. the deputation presented to Zerubbabel the proposal of their collaboration in the temple restoration; 2. the proposal was submitted to the high priest Joshua and discussed with him; 3. Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the local elders gave the answer they had reached together. That indicates close cooperation between Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the prominence of the high priest in the community of repatriates. The emphasis placed upon the role of Zerubbabel corroborates the dynastic continuity, whereas that of Joshua – the cultic continuity.<sup>43</sup> The framework of the political and administrative structure of the Jewish community start to emerge, based on the *status quo* from before the Babylonian captivity, subjected to major modification and adaptation intended to forge new future.

We do not know what the answer of Zerubbabel and the local lay elders would have been, had they been the ones exclusively

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<sup>42</sup> R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, vol. 1: *From the Exile to the Maccabees*, London 1994, 446–7.

<sup>43</sup> A. Sérandour, "Les récits bibliques de la construction du second temple: leurs enjeux," *Transeufratene* 11 (1996): 9–32.

entrusted with taking the decision. What we do know is the response they reached having consulted the high priest Joshua. The envoys, aware of their ethnic distinctiveness, invoked the unity in the belief in God and in the cult, but the religious authorities in Jerusalem questioned and entirely rejected their claims. The expression “you shall have no part with us” (*lō<sup>2</sup>-lākem wālānū libnōt bayit lē<sup>2</sup>lōhēnū*) underscores the insurmountable separation; however, it is never explained where it had originated, or what the grounds for it had been. In the background, there are the undertones of the same kind as those expressed in the Deuteronomistic narrative of the causes and aftermath of the fall of Samaria and the kingdom of Israel, which involved, among other things, the introduction of a populace alien in terms of its ethnicity and religion. Though this group displayed proclivity to accept the belief in Yahweh, the author of 2 Kings pointed out: “So these nations worshiped the Lord, but also served their carved images; to this day their children and their children’s children continue to do as their ancestors did” (17:41). Robert North was right to observe: “Zerubbabel neither denies nor questions the fact that these Samaritans (or their collaborators originating from Judah) did in fact worship Yahweh – he rather succumbs to the attitude of obstinacy and racial prejudice, attributing to their mixed blood the inadequacies in observing even the most minute of the precepts of the Law (Hag 2:12; Zech 7:2; John 8:48).”<sup>44</sup> The restoration of the temple was not only, or not as much, a material, but rather a religious and ideological undertaking. The elders in Jerusalem declared that it would be “a house to our God,” thus showing some distinct signs of a claim to exclusivity and highlighting the fact that the sanctuary will constitute the core of the repatriates’ identity, shaped after their return from the exile. If the deputation had any connection to the Betel Sanctuary, a highly probable supposition, the rejection of their offer would indicate that the worship performed there was deemed illegal in Jerusalem. The Jewish identity is emerging, and that involves the exclusion of “others” from the participation in their cult, regardless of whether

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<sup>44</sup> R. North, “Księga Ezdrasza i Księga Nehemiasza,” in: R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer, R.E. Murphy, eds. of orig. ed., W. Chrostowski, ed. of. Pol. ed., *Katolicki komentarz biblijny*, Prymasowska Seria Biblijna 17, Warszawa 2001, 347.

they themselves profess to believe in Yahweh and observe of the same religious practices. The expression “our God” bears all the marks of religious exclusivism, sealed off to anyone who did not belong to the limited community comprising the repatriates. At the root of their refusal, there were also some political considerations: an autonomous community was being formed, centred around the programme of the temple restoration.

With no king or temple, the repatriates focused on consolidating their ranks, and emphasising the role of the *gôlâ*, setting themselves apart from other compatriots.<sup>45</sup> The only exception were the communities in Babylonia, the contacts with which continued to be maintained, with a concurrent defence of the community’s autonomy as regards the leadership as well as the matters of religion and morality.<sup>46</sup> The justification of the refusal does not provide any religious arguments, but merely a political one: “as King Cyrus of Persia has commanded us.” Regardless of the issue of historicity of Cyrus’s decree, the Book of Ezra attributes immense significance thereto. The response given to the visitors suggests that their potential involvement in the restoration of the sanctuary would have been perceived as a form of insubordination against Cyrus, for the command that he had issued ought to be specifically performed according to his will. That way, the burden of justifying the negative decision and further deliberation of the matter was shifted from the Elders in Jerusalem to a pagan king. The invocation of Cyrus’s decree is a clear-cut political argument which is to provide grounds for the demand of exclusivity in temple restoration. The Elders in Jerusalem resolved to separate themselves from their compatriots inhabiting the northern part of the county; meanwhile, by excluding them from the programme of temple restoration, they removed them from any future participation in the cult performed therein. While the newcomers focused on their religious continuity with Israel, as

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<sup>45</sup> Ch.E. Carter, “Ideology and Archaeology in the Neo-Babylonian Period. Excavating Text and Tell,” in: O. Lipschits, M. Oeming, eds., *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, 301–22, with the conclusion: “This ideology has ruled the day for 2500 years and continues to dominate the interpretative landscape.”

<sup>46</sup> P.R. Bedford, “Diaspora: Homeland Relations in Ezra-Nehemiah,” *Vetus Testamentum* 52 (2002): 147–65.

later picked up on by the Samaritans, Zerubbabel, Joshua and other leaders of the community in Jerusalem lay the foundation for the limitation of the designation “Israel” exclusively to Judah and Benjamin, and thus its appropriation at the expense of the northern tribes.<sup>47</sup> Following that event, the northern populace stiffened their stance towards Jerusalem. They were fully aware of the continuity with the preexilic religion, a fundamental element of their self-identification as the worshippers of the only God. Perhaps it was that excessive kinship and mutual similarity that was perceived as a threat in the eyes of Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> The anti-Samaritan attitude found in DH,<sup>49</sup> and later also in CH, serves a strictly defined ideology. After the refusal given to the visitors, their demand to be involved in the decisions regarding the entire community of the worshippers of the only true God became increasingly fainter. During the Hellenistic period, their willingness to cooperate gave way to competition and confrontation, which resulted in the establishment of a new solid religious community centred around Mount Gerizim to compete against Jerusalem.

Verse 4 introduces the third group involved in the escalating conflict, besides the Elders of Jerusalem and the visitors from the north. Before the Babylonian exile, the phrase *‘am-hā’āreṣ* (“the people of the land”) used to refer to the people inhabiting a given province, as different from or contrasted with the king, his courtiers and officials, as well as the affluent, priests and prophets. It did not denote the inhabitants of Jerusalem, it being the royal city, whose populace was closely associated with the ruler and the temple.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, the repatriates applied the word to speak of the

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<sup>47</sup> L.L. Grabbe, “Israel’s Historical Reality after the Exile,” in: B. Becking, M.C.A. Korpel, eds., *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, Old Testament Studies 42, Leiden 1999, 9–44.

<sup>48</sup> G.N. Knoppers, “Revisiting the Samaritan Question in the Persian Period,” in: O. Lipschits, M. Oeming, eds., *Judah and Judeans in the Persian Period*, 265–89.

<sup>49</sup> R. Hobson, “The Memory of Samaria in the Books of Kings,” in: D.V. Edelman, E. Ben Zvi, eds., *Memory and the City in Ancient Israel*, Winona Lake (Ind.) 2014, 219–29.

<sup>50</sup> E. Lipiński, “‘am. III. Collective Sense,” in: G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, H.-J. Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. XI, Grand Rapids (Mich.)–Cambridge 2002, 174.

autochthonous populace inhabiting Jerusalem and its vicinity who had avoided the deportations and the aftermath of the Babylonian raids, such as famine or an epidemic.<sup>51</sup> When the country suffered from depopulation, there came a difficult to estimate number of surrounding neighbours, who would during the subsequent decades mix with the locals. That number also included Israelites, who started to migrate south to live with Judeans after the fall of the kingdom of Israel.<sup>52</sup> In one view, it could explain the inclusion in the Bible of the traditions known in the kingdom of Israel;<sup>53</sup> however, it is more probable that the process of integration occurred during the captivity, in within the encounter of the Assyrian diaspora with the (voluntary and coerced) migrants from Judah. Even if the approximation that 50% of the population of Judah was of Israeli background is indeed an overestimation,<sup>54</sup> that fraction may still have been relatively large. Thus, the situation was in a sense analogous to that in the captivity and in the northern part of the country. The fact that “the people of the land,” professing the same faith, were perceived as alien and strongly contrasted with “the sons of the exile,” that is the repatriates, demonstrates how dramatic these tensions were.<sup>55</sup> The locals, due to their origin, were seen by the returning exiles as “contaminated,” or susceptible to favour the Assyrian-Aramaic influences, gaining ground in the northern country.<sup>56</sup> Most of inhabitants of Jerusalem and its vicinity constituted farmers and shepherds, who entered into mixed marriages during the period of captivity (Neh 13:23). In the Books

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<sup>51</sup> A. Faust, “Deportations and Demography in Sixth-Century B.C.E. Judah,” in: J.L. Wright, ed., *Interpreting Exile. Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, Atlanta 2011, 91–103.

<sup>52</sup> W. Schütte, “Wie wurde Juda israelitisiert?” *Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 124 (2012): 52–72.

<sup>53</sup> I. Finkelstein, “Migration of Israelites into Judah after 720 BCE. An Answer and an Update,” *Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 127 (2015): 188–206.

<sup>54</sup> E.A. Knauf, “Bethel. The Israelite Impact on Judaeic Language and Literature,” in: O. Lipschits, M. Oeming, eds., *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, 291–349.

<sup>55</sup> J. Wimmer, “Inside/Outside the Community,” *The Bible Today* 37 (1999): 217–21.

<sup>56</sup> S. Długoborski, “Wpływ imperialnej Asyrii na religię Judy,” *Scripta Biblica et Orientalia* 3 (2011): 143–56.



of Ezra (9:1–2; 10:2.11) and Nehemiah (10:20.31–32), they are spoken of with unmitigated scorn, and accused of ignorance of the Torah, the failure to observe the Sabbath, and other errors.<sup>57</sup> In such circumstances, the expression *‘am-hā’āreṣ* became a pejorative term. The attitude of the Elders towards the newcomers from the north also came to encompass the local populace. Much like the inhabitants of the northern part of the country, they were sidelined from the restoration project,<sup>58</sup> and deprived of any influence over key decisions by the repatriates, who seized control of the political and religious life. Looking for justification for this rejection, we may assume that the exile must have been a traumatic experience, one that could explain the emphasis on separation and purity, typical in similar situations all the way to the present day.<sup>59</sup> However, it was neither the only, nor the most important factor. We witness the process of consistent appropriation of the notion of Israel, which comes to the fore in the concept of the affiliation to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin limited solely to those returning from the exile. The repatriates enjoyed strong support from the Persian authorities and used it to consolidate their position and influence. The foundation was being laid for a profound reform carried out in the fifth century B.C. by Ezra, at the heart of which there was a radical ethnic purge, consisting in the dismissal of “foreign” wives and children (Ezra 9–10).

Verse 5 justifies the period of a dozen or so years of interruption in the temple restoration works, that lasted from the return from the exile in 539 until the reign of King Darius (520–485). We do not have either biblical or extrabiblical testimonies of any external opposition against the rebuilding of the temple of such a magnitude that it could result in a complete stoppage of the works, commenced

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<sup>57</sup> E. Lipiński, “‘am,” 175.

<sup>58</sup> On the reconstruction of life in Judah after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, see M.B. Moore, B.E. Kelle, *Biblical History and Israel's Past. The Changing Study of the Bible and History*, Grand Rapids (Mich.)—Cambridge (U.K.) 2011, 367–88.

<sup>59</sup> D.L. Smith-Christopher, “Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile (597/587-539 BCE),” in: J.M. Scott, ed., *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Perspectives*, Journal for Study of Judaism Suppl. 56, Leiden 1997, 7–32.

by laying the foundations. Meanwhile, an entirely different image emerges from the Book of Haggai. On the first day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius's reign, that is in 520 B.C., the prophet addressed Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the son of Jozadak, with words of stern reprimand. Referring to the voices that said: "the time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house" (Hag 1:2), he rhetorically inquired: "Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" (1:4). After the rhetorical question, and the reflection it entailed, he went on to transmit the command given by God: "Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured, says the Lord" (1:7–8). This prophetic admonition was addressed to the same persons, that is Zerubbabel and Joshua, who a little over a decade earlier rejected the proposal of cooperation in the rebuilding of the temple made by the visitors from the north part of the country. Having refused, they did not perform the task, soon neglected not because of protests that would render it impossible, but due to focusing on their personal prosperity, condemned by the prophet Haggai. In Ezra 4:1–5, we can clearly see that the expression "Judah and Benjamin" no longer encompasses all the descendants belonging to those tribes, having instead been reduced exclusively to the repatriates.

### **The Project of New Future: Judaism**

The information of the abandonment of the temple restoration works, a state that lasted for over a decade, does not provide us with any details. The passage about that issue is abruptly interrupted by an extensive narrative (Ezra 4:6–24) of the events that occurred several decades later—during the reign of Xerxes (485–465), and Artaxerxes (464–424)—and pertained to a different issue altogether, namely, to the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. When it ends, with equal abruptness, we return to the topic of the resumption of works and completion of the temple restoration (5:1–6:18), followed by an account of a solemn celebration of the Passover (6:19–22). Many commentators of Ezra fail to conceal their perplexity at such an elaborate digression; however, a justification of it having been

situated here does not seem to pose much challenge. Reporting on the tensions surrounding the restoration of the temple, which resulted in the rejection of the collaboration offered by the newcomers from the north, even though they professed the same belief in God, the author felt excused from providing any apology of the refusal they had received. The deputation, who had arrived with fair-minded attitude, was attributed identically wicked intentions as those that later came to the fore in hostile interventions undertaken by completely different persons and milieux during the rebuilding of the city walls.

The Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicle History—as historical books—are situated alongside one another in the Christian Bible, but not in the Jewish Bible, as in the latter they are placed in two different collections, respectively Prophets and Writings. To the lot comprising Joshua – 2 Kings, Judaism attributed prophetic traits, taking prophetism to be a religious evaluation of the past and the present with the view of shaping the future. By contrast, the retrospect of the past featured in 1 Chronicles – Nehemiah, even though it admittedly influenced greatly the Jewish identity, has a different status. Both in the former and in the latter case memory was subject to criteria and regulations resultant from the circumstances and demands emerging at the time of it being recorded in writing. That is why the two accounts differ.<sup>60</sup> One of the crucial differences between the work by the Deuteronomist and that by the Chronicler consists in the fact that the former dismisses any cult and priesthood from outside of Jerusalem as illegal, but does retain the recollection of the attempts made at religious reconciliation and admitting the inhabitants of the former kingdom of Israel, that is, the northern tribes, to take part in the cult practiced in Jerusalem, and thus also in the national unity. We are able to observe a certain gradation in the work by the Chronicler:

– 1–2 Chronicles, with its numerous allusions to the group referred to as the Earlier Prophets (Josh – 2 Kgs), does not elaborate

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<sup>60</sup> E. Ben Zvi, “Chronicles and Samuel-Kings: Two Interacting Aspects of a Memory System in the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Period,” in: U. Becker, H. Bezzel, eds., *Rereading the “relecture”? The Question of (Post)chronistic Influences in the Latest Redactions of the Book of Samuel*, Tübingen 2014, 41–56.

the motif of the reintegration of the entire nation of Israel, nor does it promote it; however, it does mention the major attempts at reintroducing the cultural unity made under Kings Hezekiah (2 Chr 30:1) and Josiah (34:4–7). In the narrative at 2 Chr 10–36, the territory defined in 1–2 Kings was somewhat extended, which—as suggested by I. Finkelstein<sup>61</sup>—was a reflection of the situation during the Hasmonean rule, which constituted the fulfilment of the political visions of the new future embraced in the work by the Chronicler.

– The Book of Ezra, while continuing the approach defined in 1–2 Chronicles, increasingly narrows it down, bringing to the fore the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Nor could one overestimate the value of the information on the commencement of the temple restoration. The project was abandoned for a time, because soon after their return from the exile the elders in Jerusalem opted for a decisive separation not only from the populace of the northern part of the country, but also from those inhabitants of Judah and their descendants, who had been able to avoid the captivity. This decision provided a justification for the new situation, and concurrently for the project of new future. At its core, it entailed the notion that only the exiles and their descendants and relatives still remaining in Mesopotamia can treat themselves as “Israel,” depriving anyone else of that honour.

– The Book of Nehemiah goes further still in radicalising that perspective, and in a transition from the religious to the ethnic—it adopts and retains an absolute interdiction of intermarriage.

The conflict mentioned in Ezra 4:1–5 is quintessential for the controversy about the exclusivity or inclusivity of the religion of Israel, at the heart of which there was the idea of the “people of God,”<sup>62</sup> and the question whether the worship of Yahweh should be limited to a single people, or whether its reach should be wider,

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<sup>61</sup> I. Finkelstein, “The Expansion of Judah in II Chronicles: Territorial’s Legitimation for the Hasmoneans?” *Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 127 (2015): 669–95.

<sup>62</sup> E. Usue, “Theological Perspectives on the Concept of «Yahwe’s People» in Ezra and Nehemiah during the Early Post-Exilic Period (539-350 BC),” pt. I, *Old Testament Essays* 18 (2005): 826–46; pt. II, *ibid.* 19 (2006): 205–15.

potentially even universal. The exclusion of the local populace from the participation therein could not have been complete, considering that they did participate in the celebration of the Passover (Ezra 6:19–21), while those “who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to adhere to the law of God” (Neh 10:28), were admitted to participate in the renewal of the covenant.<sup>63</sup> What prevailed, however, was the exclusivist stance: the radical command to dismiss foreign wives and children indicates not only religious, but also ethnic exclusivity. The identification of the community members would be performed according to the name of the father, though the political essence of the reform of Ezra and Nehemiah also encompassed the emphasis on the role of the woman—as the wife and mother.<sup>64</sup> Inter-Judean debates, the traces of which have also been recognised in Deuteronomy,<sup>65</sup> focused on the issue of Israel’s identity, and the territorial reach of “the land of Israel,” lasted until the third century B.C., when they were settled in favour of the “Yehud-province” concept.

The religion of Israel was subject to a profound transformation, resulting in the “philosophy of history” presented by the Chronicler, theological and didactic in its nature, showing the Jewish identity and Judaism as the only *bona fide* continuation of the community from before the Babylonian exile. On the basis of that older faith and devotion, manifesting many universalist traits—particularly in the teaching of the prophets—open to others, i.e., pagans accepting the faith in God, it shaped and solidified the status of a tribal religion, limited to the “pure,” that is, bound by blood ties, members of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and not even all of those, but solely the repatriates. In all likelihood, the shift was rooted in the experience of the exile, where the survival of the deported Judeans depended on their abstaining from any contacts with their pagan surroundings. However, no smaller turned out to be the implications

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<sup>63</sup> P.H.W. Lau, “Gentile Incorporation into Israel in Ezra-Nehemiah?” *Biblica* 90 (2009): 356–73.

<sup>64</sup> P. Goodnick, “Ezra Rejects Patrilinear Descent,” *The Jewish Bible Quarterly* 26 (1998): 250–4.

<sup>65</sup> G. Szamocki, “Wielkoizraelska perspektywa tożsamości Judy w Pwt 11,29-30,” *Studia Gdańskie* 41 (2017): 17–23.

of the avoidance of close relationships with the descendants of the countrymen deported beforehand away from the territory of the kingdom of Israel. Both the former and the latter had contributed to the crystallisation of an attitude which was demonstrated in the rejection of the offer of cooperation on the temple restoration, and subsequently a complete separation from anyone not ethnically Jewish. The confrontation mentioned in Ezra 4:1–5 gave rise to the Samaritan community, still existing today.<sup>66</sup> A telling regularity can be observed: there is a fundamental contrast between the religious situation in both parts of Palestine in the eighth/seventh and that in the fifth/fourth centuries B.C., for in the latter, both in Judah and in the north no small sanctuaries were extant, nor any cultic figurines dated to the Persian period have been discovered.<sup>67</sup> The worship on Mount Gerizim became the subject of stern condemnations, with the emphasis on the validity of the worship and priesthood in Jerusalem.<sup>68</sup> The stress placed on the return from the exile and independent restoration of the temple serves to underscore the fact that it is the Judeans, and not the Samaritans (or others), who are the rightful continuators and heirs of the Israel from before the Babylonian captivity. *Gōla* in Judah, that is, the members of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and Levites, is presented as inherently associated with Yahweh, constituting the only proper continuation of God's chosen people.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Z. Ron, "The First Confrontation with the Samaritans (Ezra 4)," *The Jewish Bible Quarterly* 43 (2015): 117–21.

<sup>67</sup> E. Stern, "The Religious Revolution in Persian-Period Judah," in: O. Lipschits, J. Blenkinsopp, eds., *Judah and Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 199–205; idem, "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods," in: B. Becking, M.C.A. Korpel, eds., *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, 9–44 (the situation in the eighth/seventh c. – 245–53; the situation in the fifth/fourth c. – 253–55); D. Edelman, "Cultic Sites and Complexes Beyond the Jerusalem Temple," in: F. Staurakopoulou, J. Barton, eds., *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, New York–London 2010, 82–103.

<sup>68</sup> Ch. Nihan, "Cult Centralization and the Torah Traditions in Chronicles," in: P. Dubovsky, D. Markl, L.-P. Sonnet, eds., *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Rise of the Torah*, Tübingen 2016, 253–88.

<sup>69</sup> S. Grätz, "Bund und Erwählung in Esra-Nehemiah," in: N. MacDonald, ed., *Covenant and Election in Exilic and Post-Exilic Judaism*, 128–38.

When looking for the origin and the character of Samaritans, one has to seriously consider the possibility that theirs was an independent form of Yahwism—a continuation of the dominant religion of the kingdom of Israel.<sup>70</sup> It is indicated in all aspects of their religious practices with a single exception—the worship performed on Mount Gerizim. Archaeological testimonies point to that fact that the beginning of that “house of the Lord” date back to mid-fifth century B.C.,<sup>71</sup> when it had become clear that the inhabitants of the northern part of the country had been excluded from the worship in the Jerusalem sanctuary.<sup>72</sup> The foundation for that had also already been laid: the rejection of the offer of cooperation made by the visitors from the north resulted in the earlier tensions turning into a lasting conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans.<sup>73</sup> The text of Ezra 4:1–5 has a distinctly anti-Samaritan undertone.<sup>74</sup> During the period when the Book of Ezra was created, after the reign of Artaxerxes, which saw the Samaritans oppose the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem (4:10), they developed and consolidated their own identity. The hostility of Judeans towards them was so far-reaching that it was also them who had been accused of plotting against the temple restoration. The reinterpretation of the Pentateuch was also shifted towards the

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<sup>70</sup> R. Pummer, “Samaritanism – A Jewish Sect or an Independent Form of Yahwism?” in: M. Mor, F.V. Reiterer, eds., *Samaritans. Past and Present*, Studia Samaritana 5, Berlin–New York 2010, 1–24.

<sup>71</sup> Y. Magen, “The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim in Light of the Archaeological Evidence,” in: O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers, R. Albertz, eds., *Judah and Judaeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, Winona Lake (Ind.) 2007, 157–211; J. Dušek, “Mt Gerizim Sanctuary, Its History and Enigma of Origin,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 3 (2014): 111–33.

<sup>72</sup> J. Warzecha, before the most recent findings were published, had dated the erection of the Mt. Gerizim Sanctuary to early in the fourth century B.C.; see J. Warzecha, “Samarytanie – perspektywa polityczna i religijna,” in: W. Chrostowski, ed., *Słowo Twoje jest prawdą. Księga Pamiątkowa dla Księdza Profesora Stanisława Mędali CM w 65. rocznicę urodzin*, Ad Multos Annos 3, Warszawa 2000, 341.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. A.D. Crown, “Redating the Schism Between the Judaeans and the Samaritans,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 82, nos. 1–2 (1991): 17–50.

<sup>74</sup> G. Bettenzoli, “Księga Ezdrasza i Księga Nehemiasza,” in: W.R. Farmer, ac. ed., W. Chrostowski, ac. ed. of the Pol. ed., *Międzynarodowy komentarz do Pisma Świętego. Komentarz katolicki i ekumeniczny na XXI wiek*, Warszawa 2001, 577.

exclusivist positions,<sup>75</sup> particularly in narrowing down the covenant made with Abraham and Moses. After the Babylonian exile, the bonding agent of Jewish religious life in all the major agglomerations—Judah, Babylonia, Egypt—was the emphasis placed on the family and the refusal to be assimilated.<sup>76</sup> The mutual competition also pertained to the rightful lineage of priesthood. The exceptionally powerful stress on the lineages and the role of the priests in CH suggests that organisation of the cultic practices and of the temple personnel had also undergone a thorough transformation, which also required authentication.<sup>77</sup>

In the circumstances of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, and its subsequent restoration and renewal of the cult, the framework of Judaism came to emerge. It was one of the most breakthrough moments in the history of the biblical Israel.<sup>78</sup> Benefiting from the traditions of the preexilic Israel, they were adapted and updated, which provided answers to the calamity and inspiration for laying out the life of the community when the exile had ended. When the Priest Ezra commenced his radical reformist activity, valuing the ethnic factor over the profession of the same faith, the written Torah had been completed, and it was scoured for arguments justifying that attitude. A typical trait of that new stage is the form of leadership, whose authority is grounded in the elucidation of the Torah.<sup>79</sup> The number of the aggravated by this

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<sup>75</sup> E. Usue, "The Place of Non-Jews/Foreigners in the Early Post-exilic Jewish Community in Ezra—Nehemiah," *Old Testament Essays* 17 (2004): 294–314.

<sup>76</sup> R. Albertz, "Die social- und religionsgeschichtliche Folgen der Exilszeit," *Bibel und Kirche* 55 (2000): 127–31.

<sup>77</sup> P. Sacchi, *Storia del Secondo Tempio. Israele tra VI secolo a. C e I secolo d. C.*, Torino 1994, 89–104; A. Hunt, *Missing Priests. The Zadokites in Tradition and History*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 452, New York 2006.

<sup>78</sup> M. Broshi ranked it as one of the eight crucial events between 734 B.C. and A.D. 135: 1. the fall of the kingdom of Israel; 2. the reign of Hezekiah; 3. the rule of Zedekiah; 4. the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah; 5. the Hasmonean revolt; 6. the first revolt against the Romans; 7. Jewish rebellions against Trajan, 8. Bar Kokhba revolt, giving precedence to the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, alongside the Hasmonean revolt; M. Broshi, "Eight Critical Junctures in Ancient Jewish History," in: K.D. Dobos, M. Köszeghy, eds., *With Wisdom as a Robe. Qumran and Other Jewish Studies in Honor of Ida Fröhlich*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 21, Sheffield 2009, 15–22.

<sup>79</sup> Z. Ron, "Ezra, The First Rabbi," *The Jewish Bible Quarterly* 44 (2016): 37–44.



profound reform not only included those who were not members of Israel, but also the Judeans who had intermarried, as well as Israelites—the descendants of the northern tribes refused the unity with Jerusalem.<sup>80</sup>

Concluding, it is worth to restate the questions falling within the field of the so-called virtual history:<sup>81</sup> What would the history and religion of Israel have looked like if the elders in Jerusalem had responded positively to the plea of the visitors from the north and the local populace? Would the temple restoration have been postponed in time, as it was? – Probably not. Would the Jerusalem temple have become the keystone of the entire Israel, beyond the limits of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin? – Probably so. Would the favour extended to the newcomers have found extension in a universalism, much more open to the encounter with pagans interested in the religion of Israel? – Certainly. Would such circumstances have fostered the reforms carried out midway through the fifth century B.C., which resulted in the suffering of the dismissed women and children? – Probably not. Would the encounter of the belief in one God with the non-Jewish world have to wait as long as the emergence of the Septuagint as the Greek Bible, initially enthusiastically welcomed, and subsequently, once it became the Bible of the Apostolic Church, definitively rejected by the rabbis? It seems likely that a fruitful encoded of between the Jewish and the non-Jewish worlds would have occurred long before the appearing of the Septuagint, and it would have occurred in Jerusalem, instead of Alexandria. Towards the end of the pre-Christian era, thanks to the Greek Bible there were thousands of proselytes and those “fearing God” at the verge of Judaism. Would not they have come much earlier and in much greater numbers, had it not been for the refusal of admitting their representatives in the

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<sup>80</sup> “Ezra insisted that the Israelites divorce the wives they had taken from the «peoples of the land». Now, as a matter of fact, the peoples of the land were none other than descendants of those Israelites who had not gone off into exile in Babylonia. They had remained behind, and had not undergone the paradigmatic experience of exile and return. Israel was comprised, in the priests’ version, only by those who had gone into exile”; J. Neusner, *Transformations in Ancient Judaism. Textual Evidence for Creative Responses to Crisis*, Peabody (Mass.) 2004, 21–2.

<sup>81</sup> W. Chrostowski, “Konflikt wokół odbudowy świątyni,” 82–3.

temple restoration? Even though we do not know the answers to these questions, it is worth considering, as also suggested by M. Broshi,<sup>82</sup> what the history of Israel would have been if the events briefly reported in Ezra 4:1–5 had unfolded entirely otherwise.

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<sup>82</sup> M. Broshi, "Eight Critical Junctures in Ancient Jewish History," in: K.D. Dobos, M. Köszeghy, eds., *With Wisdom as a Robe*, 21–2.

- Broshi M., *Eight Critical Junctures in Ancient Jewish History*, in: Dobos K.D., Köszeghy M. (eds.), *With Wisdom as a Robe. Qumran and Other Jewish Studies in Honor of Ida Fröhlich*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 21, Sheffield 2009, 15–22.
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