Joel Joseph

Politico-Economic and Socio-Religious Factors behind the Rebuilding of the Second Temple during the Persian Period
A Sociological and Postcolonial Reading
A Dissertation submitted to the Senate of Serampore College (University) in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Theology
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Dedicated to the Glory of God,
to my Mom, late Annamma Joseph, Dad, Thomas Joseph,
my wife Ruby Joseph, daughter Jennifer Grace Joseph,
son Joshua Joseph, sisters,
Jolly and Dr. Joyy for their valuable contribution...

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List of Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABRL</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWA</td>
<td>Ancient West Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOS</td>
<td>American Oriental Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeologist</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAR</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
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<tr>
<td>BibInt</td>
<td>Biblical Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIS</td>
<td>Biblical Interpretation Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJS</td>
<td>Biblical and Judaic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRrev</td>
<td>Bible Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>Biblical Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZ</td>
<td>Biblische Zeitschrift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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ETL Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses

ExpT Expository Times

FOTL Forms of the Old Testament Literature

FRLANT Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

HSM Harvard Semitic Monograph

HSS Harvard Semitic Studies

HTR Harvard Theological Review

HUCA Hebrew Union College Annual

ICC International Critical Commentary

IEJ Israel Exploration Journal

Int Interpretation

JANES Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies

JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society

JBL Journal of Biblical Literature

JEOL Jaarbericht...ex oriente lux

JJS Journal of Jewish Studies

JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies

JQR Jewish Quarterly Review

JR Journal of Religion

JSJSupp Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSOT  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSupp  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS  Journal of Semitic Studies
JSSM  Journal of Semitic Studies Monograph
JTS  Journal of Theological Studies
LXX  Septuagint
MT  Masoretic Text
NCB  New Century Bible Commentary
NCBOT  New Century Bible Old Testament
NRSV  New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
Or  Orientalia
OTL  Old Testament Library
PEQ  Palestine Exploration Quarterly
RB  Revue Biblique
RA  Revue d' Assyriologie
SBT  Studies in Biblical Theology
SBTS  Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SJOT  Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament
SVT  Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
Syr  Syriac
Tg  Targum
VT  Vetus Testamentum
ZAW  Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Temple played an important role in the life of an Israelite. It was the Divine dwelling place of God on earth.\(^1\) It was the primary national institution and symbol of Judaism and Jewish pride.\(^2\) The rebuilding of the Temple started by 539 / 538 BCE but got over by 515 BCE.\(^3\) The basic questions that sprout in the researcher’s mind are: Why did the work take so long for its completion? What was the reason that most of the people of God were not very much interested, though the Persians assisted the Israelites? Who were the basic beneficiaries of this desire for the rebuilding of the Temple? Was there any economic, social, political and religious agenda of the Persian Empire and other Jewish elite group for this process of rebuilding the Second Temple? There will be an attempt made, to bring all factors, for instance, the political, economical, social and religious under one umbrella but the basic question of seeing the possibility of the Persian Empire silently exerting their dominance on the Post-exilic Biblical writers from

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\(^1\) John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd edn. (London: SCM press Ltd, 1960), 369; J. Lundquist, “Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State” in *Society of Biblical Literature* 1982 Seminar Papers, ed. K. H. Richards (Chico CA: Scholars Press / The Society of Biblical Literature, 1982): 109ff. Even in *Jubilees* 31: 13-20 there is a mention of Isaac’s turning to Levi and blesses, ‘May the Lord give you and your descendants extremely great honour; may he make you and your descendants (alone) out of all humanity approach him to serve in his temple like the angels of the presence. Levi and his descendants were elected out of all humanity to serve in the earthly Temple. In the book of Jubilee, the relationship between earthly and the heavenly cultus is also at the heart of the book’s eschatological expectation. The hope is that God’s original ideal will be accomplished when the Temple at Mt. Zion will be rebuilt, James M. Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven: The Restoration of Sacred Time and Sacred Space in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2005), 5. A great deal could be read about Zion from different books in the Bible, refer to Elizabeth Boase, *The Fulfilment of Doom? The Dialogic Interaction between the Book of Lamentations and the Pre-Exilic / Early Exilic Prophetic Literature* (New York / London: T and T Clark, 2006).


\(^3\) Eileen Schuller, *Post-Exilic Prophets* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988), 53.
postcolonial and sociological perspective will surely add a difference to the findings.

1.2. Definition of the term

The word politics or the political domain is not limited in the sense of political scenario of rule and party that one comes across in the secular world. I quote Mrs. Bonita Elieaz in describing the word “politics.” The word politics and political has two manifestations at least: that which operates through institutions and has a theoretical standing, a legal voice, takes recourse to rules and regulations or has a set of boundary through which it is manifested through innumerable forms, methods and strategies; it has no set of modality but remains at the cognitive level or level of perception and is internalized by the perceiver or the person experiencing the power of the dominant (manifestations of behaviour or speech forms; how does an individual compel another to do the bidding without even raising one’s voice).  

1.3. Elaboration of the Problem

One cannot negate the fact that, God Himself wanted the temple to be rebuilt. But on the other hand, Paul Hanson indicates that there was some tension involved between the Zadokites and the Levites in the latter part of the exile and also the initial return which had taken place with different motives. The Levites were linked with the high priest Abiathar and the other group belonged to the high priest Zadok. These two high priests were from the time of David. When Abiathar supported Adonijah when he rebelled against Solomon, he banished Abiathar to his home town. The Zadokites became the sole group responsible for the high priestly office. This is affirmed by Josephus, too. Slowly the wedge increased and the disparity can be seen even at the time of the rebuilding of the Temple. The members of the priestly class who originated from the Zadokite priesthood had a lot of authority. They attributed all the woes to the people, for the lack of interest

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6 Transition from David to Solomon was not a smooth one, this could be seen when David was trying to kill Joab the brother of Solomon towards his claim to the throne, refer to David Janzen, “What he did for me’: David’s warning about Joab in 1 Kings 2:5” in *JSOT* 39.3 (2015): 265.
8 Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, “Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophets and Economic Issues” in *Voices from the 3rd World* 20.19 (June 1997): 62. This disparity is even found in the New
in re-building of the temple and the prevailing irregularities in the cult and worship life. They were backed by Haggai and Zechariah whose solution to the socio-economic problems was to rebuild the temple, reinstate regular worship and proper observance of the law. Except for Trito-Isaiah, nobody was there to challenge and to pronounce judgment upon the community for the corruption existing in the religious and socio-economic structures and to provide the opportunity to do critical evaluation of their lives on the basis of the fundamentals of justice and righteousness. Only, Trito-Isaiah preached in a manner different to other post-exilic prophets. He accepted the vision of Deutero-Isaiah. He took up the central themes of Deutero-Isaiah and developed them to suit the new context.\textsuperscript{9}

The wedge between the two groups has been substantiated by the increase in number of the Zadokites who came for rebuilding in comparison to the Levites. Temple was considered very important by the Zadokites to implement their power and status, which facilitated the Persian Empire’s agenda therefore they also came out of their way to help the rebuilding process. Levites had been sure of the low status that would be assigned once the temple was reconstructed. Hence, they did not show any keen interest for this work. There is commendable work done about showing a good number of elitists who were strong supporters of the Persians.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{9} Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, \textit{The Relationship between Election and Israel’s Attitude towards the Nations in the Book of Isaiah} (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 347-349.

1.3.1. The Situation in the Babylonian Gola

For those who were deported, the downfall of the state of Judah meant a deep social uprooting. They had lost not only their homes but also their land and a social status which was usually influential. They had the bitter experience of seeing how quickly they were written off by the majority of the population which had remained behind and of being robbed of their property (Ezekiel 11:15; 33:24). Though the Babylonian policy was congenial but their separation from land, temple and kingship and their hurt was irreparable.

The Old Testament contains very little from Palestine during the half century between the fall of Jerusalem (587 BCE) and the fall of Babylon to Cyrus (539 BCE). From the book of Kings and Jeremiah one can only draw the conclusion that there were significant proportion of the elite of Judah, as “Morton Smith labels them as Yahweh-alone party,” numbering several thousands who were exiled to Babylonia. These people were elite but the Babylonian empire exiled them and they lost the original identity and could be termed as slaves, but they had their own benefits. Kopytoff defines slavery as, “the slave begins as a social outsider and undergoes a process of becoming some kind of insider. A person stripped of his previous social identity is put at the margins of a new social group and is given a new social identity within it.” Such a removal of

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identity has also been described as ‘social death,’ and this choice of metaphor seems appropriate to the exiles, since it is given graphic representation in Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones (37:1-14). The destruction and recreation of identity also fits well with the policy of changing names of Mattaniah / Zedekiah cf. Daniel 1:6-7.

The exiles suffered the forced migration under the Empire but to a great extent they resisted the pressures. They did not succumb fully to the pressures. On the contrary, they tried to retain their ethnic identity but with lot of complexities. Many remained hostile to the Babylonians; when the Persian conquest appeared imminent, the author of the Second Isaiah joyfully prophesied it.

1.3.2. Transition from the Babylonian Empire to the Persian Empire

Babylonians are attributed of taking the people of Judah into exile but the imperial strength did not last for long. Babylonian’s power quickly waned after the Jerusalem’s destruction. In c.a. 550 BCE, Cyrus’ forces took Ecbatana and effectively controlled the earlier Median Empire. With the defeat of Babylonians, a

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17 Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 70. As Smith writes: ‘Both the policy of name changing and constant reassurances by the prophets that it was Yahweh who willed the exile and not the power of foreign gods, seem to reflect an awareness of the symbols of power that the exiles had to live with and struggle against. The Babylonian exiles may not have been slaves, but evidences suggest they were most assuredly in this continuum i.e. continuum of domination’. He says: Concisely, exile was a punishing experience, more effective than any symbol left in the homeland, which unavoidably reminded Jews that they were conquered. D. L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile*, 31-41.

18 Jeremiah 29:5; refer Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that shaped the Old Testament*, 78.

number of changes took place in imperial administration. The time of exile soon ended, and the character of Judah’s existence changed once more.20

Efforts by Cyrus the Mede to discredit Nabonidus for altering traditional religious views in Babylon by replacing Marduk with Sin—the new supreme deity—probably paid off. Perhaps Nabonidus did subdue Arabia and Edom and gained control of their lucrative trade routes, but Cyrus’s power proved too much for him. In 540 BCE, a coalition of Medes and Persians attacked Babylonia and they were welcomed with open arms by the elders of Babylon. The Persians, under Cyrus the Great, or just “Cyrus,” found themselves de facto rulers of Mesopotamia and all the eastern Mediterranean-including Palestine.21 The return of the exiles from Babylon afforded a chance to build up Jerusalem again and the exiles tried to recapture national glory. But it could never be the same. Not only were the Persians firmly in control, but the Jews also underwent the pedagogy of the Exile.22

Post-exilic biblical texts indicate that few found their way to the highest political offices (Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Nehemiah and Ezra). Both the donation lists of this time (Ezra 2:69; 8:30) and the fact that only a limited number of people were prepared to return, indicates that the majority of the Babylonian Gola had done very well for themselves in their business abroad. Their needs were more primarily of a religious kind (Psalm 137; Isaiah 40:27; 50:1f.). This part, after dealing with exile, tends to concentrate on the time of Persian period23 and their influence on God’s people.

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21 John W. Betlyon, “Source” in Near Eastern Archaeology 68.1-2 (March-June, 2005), 5, 6. For further readings on this part of history, refer to Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer and Hans M. Barstad (eds.), Continuity and Discontinuity: Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40-66 (Gottingen / Bristol: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2014), it has many articles that contributes to this period.
23 Bruce C. Birch et al., A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament, 2nd edn. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 425. The author clearly makes a very interesting distinction, the era about which we often called the post-exilic period, a phrase that is both useful and problematic. The phrase is useful because it points to a time in the mid-sixth century when some Yahwists were able to return from exile. However, the phrase is problematic because the “post-exilic period” has no end. From the time of the Babylonian exile, there were Jewish communities outside the land. One could say that the post-exilic period continues down to our own time. Hence, some scholars prefer to speak about “the Persian Period”, which commences with the imperium forged by Cyrus.
1.3.3. The initial years of the Returnees: A time of hardship

The returnees did not get a red carpet treatment and their situations were disheartening and full of frustrations. The returnees faced years of hardship, privation, and insecurity. They had to make a fresh start, they had to face sequence of poor seasons and partial crop failures (Haggai 1:9-11; 2:15-17), which ruined them without adequate food and clothing (Haggai 1:6) and made their progress slow.²⁴ It is, therefore, scarcely surprising that work on the Temple, before taking the momentum came to a halt. The people were succumbed to the struggle for existence.²⁵

1.3.4. Achaemenid Imperial Policy

This was probably implemented in Judah no earlier than the invasion of Egypt by Cambyses 525BCE and carried through as part of the administrative measures of Darius after 520 BCE. He envisaged the setting up of loyal aristocratic elite in the province centred on a restored, imperially backed cult in Jerusalem with a view to the preservation of the pax persica and the collection of tribute. These elite group are known in the biblical sources as the bene-haggola and are described as disposing of political, social, and economic power in contrast to the relative poverty stricken of the rest of the population, aggravated by heavy taxation and apparently also a succession of bad harvests (Nehemiah 5:1-5; Haggai 1:4-11; 2:16-19; Zechariah 8:10).²⁶

²⁴ The aristocrats of Samaria, who had regarded Judah as part of their territory, were openly intimidating. It is unlikely to believe that Jews who resided in the land were not very happy of their return and therefore might have welcomed with much reservations. They had regarded the land as theirs (Ezekiel 33:24) they would have been least interested to give place to the newcomers and consent in their claims to ancestral holdings. The fact that the returning exiles considered themselves the true Israel and tended to draw a separating line from Samaritans and their less orthodox brethren as unclean (cf. Haggai 2:10-14), thus creating a great wedge of tension. This internal bitterness might have led to violence and public safety was at stake (Zechariah 8:10). For further insights refer Elizabeth R. Hayes, “Fading and Flourishing: The Rhetorical Function of Plant Imagery in Isaiah 40-66” in Continuity and Discontinuity: Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40-66, eds. Lena-Saifa Tiemeyer and Hans M. Barstad (Göttingen / Bristol: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2014): 89-102.


1.4. Research Questions

The basic questions that sprout in the researcher’s mind are:

1.4.1. What were the social, political, religious and economical factors which led to the rebuilding of the temple? Who were the basic beneficiaries of the rebuilding process? Were there any personal agendas on the part of the elite or the dominant group and also the Persian Empire behind the rebuilding the Temple?

1.4.2. What are the postcolonial dimensions helpful in reading many biblical passages written during the Persian time? If so, is there any inclination of the authors to facilitate the plans of the colonizers?

1.4.3. Why did the Persians show such a keen interest on the building project which was a huge one, if they had no motives as a dominant Empire?

1.5. Importance of the Problem

The researcher is interested to see the reasons and want to discover the possibility of seeing the rebuilding process as a naïve form of atrocity from a sociological and postcolonial reading. There are many questions that make the researcher to delve into the sphere of digging out the details. One should strive to find out why the Temple was rebuilt which promised no much return to the colonial power from the peripheral outlook. A modern historian needs to understand the temple rebuilding within the wider context of Persian policy in Yehud during the reign of a specific kings, in relation to economic, military, and commercial needs within the larger empire. Hence, this problem becomes important to be delved into. Diana Edelman\textsuperscript{27} has also contributed in this particular area of studies.

1.6. Previous Work\textsuperscript{28}

There has been commendable work done on the late exilic and the Persian period by the esteemed scholars since the rise of modern biblical studies. The early Christianity has its strong foundation on the second temple times. The studies on


\textsuperscript{28}This area of study has profusely used the book, \textit{Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social Historical Approach} by Jon L. Berquist, and also \textit{The Origins of the ‘Second’ Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem} by Diana Edelman. This is acknowledged at different levels.
the Rebuilding of the Temple have been always thought provoking and interesting. Many of the biblical scholars have tried to explore the various causes for why the temple was rebuilt. There are two different strands; Julius Wellhausen\textsuperscript{29} says that the internal reasons stand out, than the Persian influence. He has contributed a lot for the study of postexilic religion. In Wellhausen’s view, the members of the postexilic community kept religion separate from the land, and thus from daily life. According to Wellhausen, the resultant organizational form for the people was a theocracy. The Persians welcomed the rejection of the political forms of monarchy.\textsuperscript{30} The Persians would not allow such independent political activity anyway.\textsuperscript{31}

On the other hand, Martin Noth emphasizes on the Persian influence. The Persian Empire, according to him, took advantage of this tendency and gained its subjects loyalty by the wise policy of encouraging their religion.\textsuperscript{32} This Persian policy allowed full freedom to the religious life of the people, while keeping any and all forms of political independence in abeyance. Thus Persian policy, not the internal continuation of a centuries-old shift of religion away from its natural base, caused the increasing centrality of the Temple vis-a-vis politics.\textsuperscript{33} He refers to the Cyrus cylinder.\textsuperscript{34} One should understand that Colonialism and Imperialism

\textsuperscript{29} Julius Wellhausen, \textit{Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel} (New York: Meridian Books, 1957). For a recent evaluation of the impact of Wellhausen’s work upon the scholarship of the Hebrew Bible and other fields of study, refer to Douglas A. Knight, “Wellhausen and the Interpretation of Israel’s Literature” in \textit{Semeia} 25 (Chico / California: Scholars Press, 1982): 26, 32. Wellhausen’s understanding of the nature of the postexilic Yehudite community summarizes itself in one quotation: “The Mosaic theocracy, the residuum of a ruined state, is itself not a state at all, but an unpolitical artificial product created in spite of unfavorable circumstances by the impulse of an ever-memorable energy: and foreign rule is its necessary counterpart.” Yehud is a shattered community that takes an artificial form, shaped by its past but rejecting ideologically any continuity of form with that past, deeply influenced by the needs of surviving in the political context of foreign rule. Note the influence of Wellhausen upon the views of Israelite religious institutionalization in Max Weber, \textit{Ancient Judaism}, ed. and trans. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Glencoe: Free Press, 1952).


\textsuperscript{31} Julius Wellhausen, \textit{Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel}, 420.

\textsuperscript{32} Martin Noth, \textit{The History of Israel}, trans. P. B. Ackroyd, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn. (New York: Harper and Bow, 1960), 304.

\textsuperscript{33} Martin Noth, \textit{The History of Israel}, 314-315.

\textsuperscript{34} Martin Noth, \textit{The History of Israel}, 306-315. Harry M. Buck, \textit{The People of the Land: The History, Scriptures, and Faith of Ancient Israel}, 379, 380, also comments that Cyrus also believed that he received the sanction from Yahweh (Ezra 1:2-4), the God of heavens, not only “Lord of Hosts.” The phrase “God of heavens” (often “God of heaven,” as in the RSV)
are not only confined to the political arena, but also cover every aspect of life.\textsuperscript{35} The researcher feels that both the strands are helpful for a clear understanding. Therefore, a middle strand will help in extracting the deeper truths in relation to political, religious, social and economic causes for the rebuilding of the Temple and the life of the people of God.

1.6.1. Political causes

Like Noth, Peter Ackroyd emphasized the importance of Persian political influence upon the postexilic community.\textsuperscript{36} Peter Ackroyd has proposed that Cyrus’ permission for the temple rebuilding had three motivations. The first was a desire to resettle an exiled god. He does not develop this point any further. The second was a desire to win local favour for Persian rule as the successor to the royal line in Jerusalem by sponsoring the former royal shrine. The third was a concern for political security in the border region of the as-yet unconquered Egypt. He gives no further clarification.\textsuperscript{37}

J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes emphasized that the Persian policy controlled many aspects of the Judean community, both directly and indirectly, through the appointment of officials to supervise and govern. Even many of the internal factors were mediated through Persian-appointed officials, and thus these too were subject to external considerations.\textsuperscript{38} John Hayes thinks that Cyrus’ edict concerning the return of the gods of Sumer and Akkad to their home sanctuaries reflected a more general attitude toward other regions and cults. Cyrus’ edict reversed the policy of his predecessor i.e. the Babylonians, by permitting the return of both gods and people to their homes. As a sensitive region along the road to Egypt, the need to assure Judah’s loyalty to Persian

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authority might have led Cyrus to apply this policy there as well. Hayes acknowledges, however, that according to the two edicts Cyrus purportedly issued to Jewish exiles (Ezra 1: 2- 4; 6: 3-5), the repatriation was specifically for reconstruction work on the temple and not a full-fledged grant of exilic repatriation. Four possible Persian motivations are suggested: (1) the policy was judged to be in the best interests of the Persian cause; (2) the permission may have been a reward for the pro-Persian sentiments of many Jewish exiles (the author of Isaiah 40-55, known as second Isaiah, exemplifies this positive stance); (3) by supporting the temple, Cyrus was claiming to be a successor to the Davidic royal line since the temple had been a royal shrine under royal patronage; and (4) political realities on the south-western borders of his empire could have made such a gesture expedient. A pro-Persian Judean community would have aided an inevitable attack against Egypt.\textsuperscript{39}

Carol and Eric Meyers have placed the temple’s rebuilding in the broader framework of a Persian imperial policy committed to building and resettlement as part of a policy of restoring conquered subjects when politically feasible. This was driven by the further desire to install loyal colonies in critical geopolitical areas. Darius wanted to reinforce loyalty within his empire but kept ultimate control through his overarching satrapal administration, run primarily by Persians. To this end, he sent a second group of repatriates to Yehud under Zerubbabel and Yeshua, who were vested with more authority, and they were able to complete the rebuilding project.\textsuperscript{40}

Eric M. Meyers discussed two major elements in early postexilic Yehud: the return of significant numbers of exile and the response of the Yehudite leadership. The first generation’s response to the Persian policies (ca. 522-486 BCE) was “a pragmatic and tolerant attitude toward Persian rule”. This was considered a very stable period, controlled by Persian policy and by the leaders’ response. The second generation of Yehudite leadership (ca. 486-445 BCE) faced


\textsuperscript{40} Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 37-38, 390. The temple provided a physical setting and legitimization for the indigenous priestly leaders who, working in cooperation with the Persian-appointed governor, were to handle local affairs. It served as the administrative centre of Judah, whose officials oversaw political, economic and judicial matters. Wes Harvard-Brook, *Come out My People, God’s call out of Empire in the Bible and Beyond*, 247-249.
a much different situation of instability and uncertainty, because Persia had turned its attentions elsewhere. The difficulties of ethnic self-definition combined with religious corruption and economic decline to create a chaotic social condition. Nehemiah’s arrival formed a new, third generation of leadership “as part of a larger Persian effort to fortify the routes to the coastal lands and Egypt.”

Joel Weinberg has proposed that two factors motivated Cyrus to issue a decree allowing Jews living outside of Judah to return to their ancestral homeland and rebuild the temple: (1) a desire to leave the existing neo-Babylonian administrative system intact (2) a desire to make Palestine a secure staging point for his planned conquest of Egypt.

Elias Bickerman relates the temple-building effort to the widespread revolts at the beginning of the reign of Darius 1 in 522 BCE, which preoccupied him to such a degree that Zerubbabel, felt he could initiate the rebuilding of the temple without repercussions. Yehezkel Kaufmann’s analysis of the early postexilic period focused on temple and cult. The internal factor of religion controlled the development of the community. Jacob Myers accepts the account of Ezra 1-6 as historically reliable. He suggests that Cyrus and Darius were benevolently inclined toward the religions of their subject peoples within the empire. He adds that the concern of the Persian kings for the various temples and gods of subject groups was probably due to ‘political reasons,’ which he fails to explicate.

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1.6.2. Religious causes

Siegfried Herrmann dates the initial permission to rebuild the temple to Cyrus but the building work took place under Darius. Cyrus’ edict reflects the Persian concern to foster local traditions and cults. This would restore the local’s desire of Jerusalem as a political and spiritual centre in accordance with pre-exilic tradition. The Persians may have wanted to secure and consolidate the situation in Palestine.48

Geo Widengren argued that messianic expectations were generated by internal dissension within the community around ca. 520 BCE. Widengren also noted distinctions among various spheres of social life; Persian policy created control on external influences in political, linguistic and ideological matters, whereas internal factors were more important in cultic and social items.49

Peter Bedford has rejected the historical reliability of Ezra 1:1-4:5 and, on the basis of the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra 5-6, argues that the rebuilding of the temple was a local initiative, but one undertaken with the permission of the imperial authorities. They were motivated by the hope that it would be the first step toward the re-establishment of an independent kingdom of Judah once again. The temple represented to the local Judeans the end of the divine wrath. It re-established them as a single people living in their homeland once again.50

1.6.3. Social causes

Paul D. Hanson has offered a new reconstruction of early postexilic history. The destruction of the Temple ca. 587 BCE and its resultant national trauma ended the previous social differences and shattered the precarious balance of power between various groups. Several competitive power groups arose. After the exile, a hierocratic party returned to Palestine with the purpose of building the temple, supported by a Persian mandate.51

48 Siegfried Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 300-305. Herrmann proposes that some Jewish exiles may have obtained an audience before Cyrus captured and may have brought to Cyrus’ attention soon after he captured Babylon, to this relatively small and insignificant temple in a small corner of the empire.


51 Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 212, 226; see also Paul D. Hanson, “The Temple Treasury
Hanson’s historical reconstruction of the early postexilic period thus diverges greatly from Wellhausen’s depiction. Wellhausen saw the postexilic institutions as somewhat passive. Hanson argues that the postexilic hierocratic institutions actively suppressed opposition in their pursuit of power and social control. Hanson’s argument completely reorients the question of causation. The chief dynamic of the early postexilic period was a competition between two groups, creating an internal causation for the majority of social events and structures. However, external factors enter this portrayal in that the hierocratic group was able to gain official Persian support for its plans.52

1.6.4. Economic causes

Samuel L. Adams mentions that taxation played a major role in the economy of the Second Temple period. Most persons had to participate in the system in one form or another, whether paying tithes to the temple and / or taxes to foreign rulers.53 He refers, the Persepolis archives (492-458 BCE) document food storehouses and the imposition of taxes upon the subject people. The imperial apparatus, through local governors and administrators, assessed the citizenry in a variety of ways, and the network of satrapies provided a structural framework for the collection of taxes and tributes.54

Gösta Ahlstrom has proposed that Cyrus authorized the rebuilding of the temple as a way to control Yehud and as a source for money-making. Like other temples throughout the empire, it would have been under the jurisdiction of the crown and, thus, a source of revenue. At the same time, it would have allowed the region to be governed according to the laws of the empire and to become part of its economic system. The permission to build was an official acknowledgement of Judah as a province. Opposition between locals and the returnees to the land from


52 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social Historical Approach, 8.


Mesopotamia seriously hampered rebuilding efforts but the temple was completed under Darius I in ca. 515 BCE.\footnote{Gösta W. Ahlstrom, The History of Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander’s conquest, JSOT Supp 146 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 841-848.}

Jon Berquist suggests that Darius ordered the building of the temple in Jerusalem as a means of supplying food for his imminent overland campaign against Egypt, which began in 519 BCE. The intention behind authorizing the immediate rebuilding of the temple was to have it serve many functions simultaneously: imperial government, financial administration, the renewed worship of the people’s deity, and food production.\footnote{Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach, 57-63.}

Joachim Schaper has drawn attention to taxation practices in Achaemenid Babylonia and the practices of the “king Chest,” which was a tax-collection device by which part of the temple income was diverted from the sanctuary to the ruler.\footnote{Joachim Schaper, “The Jerusalem Temple as an Instrument of the Achaemenid Fiscal Administration” in VT 45 (1995): 528-539; see also Schaper, Joachim. “The Temple Treasury Committee in the Times of Nehemiah and Ezra” in VT 47(April, 1997):200-205, Paul S. Evans, “The Function of the Chronicler’s Temple Despoliation Notices in Light of Imperial Realities in Yehud,” 45.}

Diana Edelman made a worth notable comment of the purpose which needs serious thought i.e. The Temple was rebuilt as part of a larger Persian policy that established a network of birot, guard stations and inns along the major road systems of the empire, to facilitate trade, imperial communication, and military mobility. The decision to rebuild Jerusalem as the new provincial seat, replacing the long-serving Mizpah, would have been the result of strategic considerations. Jerusalem lay at a major north-south and east-west crossroads, whereas Mizpah only commanded a position along the main north-south route in the central highlands. It also had a perennial water source on-site, unlike Mizpah.\footnote{Diana Edelman, The Origins of the ‘Second’ Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem, 9.}

In a very succinct manner, the different perspectives of the various scholars will act as a springboard for further research to see the rebuilding of the temple during the Persian period from sociological and Postcolonial perspective.

\section*{1.7. Aims and Objectives of the Research}

This research does not negate the work of God behind the rebuilding and change of political scenario. On the other hand, the researcher is trying to grapple and
unravel the other various reasons behind the rebuilding process. There is an attempt made to see whether the Persians and the elite Jewish communities i.e. the Zadokites, had any other political, social, religious and economic agendas.

Another aim is to bring forth a different interpretation apart from the traditional interpretation of the text, which will make meaning to the sociological and postcolonial reading of the text.\textsuperscript{59}

Why the other Jewish community members were not interested and showed some sort of resistance?\textsuperscript{60} Therefore, Haggai had to instigate by using hard words. There will be an attempt to explore and discover, if there are any naïve forms of exploitation by the colonial power.

The transition of the Babylonian and the Persian Period and especially the time when the rebuilding of Temple took place was a conglomeration of various parties and ideologies. There were inter-cultural and intra-community conflicts on account of economic, political, and social disparities. The aim of this study firstly, is to see the role of the Persian Empire in promoting its own vested interest through its strategic move of facilitating the defence, stability and control\textsuperscript{61} with religious benefits to the colonized. Secondly, to unravel the Jewish elites who were indirectly facilitating the Persian’s ideologies, hence some re-reading of the text that deals with the rebuilding of the Temple will help to see the colonial flavour in it. Thirdly, to see how the dominant can intertwine religion and politics to achieve their goals to have power and promote their vested interest on the people who are on the receiving end.

This research will have its implication to the context of India in various domains like the political, ecclesiastical, theological and missiological scenario, and other areas of contemporary tensions and segregations. It becomes lively as the recent flood situation in Uttarakhand has made many politicians to show a


keen interest on rebuilding the temple at Badrinath.\textsuperscript{62} Religion and politics are intertwined, priestly class wishing to go back and restore worship.\textsuperscript{63} This will also have a great relevance to Indian church, church organisations in the present context.

1.8. Scope and Limitation

This research will limit itself to the end of the Babylonian time and the time of the rebuilding of the temple during the Persian period. The role of the Persians behind the return of the exiles to their homeland will be closely scrutinized. The rebuilding of the second Temple will be brought to close lenses. The post-exilic period in itself, is a very vast area to deal with. Therefore, the researcher shall look into the initial period of the rebuilding process and its socio-economic, political and religious reasons. The researcher would like to do a re-reading of the select biblical texts that are related to the late exilic and post exilic period.

The Proposed Texts which will be incorporated in the chapters are:

2. Ezekiel 40:45-46a
3. Ezekiel 44:10-16; 48:11.
10. Ezra 6:3-5.

1.9. Methodology of the Research

The researcher shall primarily make use of the sociological and postcolonial\textsuperscript{64} perspectives for the study. The study moves in the direction to see how the last part of the exile and the initial period of the Persian Period which had helped the Israelites for rebuilding the Temple. Weinberg points the need to address the

\textsuperscript{62}“Uttarakhand CM rejects Modi’s offer to rebuild Kedarnath temple, says state will bear the expenses” CNN-IBN | Updated Jun 26, 2013 at 06:01pm IST; “Modi says he wants to rebuild Kedarnath Temple” New Delhi | Updated 6/22/2013 7:55:37 PM IST; Politics over rebuilding Kedar nath Temple? Date 28\textsuperscript{th} June 2013, 9:43 pm, Business Today India Today Aaj Tak Headlines Today.

\textsuperscript{63}“Govt should ensure puja at Kedarnath: Shankaracharya” in The Times of India, Bangalore, Thursday, July 4, 2013, 9. “At Badrinath , faith shaken by human tragedy” in The Times of India, Bangalore, Thursday, July 1, 2013, 1.

\textsuperscript{64}This research would not use hyphen but spell the term as a single word: ‘Postcolonialism’. The hyphenated term ‘post-colonial’ seems more appropriate to denote a particular historical period or epoch..., but as referring to disparate forms of representations, reading practices and values. John McLeod, \textit{Beginning Postcolonialism} (New Delhi / Mumbai: Viva Books, 2011), 5.
sociology and socio-economic structures of the ‘exile’ and the ‘postexilic’ period. Like Hoglund and Berquist, he suggests that it is impossible to understand the period without addressing the sociology of empires in general and the needs and motivations of the Persian Empire in particular. Therefore the sociology of the time will help the researcher to dig into the hidden motives of the Persian Empire in the whole process of the rebuilding of the Temple. These two readings will help the researcher to attain the goal of getting more clarity to the Biblical texts and to deal with more objective reading.

West Asia during the second half of the 6th century was ruled by the Babylonians and the surging super power i.e. the Persians respectively. This will be purely library based, which will unearth the Sitz im Leben of the rebuilding process of the temple by using historical critical method and sociological criticism. It is important to note that it does not reject the insights of historical criticism, because much of the work of the historical critics contribute to the understanding of the worldliness of the text....

Sociological criticism is an extension of historical criticism that seeks to place texts (and sometimes readers as well) in their appropriate social context. One does not just read the texts but also the social context. As a result, reconstruction of their emic (insider) viewpoint becomes a matter of interpretation and is subject to the degree of objectivity that the researcher can apply to the biblical text and to the available archaeological data. The etic (“outsider” or observer) interpreter then can make claims about cultural acts as described in the narrative.... Although this is never an entirely objective process,

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66 Kwok Pui-Lan, “Making connections: Postcolonial Studies and Feminist Interpretation” in *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005): 77-99; Kwok Pui-Lan, “Making connections: Postcolonial Studies and Feminist Interpretation” in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (USA / UK / Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 45-63. One should understand that various criticisms were used to understand the text better and hence no particular perspective can claim that it can envelop everything into it, as the old literary critic laid emphasis on the study of the text diachronically while the new literary critic laid emphasis to the study of the text synchronically. Although the new literary criticism claimed to be different from the old yet it borrowed some fundamental assumption from the old stream, Yvonne Sherwood, *The Prostitute and the Prophet: Hosea’s marriage in literary-Theoretical Perspective*, JSOTSupp 212 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1996), 326. Hence in the same way Postcolonial studies do not negate the other criticism but tries to see the role of the Empire and the elite in the formation of the Biblical text.

the data can be refocused and its meaning clarified on a sort of universal cultural scale. Since the Bible is also a cultural artefact, the cultural signposts come into view or social indicators embedded in the narratives suggest when a story may have been composed as well as the worldview and social customs of the time in which the episode is set. Israelite culture as reflected in the biblical tradition and the cultural context of the ancient West Asia in which the tradition developed are not always same, attention also needs to be given to the perspective of the author / editor. This is because the manner in which that person or persons composed, recited, recorded or shaped a story was based on their particular cultural background at the time that they contributed to the development of the story. It uses methods and theories from the social sciences to help bridge the gap between our society and the social world of ancient Israel. One important theory of sociological interpretation that can be useful to this study could be the Conflict Theory. Originally formulated by Georg Hegel and Karl Marx and adapted by Max Weber, conflict theory examines forces within a society that either contribute to or promote conflict between the classes or structure of a society. At work are ideological differences on how to control the means of power and the modes of production. It is therefore necessary to first identify competing groups within the society. The task is then to analyze their methods for protecting their own interests or supplanting the assets of other groups. The assumption is that the potential for social change and social conflict is endemic within every society. Therefore, sociological perspective would help to see the tensions within the Israelite community especially the elite Priests and the Levites, even the conflict between the colonial i.e. the Persians and the colonized.

As persons living in a highly industrialized, technological society, our perspectives on the world have been shaped by sociological factors quite different from those that shape the worldviews of the people of ancient Israel. Sociological criticism also studies the parallels between social institutions and practices in ancient Israel and those of other cultures. Sociological criticism has broadened perspectives on the social role of Israel’s religious literature and institutions. It

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has aided in the reconstruction of Israel’s history, not just political history as the story of prominent individuals, but also Israel’s social history as it was formed from the everyday acts of ordinary men and women.71

John Elliott defines social-scientific criticism as: Social-scientific criticism of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences. As a component of the historical-critical method of exegesis, social-scientific criticism investigates biblical texts as meaningful configurations of language intended to communicate between composers and audiences.72 Sociological criticism “operates with the basic assumption that there is interplay between the various components of the texts due to the sociological units of the text.”73 Anthony C. Thiselton defines it as ‘socio-critical’ hermeneutics, “seeks penetrate beneath their surface-function to expose their role as instruments of power, domination, or social manipulation.”74 Thus, it provides the tools for reconstructing the social system of the ancient Mediterranean world, including functions, roles, customs, religious and political structures.75 Social science method employs cross-cultural models of human interaction and methods of analyzing data regarding social organization, politics, structure of authority and social institution.76

Postcolonial studies, on the other hand, emerged as a way of engaging with the textual, historical and cultural articulations of societies, disturbed and

transformed by the historical reality of colonial presence. Postcolonialism’s critical procedure is an amalgam of different methods ranging from form-criticism to contemporary literary methods. It is interdisciplinary in nature and pluralistic in its outlook. It is more an avenue of inquiry than a homogeneous project. One of the significant aspects of Postcolonialism is its theoretical and intellectual catholicism. It thrives on inclusiveness, and it is attracted to all kinds of tools and disciplinary fields, as long as they probe injustices, produce new knowledge which problematizes well-entrenched positions and enhance [sic] the lives of the marginalized. There are several marks of postcolonial criticism. One is identified by cultural critic Stuart Hall, when he advocates looking in the text for what he calls oppositional or protest voices. The interaction between academics and social forces have led to the manifestation of postcolonial expressions in areas as varied as political science, feminist theory, cultural studies, psychology, anthropology, art, theatre, musicology, sociology, economics, environmentalism, literary studies and still others. Postcolonial criticism seeks to unearth exploitative ideologies of all kinds, may they be social, political or economic; all philosophical expressions that aim to suppress underprivileged populations are identified, critiqued and rejected out rightly. Consideration is given to the multifaceted relationship of power, on all its forms, by way of an ever-present spatial metaphor that identifies the “centre” and the “margins” or “People on the edges.” The field examines the unequal distribution of social, cultural, political and economic power existing between the dominant metropole (centre) and those communities that live, or share, the experience of the underclass on the peripheries (margins). As an outcrop of Postcolonialism, biblical / theological studies have set out to identify its own colonial collusions.

via a critical confrontation and discursive stance against dominant knowledge systems responsible for influencing understanding.\textsuperscript{82} Reading the Bible from postcolonial perspective implies removing the colonial assumptions and ideologies on which much of the text rests. Postcolonial interrogation makes clear that though we may have no qualms about admitting the Bible’s relevance to our immediate context, the biblical narrative in some ways is not about us. Yet we return to its narratives, in a place and time utterly different from the milieu from which the biblical materials emerged. Postcolonial criticism does not stop with questions about the nature and status of the texts, but has another fundamental hermeneutical task—what to do with them? Such reading is compelled to focus on the concerns of postcoloniality in the construal of meaning.\textsuperscript{83}

The postcolonial method will envisage the colonial flavour in the Biblical text.\textsuperscript{84} It is a process of cultural and discursive emancipation from all dominant structures whether it is political, linguistic or ideological.\textsuperscript{85} There are factors in the case of colonization, which makes the analysis of change much simpler than in most other cases of social transformation. Colonization results when one group determines to intrude upon some other, which does not belong to them. The overall social transformation takes place because of the overall plan, which is installed with some haste, reflecting the determination of the colonizers to bring a change in the politics of the region in favor of the colonists.\textsuperscript{86} Hence, these methods will have a specific contribution to the selected texts, to make it distinct from the earlier findings by the esteemed scholars.

The sociological concerns will be combined with the postcolonial perspective especially of Homi Babha who talks of hybridity or third space and Spivak talking of Strategic Essentialism. This makes it distinct from other

\textsuperscript{82} Gilberto Lazano and Federico A. Roth, “The Problem and Promise of Praxis in Postcolonial Criticism,” 184-185.

\textsuperscript{83} R. S. Sugirtharajah, \textit{Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations}, 20-21.


preceding works. Most of the Biblical texts were written during the Persian domination. Thus, the postcolonial studies become very relevant. Musa W. Dube comments, “Postcolonial is not a discourse of historical accusations, but a committed search and struggle for decolonization and liberation of the oppressed.”

A Postcolonial critique as one of the forms of deconstruction enabling the interpreter to go beyond words and themes of the text, and questions the idea that gave rise to the text and its language affiliations. The proposition that there is a nexus between power, idea, language, and knowledge is taken seriously to read and interpret the text. This should enable the reader to perceive the issues of colonialism in a deeper manner.

Hence, it will help to deconstruct the oppressive ideologies that are deeply saturated in the biblical texts and its interpretations with an aim to make the reader aware of the crucial issues related to the struggles of the people under the colonial contexts, women, children and those who live in the periphery. It is “sensitive to the postcolonial concerns like hybridity, de-territorialization and hyphenated or multiple identities.” Jeremy Punt presents this framework, which is having implications for history and hermeneutics: Empires, then, and now has an impact on the history and culture of both ancient and more contemporary contexts. A postcolonial approach to any of these contexts is not simply to perform an anti-imperial standpoint, because empires have their own attractions as well as dangers, a postcolonial approach needs to extend its reach to investigate and consider the imperial context in broader scope, incorporating but then also going beyond the perceptions and working of a dominating political

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Postcolonial study is a model that takes the reality of empire, of imperialism and colonialism, as an omnipresent, inescapable, and overwhelming reality in the world.\footnote{Fernando F. Segovia, “Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic” in \textit{The Postcolonial Biblical Reader}, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Oxford / Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 37.} Its direct attention is on the social structure and institutions which spawn victimhood than blaming the victims.\footnote{R. S. Sugirtharajah, \textit{Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations}, 23.}

It has been vigorous in addressing issues caused by the movement of people, such as diaspora, migrancy, multiculturalism, hybridity and nationhood.\footnote{R. S. Sugirtharajah, \textit{Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice} (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 51.} It poses question to the text: What is a text? Who produced it? How is its meaning determined? How is it circulated? Who are the beneficiaries of the interpretation? What were the circumstances of the production? Like historical criticism, Postcolonialism is committed to a close and critical reading of the text, but the difference is the former one concentrates more on the history, theology and religious world of the text, the other concentrates on the politics, culture and economics of the colonial milieu out of which the text emerged.\footnote{R. S. Sugirtharajah, \textit{Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice}, 2.} R. S. Sugirtharajah, who is among those who have taken the lead in transposing postcolonial theory from (nonbiblical) literary criticism into biblical studies, maintains that “the major achievement of Postcolonialism is to inaugurate a new era of academic inquiry which brings to the fore the overlapping issues of empire, nation, ethnicity, migration and language,” and he suggests, vis-à-vis biblical interpretation, that “Postcolonialism is roughly defined as scrutinizing and exposing colonial domination and power as these are embodied in biblical texts and in interpretations, and as searching for alternative hermeneutics while thus
overturning and dismantling colonial perspectives.”

With regard to the use of the Bible as a theological tool to deconstruct the imperialist production of subjectivity, biblical scholars have initiated postcolonial hermeneutics. It is a political program intended to de-imperialize the scripture and to reconstruct its textuality from the standpoint of the life experiences of the ‘colonized other.’

It is attested by massive traveling, by the crossing of boundaries, by the continued contested relationships between the colonized, the collaborators and the colonizers. How did the colonist construct and justify domination. It is thus a paradigm that involves many different disciplines. It seeks to examine how the colonizer constructs and justifies domination of the other in various places and periods of history; how the colonized collaborated, resisted and asserted their rights to be free at different times and place of history; and how both parties travelled and crossed boundaries. It is concerned about economic, political, cultural, ideological forces that become part of the task of exploitation. But
above all, it proposes ways of co-existing on this blessed earth without suppressing and exploiting the others by blurring the boundaries of center and periphery.\textsuperscript{103}

The ‘Colonial / postcolonial’ refers to a discourse or a discursive strategy of a colonised or dominated subject community that emerges either during or after its colonial experience and that tends to exhibit a complex and incongruous affiliative-disruptive characteristics almost simultaneously.\textsuperscript{104} The colonized resorted to two discursive practices—resistance and assimilation.\textsuperscript{105} It is possible that the discourses emanating from colonised subjects in a colonial context may exhibit either anti or pro-colonial tendencies.\textsuperscript{106} But these are not the only options. One of the further tendencies of discursive response to colonial domination is recognized as ‘the problem of approximation.’ It occurs because the world of the colonized is dominated by empire not only ideologically but also in almost every aspect. The colonial / postcolonial writers who live in the context of colonial domination need to work with the colonizer’s perceptions of power even when creating oppositional categories of meaning. So, in an effort to be more of their own, they run the risk of paradoxically of mirroring the authoritative postures of the colonizer. They are forced to participate in the dominant culture in order to make their case they find themselves affiliating with the symbolic system that impelled their resistance in the first place.\textsuperscript{107}

Approximation in some measure is an imitation. It can facilitate certain colonised subjects in intentionally appropriating a culturally in-between posture

\textsuperscript{103}Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley, “Descending from and Ascending into Heaven: A Postcolonial Analysis of Travel, Space and Power in John,” 3.


\textsuperscript{106}Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s \textit{Anandamath} is essentially an anti-colonial discourse resisting the British domination in Bengal. Chandu Menon’s \textit{Indulekha} may be included in the pro-colonial category. Refer to Simon Samuel, “The Beginning of Mark: A Colonial / Postcolonial Conundrum,” 406.


and imitating their masters with a difference and thereby accommodating and disrupting, in a strategic manner, both their own native and the colonial discourses of power. This is a mimetic, ambivalent and hybrid posturing, to describe this posturing in terms of strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity, that is a condition of being in which claims of difference (selfhood) and the desire for transculturality are both contradictorily necessary. If approximation, imitation-with-a-difference, strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity are possible characteristics of a colonial or postcolonial discourse emanating from a colonised subject in a colonial context.\textsuperscript{108} Therefore, one needs to examine whether or not such features are manifested in the text related to the rebuilding of the temple.

The scholars who have used sociological criticism are Gottwald,\textsuperscript{109} Paul Hanson,\textsuperscript{110} Jon Berquist\textsuperscript{111} and Diana Edelman.\textsuperscript{112} The researcher will try to extract the social aspects for the biblical interpretation taking the help from these resources. This will help to understand the reasons why the Babylonians were not interested in sending the people who were in their custody. Why were the Israelite people also not very keen of doing so? On the other side, what was the driving force for the Persians to send the people for rebuilding the Temple? Was there a genuine interest or had they some hidden agendas? There will be an attempt to understand the social dynamics of the Colonizers and the Colonized. Through the postcolonial reading, an attempt will be made to interrogate the Biblical documents which have a colonial context (Babylonian Empire and Persian Empire). Postcolonial criticism focuses on the relationship between literature, literary canon and imperialism. The assumption of postcolonial critics is that the dominant cultures wrote the literature and decided what literature was canonized.\textsuperscript{113} The contrapuntal Reading\textsuperscript{114} advocated by Edward Said shall be


\textsuperscript{111} Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).


\textsuperscript{113} W. Randolph Tate, Biblical Interpretation an Integrated Approach, 312.
used in which the experiences of the exploited and exploiter are studied together in order to understand the Babylonian and Persian context. The Postcolonial criticism resorts to a hyphenated, in-between, liminal space—neither here nor there, yet at the same time here and there—from where he/she affiliates and distances, accommodates and disrupts, mimics and mocks both the native and alien discourses of power almost simultaneously.\textsuperscript{115}

Postcolonial biblical criticism seeks to accomplish a pair of indispensable goals. It attempts to make an inquiry to catalog the presence of imperialistic impulses in the biblical text as well as in the academic and ecclesial appropriation of the biblical text. Thus postcolonial scholarship attempts to go beyond simply identifying exegetical imperialism to “decolonizing” both text and their interpretations through a commitment to disenfranchised groups, both in biblical world and outside of it. For Christian communities this approach has important implications for the witness of the church, which is ever more global, dispersed and multiform.\textsuperscript{116} Postcolonial studies aim to have enhanced/reconstructive readings of texts that highlight the struggles and resistance in different colonial contexts.\textsuperscript{117} In postcolonial India, postcolonial hermeneutics can open up new vistas for the biblical interpretative process by broadening the scope and relevance of the Bible for the contemporary, neo-colonial challenges.\textsuperscript{118}

Colonialism is not just imposed by military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship but most important domination was the mental universe of the colonized..., by the language of the colonizing nation.\textsuperscript{119} Postcolonialism is not

\textsuperscript{116} Gilberto Lazano and Federico A. Roth, “The Problem and Promise of Praxis in Postcolonial Criticism,” 185.
\textsuperscript{118} Jayachitra Lalitha, “Postcolonial Feminism, The Bible and the Native Indian Women,” 80.
a theory but a criticism, it is adopting a critical stance in favour of those suppressed in colonial and postcolonial circumstances.\textsuperscript{120} The “post” is concerned with going beyond coloniality as an “ethical intention and direction.”\textsuperscript{121} Hybridity, further describes what Postcolonialism is and what Postcolonialism does. As a practice, hybridity simply means mixing of, for example, cultures, languages or pattern of thought. It can result in linguistic fusions and mixing with the result, sometimes, of new dialects, languages or worldviews.\textsuperscript{122} Such hybridizing does not simply emerge from historical contingencies but is intentionally developed as resistance to imperialist hegemony and homogeneity.\textsuperscript{123} In \textit{Orientalism} (1978), Edward Said draws attention to the exercise of power not only in colonialist land grabbing but also in the production of “knowledge” about, in his case, the so-called Orient. Colonization can perpetuate both physical and epistemic violence. Colonization is both physical and epistemic violence.\textsuperscript{124} Literature or the teaching of literature has been instrumental in the construction of colonialism as a ruling idea.\textsuperscript{125}

Hegemonic discourse talks and writes itself into history producing a history that is doctored and leading in turn to false popular perceptions.\textsuperscript{126} The

variety of perspectives that the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament offers on the question of human and Divine power, and the Postcolonial critique of the relationship between the biblical materials and contemporary exercises of power, continue to raise questions and promote creative thinking on the part of biblical scholars. While nearly every part of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament bears a relation to question of this nature, the postexilic books of the Bible especially the accounts of the Rebuilding of the Temple in particular are interesting to read from this perspective because of its ability to critique human claims of power. This is true with the Babylonians, the Persians especially Cyrus and Darius and even the elite class. Thus, the wide horizon of these two methods will help for the study of the empires during which the Bible was written. It would help in unravelling the message of the Bible for the Asian Context, and especially for India.

1.10. Designing of the Research

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Temples in Ancient West Asia
Chapter 3: The Monarchic and Prophetic response to the Worship Practices in the Sanctuaries and the Temple before the exile

Chapter 4: The Babylonian role in the destruction of the Temple and the exilic prophetic response for the rebuilding of the Temple

Chapter 5: The Persian Empire and its background study regarding their policies towards Rebuilding of the Temple

Chapter 6: The Rebuilding of the Temple and the postexilic prophetic response

Chapter 7: The Perspective of the postexilic elite towards the worship and the rebuilding process.

Chapter 8: Implication of the study to the contemporary realities of India

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter in few pages highlights what the researcher has in his mind and tries to see if there is a possibility to address the rebuilding of the Temple during the early period of the Persian kingdom from sociological and postcolonial perspective. The economic, political, religious and socio-cultural dimensions for the rebuilding process will be taken into account with some biblical passages, which deals basically from the Temple point of view and the intra community conflict during its destruction and the rebuilding process. These different dimensions will help in understanding the sociology of the times and also this will facilitate to have a broader understanding from the perspective of the Empire. The research questions with the methodology taken into consideration will help to move forward to the desired goal. In the end an attempt will be made to see if this study has some implications to the Indian Church and society.
CHAPTER 2

TEMPLES IN ANCIENT WEST ASIA

2.1. Introduction

The temples had its own importance in the life of the people of Ancient West Asia. Throughout its long history the temples in general were the scenes of violence and conflict because temples were as much a statement of political status as they were evidence of piety; the power of the nation’s god and king was reflected in the splendour of his cult and in the success of his people. Conversely, the defeat of a people was a sign that the god had been disgraced and his sanctuary desecrated.¹ This was very true to the temples that were built by the people of God at different intervals in the history.² The temple was the meeting place of heaven and earth, time and eternity.³ The Jerusalem Temple was a microcosm of Yahweh’s heavenly order.⁴ This is seen in its structure as Josephus interpreted concerning the three main parts of the temple as corresponding to the three

² There have been three temples of the Lord in Jerusalem; the first was built by Solomon in the middle of the tenth century BCE (1 Kings 5-8; 2 Chronicles 3-4) and destroyed by the Babylonians in 585 BCE (2 Kings 25: 8-17); the second was built by the exiles when they returned from Babylon (Ezra 3:8-13) and dedicated in 515 BCE (Ezra 6:16-18). The ‘third’ was the temple enlarged and largely rebuilt by Herod the Great in 20 BCE.
cosmic regions: the Holy of Holies to the heavens, the holy place to the earth and the surrounding courts to the sea of the lower regions (War 5. 215-237).  

2.2. Definition of the word Temple

A temple, in the original sense of the Latin word *templum*, meant a rectangular place marked, ‘a place set aside for the purpose of augury.’ In its primitive sense, *templum* corresponds to the Greek *Temenos*, a place marked off as acre to a god, in which a house of god might be erected. It also gave the meaning of a consecrated place or building. It’s a place where the god is believed to have manifested his presence and abiding virtue, where men and women meet him in adoration and worship. It is also said as *bayit* (house, dwelling, building, family, dynasty); *hekal* (palace, temple). *Hekal* generally means temple, but in fifteen OT passages (e.g. 1Kings 21: 1; Isaiah 39:7; Daniel 1:4) the sense is “palace.” Since a temple is often considered as God’s dwelling place, the distinction between palace and temple is only minor. Not surprisingly, given the temple’s central role in Jewish society, the biblical imagery surrounding it is particularly rich and suggestive. The temple presents the dwelling of ‘Israel’s invisible’ God (e.g., Psalm 48:4-8, 12-14). After all, the temple was not only the worship centre but had various roles to play in the Israelite society such as, the Temple was the centre of Jewish national life. In its service, Israel found the communal satisfaction and most vital impulse and at least an illusion of its deepest national unity. It was the Divine dwelling place of God on the earth.

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5 Cf. Kyu Sam Han, *Jerusalem and the Early Jesus Movement: The Qumran Community’s attitude towards the Temple*, 52.

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Although, not a trace of any phase of the temple building in Jerusalem seems to have survived to the present day, the Jerusalem Temple holds a place of great prominence in the architectural history of the West Asian world. No other building of the ancient world, whether it stood in Jerusalem or in the millennia since its final destruction, has been the focus of attention throughout the ages.\(^\text{15}\)

In the next few pages an attempt will be made to bring into light the information about the temples in the Ancient West Asia. The influence the temples created in the countries related to the Biblical world is noteworthy and remarkable.

Temples in Ancient West Asia had a prominent place in religious life and architecturally they were of great importance. It is easy to misinterpret the ancient Hebrew writings from our own very different intellectual world. Familiarity with the thought of the other Ancient West Asian peoples can give us a better perspective on that of the Israelites.\(^\text{16}\) One has to understand that the temple did not come into reality by its own but within the similar set of historical and religious circumstances as was the case with the neighbours of the biblical people.\(^\text{17}\) Hence, this chapter will succinctly contain a survey of the importance of the temples in Mesopotamia, Canaan, Assyrian and Egypt during the biblical times.

### 2.3. The Temples in the Ancient West Asian Nations

One seems loaded with tons of information to determine the role of ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian temples, whereas informations regarding Syria-Palestine temples are scanty and limited. Some insights on ancient Mesopotamian temples, Egyptian temples and their role in the society will help to understand their influence on Israelites.

#### 2.3.1. The conglomeration of the religion, politics, economics and culture in building of the temple in Ancient West Asia\(^\text{18}\)

It is significant to note that the two cylinders of Gudea, mention about the rebuilding of temple called Eninnu. Enlil, the chief god in the pantheon, looked at

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Ningirsu, the head deity of the city of Lagash. Enlil was pleased with the city.\(^{19}\) Ningirsu\(^{20}\) announced that the anonymous governor (ensi) would build Eninnu. That night, Gudea beheld Ningirsu in a dream and the god commanded him to build his temple, Eninnu. Gudea did not understand the dream and therefore sought the help of goddess Nanshe. After interpreting the dream, Nanshe told Gudea what to do in order to receive additional instructions and learn about the form and nature of the temple, he was to build. Following the advice of the goddess, Gudea prepared a glorious war chariot for Ningirsu and brought his gift before the god. In reaction Gudea immediately commenced the preparations for the building project. He imposed peace and tranquillity in his city, introduced a bit of social equality, and purified the city. Afterwards he levied corvee labor (zi-ga) upon the inhabitants of the city and imported necessary building materials—wood and stone—from distant lands. He brought the wood to his city as rafts, while the stones he transported aboard boats.\(^{21}\)

One thing that is held common in Sumerian, Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian literature is the stereotyped story. The gods make a decision and select a human king to carry it out for them, and in return for his efforts and success in fulfilling the divine decision, he is rewarded with their blessings (or he requests their blessing). This tripartite story (divine decision, implementation, blessings) is the basis of narratives told in numerous royal inscriptions and royal hymns. The task performed can be any one of the various deeds befitting a king. The pattern is found in relationship to temple building in inscriptions of Naram-Sin, Ur-Nammu, Ipiq-Ishtar and Samsuiluna. The Inscriptions of Nabopolassar show that building account of Etemenanki temple is organically linked to the defeat of the Assyrians. The linking of the two events may be related to the pattern of the ‘victorious temple builder’ or the ‘divine warrior.’ This pattern in


fact exists also in all the Assyrian royal inscriptions in which the king’s military victories are placed before the building account that concludes the inscription.22

Assyrian and Babylonian scribes alike, wrote their temple building accounts with similar literary pattern which patronized the royal throne. The scribes reaffirmed in their writings that the king fulfilled the traditional role of temple builder and as a divine servant.23 The ancient Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians built their temples, frequently demolished and reconstructed the temple because (as is amply attested by numerous royal dedicatory inscriptions, year names, and self-laudatory royal hymns) it was considered the pious act of the dutiful ruler, acting as the god’s steward, to undertake such reconstruction, and to do so on the same sanctified spot.24

Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts (in the genres of myth25 and ritual26) reveal the materials (e.g., gold, silver, bronze, copper, precious stones, worked stone and wood) used to make statues. Archaeology is less helpful owing to the reuse of costly goods in antiquity and their inability to withstand the ravages of time. Excavations show that the great temples stood in a court with a vestibule, flanked by chambers. The temple building consisted of a long outer hall, opening into a smaller one with the holy place, or parakhu, where stood the image of the divinity and an altar. The holy place was open to the priest alone, or to the worshipper accompanied by a priest for special religious purposes. An altar stood in the court and perhaps in the outer hall also. Both Egyptian and Babylonian temples were endowed with lands which yielded large revenues. Hence, outside their religious purpose, they had great influence on the economic life of the nation. In the Babylonian temple area also, as the priests were administrators of the law, there were courts of justice, chambers where national archives were stored and even banks.27

22 Victor (Avigdor) Hurowitz, I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings, 47, 82.
In the Bible, a similar situation is depicted, as David enquires from Nathan, and later during the rebuilding of the Temple after the exile, the governor took the initiative to build the Temple. Though, we cannot take the idea of “pan-Babylonianism” which assumes all ideas originated in Babylonia and moved west ward. Moreover the story in some sorts has a basis for the biblical story of temple and even the rebuilding of the temple after the exile. Solomon also when he had his throne established he thought of building a temple, though this was a deep rooted desire of King David, that once his throne was well established, he should build a temple. Hence, politics, religion, economics and cultural norms was a well construed formula for the temple’s inception.

2.3.2. Ancient Mesopotamian Temples

Beginning with the pioneering excavations of the late 19th century, archaeologists have recovered the remains of monumental structures more or less conclusively identifiable as temples at many sites in both South Mesopotamia (ancient Sumer and Akkad, later Babylonia) and North Mesopotamia (Assyria and the Jazirah). The remains of temples and the associated staged towers known as ziggurats have been discovered in Babylonia at such important cities as Eridu, Uruk, Ur, Nippur, and Babylon; and in Assyria and the North at Assur, Mari, Calah, Tell Rimah (possibly ancient Karana), Tell Brak, and in the last several years, Tell Leilan (ancient Shubat-Enlil). These remains date from as early as the early 5th millennium BCE (at early Ubaid-period Eridu) to the mid-1st millennium BCE at Babylon.

2.3.2.1. Royal assistance to the Temple

The king had first and foremost responsibility of nourishing the gods, which meant that he had to contribute substantially from the state resources toward the

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maintenance and building of the temple as a pre-condition for his divine appointment.\textsuperscript{32}

This gave the kings the opportunity to secure the favour of the temple officials and to assist them in maintaining the temple’s prestige.\textsuperscript{33} From third millennium BCE onwards the temples of Uruk,\textsuperscript{34} Sumer, and Girsu had abundant resources in livestock and agricultural products.\textsuperscript{35} Stone and timber were expensive as it had to be imported and therefore, were used only for palaces and temples.\textsuperscript{36} Royal gifts and endowments together with the offerings and tithes from the people considerably increased the wealth of the temple.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{2.3.2.2. Economic role}

Mendelsohn points out that the Babylonian temples with their vast wealth constituted the richest agricultural, industrial and commercial unit within the society. He says, “It was a well organised and efficiently run-corporation, controlling extensive tracts of land, enormous quantities of raw material, large flocks of cattle and sheep, sizeable amount of precious metal and large number of slaves.”\textsuperscript{38} The big temple estates employed a large workforce of different crafts and professions including bricklayers, carpenters, smiths, masons, spinners, weavers, butchers, bakers, farmers, fishermen, shepherds and swineherds.\textsuperscript{39} There were large warehouses, workshops, granaries and stables.\textsuperscript{40} The temple was spread over many acres and consists of several buildings.\textsuperscript{41}
2.3.2.3. Social role

The Mesopotamian temples had a clear social responsibility, especially for the underprivileged in the society. I. J. Gelb has shown that the temple took care of all the outcasts of the society, the poor and the indigent, the crippled and the widow.\(^{42}\) The surplus foodstuffs in the temple were used to sustain the community in hard times. It ransomed citizens who were captured by the enemy. It regulated the money market by granting loans without interest in special cases.\(^{43}\)

2.3.2.4. Religious role

Ancient Mesopotamian temples served as the house of the city's patron god or goddess. The Mesopotamian gods needed nourishment drink, clothing, jewellery, cleansing, travel, music, perfume and sex. All of this makes their presence in the anthropomorphic cult image more suitable.\(^{44}\) Humankind was created to relieve the gods from the burden of physical labor and to perform ritual service to the gods. The gods prescribed the rituals in which they received a part of the animal that is sacrificed, the rest going to the king and temple officials. The king was perceived as the official representative of the deity and it was his responsibility to insure the fertility of the land through careful observance of the New Year rituals. In the temples, an elaborate priestly bureaucracy was responsible for maintaining the temple and its deity.\(^{45}\)

The temple was believed to be the house in which a god lives, manages god’s worldly business. The temple gave the inhabitants the assurance that god was present among them. The identity of the patron deity with his / her temple was so complete that temple can be regarded as the embodiment of god.\(^{46}\) Therefore,


\(^{43}\) A. Leo Oppenheim, “Mesopotamian Temple,” 54-63, the author notes that in other circumstances the temple officials might extract interest rates as high as one-third of a loan’s principal.


always the politics and religion had its own blend

Bill T. Arnold is of the view that the historical contact between the Babylonians and Israelites was very immense and its contribution to the Old Testament culture and society cannot be completely negated. Bill T. Arnold is of the view that the historical contact between the Babylonians and Israelites was very immense and its contribution to the Old Testament culture and society cannot be completely negated.\footnote{Bill T. Arnold, “Babylonians,” 43.} Solomon’s temple shared several features with these patterns, but the striking contrast was the lack of any visible deity in Israel’s Holy of Holies.\footnote{Bill T. Arnold, “Babylonians,” 73.}

2.3.3. Canaanite Temples

Most of the temples of Canaan were connected with the religion of the Semites, although a few of them did belong to other cults. They are mentioned occasionally in the Bible, but never described in full; see, e.g., the references to the temple or temples of El-berith in Shechem (Judges 9:46), the temple or temples of Dagon in Ashdod and the Philistine districts (Judges 16:23-30; 1Samuel 5:2; 1Chronicles 10:10).\footnote{G. A. Barrois, “Temples,” 561.} Canaan was the Promised Land in which the people of God dwelt and hence the temple in Canaan has been talked in detail, so that the biblical picture may be clearer.

2.3.3.1. Temples before Israel was formed

1. The identification of a Chalcolithic structure from Megiddo (ca. 3300-3000 BC) as a temple or shrine is possible, though by no means evident. The foundations of a small building discovered in the ruins of et-Tell, the biblical Ai, may be regarded with great probability as an ancient shrine or temple. It has two earthen stands, identifiable probably as incense burners, the ivory handle of a knife, jars and bowls of the Early Bronze Age. There were heaps of bones and ashes found in the corner of this room.

2. At Megiddo the remains of three temples were unearthed (Middle Bronze Age, 1900 BCE). Two of them stood side by side on the same alignment; third was close to the first two, but at an angle.

3. The ancient sanctuary of Gezer, often described as a “high place,” consisted of an irregular row of eight rough pillars of stone unequal in size and in appearance, and ranging from approximately 5 to 10 feet in height.

4. A shrine from the second half of the Middle Bronze Age (from 1800 BCE onwards) was discovered at Nahariya, five miles North of Acre. Several incense burners, miscellaneous pottery, silver figurines of doves, usually associated with the worship of Ishtar, were found in disorder among the ruins.

5. One of the buildings on the acropolis of Shechem has been recognized for a temple, with great probability. Its foundation rests on an artificial platform dating from the latter phase of the Middle Bronze Age (1800 BCE).

6. A temple of Lachish, rebuilt several times, was discovered in a filled-in section of the city in the Middle Bronze Age. The original building had been in use from ca. 1475 to 1400 BCE. The sanctuary was destroyed by fire by the end of the Late Bronze Age, when Palestine was raided in 1223 BCE.50

2.3.3.2. Temples after the Conquest

Canaanite cults continued normally in regions or single localities in which the Israelites were not able to establish their power. The biblical records even suggest that many local shrines and high places remained open and retained considerable popularity. The excavations of Beth-shan have brought to light the remains of several temples built in succession like those of Lachish. Egyptian influences are most conspicuous in the architecture. Towards the 11th century BCE, twin temples were built, differing from the earlier structures both by their orientation and by their plan. It is possible and probable that the twin temples of the 11th century are those mentioned in the Bible as the temple of Ashtaroth (I Samuel 31:10) and the temple of Dagon (1 Chronicles 10:10).51 Several rooms on the acropolis of Megiddo (1000 BCE) contained an unusual number of articles usually associated with Canaanite worship, such as small altars of limestone, offering stands and incense burners. “The first Temple in connection with the worship of Y” is that at Shiloh (1 Samuel 1), ‘where the ark of God was,’ in the period of the Judges, under the guardianship of Eli and his sons. With the capture of Jerusalem by David, and the transference thither of the Ark, a new political and religious centre was provided for the tribes of Israel.”52

and contained several utensils usually associated with Semitic religious worship.\textsuperscript{53}

Archaeological discoveries have brought to light a number of Canaanite, Philistine and Israelite temples and sanctuaries. A \textit{breithaus} temple above the spring at En-gedi, which overlooks the Dead Sea, is considered as the earliest real temple in Palestine.\textsuperscript{54} The Middle and Late Bronze Age temples\textsuperscript{55} and with a holy place built later was a prototype for the later temples, and to some extent it would have facilitated the Solomon’s temple.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{2.3.3.3. Economic role}

Mendelsohn also maintains that temples in Syria and Palestine not only owned large tracts of land but also large flocks of livestock, great quantity of precious metals and large number of slaves.\textsuperscript{57} The Tel Mevorakh temple had a rich collection of items. Several temples were found at Beth-shan in Egyptian style. Remains of Israelite cultic installations belonging to the tenth century BCE were found at Megiddo, Taanach, Tell el-Farah, Dan and Arad.\textsuperscript{58} Since these temples were looted in antiquity, we are not sure about the treasures of these temples. Nevertheless, Rostovtzeff notes that the temples in north Syria owned large tracts of land.\textsuperscript{59}

\textbf{2.3.3.4. Social role}

A bichrome wall painting depicting elaborate geometric motif in a small temple at Tuleilat al-Ghassul indicates the part played by temple in the field of education. The Canaanites were also intellectually sophisticated, using their writing system not only for commercial and cultic purposes, but also to produce a body of literature that left its impact on the authors of our Hebrew Bible. For e.g. the prophet Isaiah identifies the speech of Judah with the language of Canaan (Isaiah 19:18).\textsuperscript{60}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} G. A. Barrois, “Temples,” 565.
\item \textsuperscript{54} W. G. Dever, “Temples and Sanctuaries in Syria-Palestine,” 376.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Amihai Mazar, \textit{Archaeology of the Land of the bible 10,000-586 B.C.E.} (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 211-213.
\item \textsuperscript{57} I. Mendelsohn, “Slavery in ANE,” 74-88.
\item \textsuperscript{58} W.G. Dever, “Temples and Sanctuaries in Syria-Palestine,” 380.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Rostovtzeff, \textit{Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire}, ed. P. M. Fraser, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 266.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Keith N. Schoville, “Canaanites and Amorites,” 179.
\end{itemize}
2.3.3.5. Religious role

Large quantities of burned sheep and goat found at Gezer “high place” indicate that animal sacrifice was offered there.\footnote{W. G. Dever, “Temples and Sanctuaries in Syria-Palestine,” 378.} Though our information about the temples in ancient Syria-Palestine is very limited, the sources indicate that these temples were also very rich. It is very likely that they also functioned like other temples in the Ancient West Asian region.

2.3.4. Ancient Assyrian Temples

A temple was a community unto itself, with its own hierarchy of personnel and its own economic resources, at least in origin. By the Neo-Assyrian period, however, Assyrian temples were no longer economically independent.

2.3.4.1. Economic role

The priests had become accustomed to receiving major benefits from royal campaigns. This brought greater prosperity but at the same time, led to the loss of some control over their own affairs. Besides the priests, the temple personnel included artisans, scribes, kitchen staff, and domestic servants. Temple became repositories of wealth as individuals and families made donations of precious metals, precious stones and slaves. One of the representatives of the vassal states under the Assyrian empire and the annexed Assyrian province was asked to visit periodically and pay the annual tribute and special “gifts” to the most powerful gods and thus it added to the economy of the temple.\footnote{William C. Gwaltney Jr. “Assyrians” in The Peoples of the Old Testament World, eds. Alfred J. Hoerth et al. (Cambridge / Grand Rapids / Michigan: The Lutterworth Press, Baker Books, 1994):102.} Most of the Assyriologists agree that the arable land, which was the basis for nearly all economic activities in lower Mesopotamia, was owned either by the temple or the palace.\footnote{Sam P. Mathew, Temple-Criticism in Mark’s Gospel: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple during the First Century CE, 5.}

2.3.4.2. Royal intrusion

The king was the chief priest in the land since he was Asshur’s representative on earth. His presence was frequently required at religious ceremonies, particularly at the celebration of the New Year, in which his right to reign for another year was confirmed by the god. Religion in the form of the temple rituals and divination had great influence on the Assyrian king. Thus, the priests and diviners had a great deal of influence on state affairs.\footnote{A Kirk Grayson, “Mesopotamia, History of Assyria,” 767.} Assyrian kings from Ashur-uballit I were called “high priest.” Some temple personnel had administrative duties involving construction and maintenance of buildings and allocation of physical
and human resources.\(^{65}\) Hence, there is a probability that during the rebuilding of the second temple the priest must have taken this responsibility on their shoulder as seen in the Assyrian context.

### 2.3.5. Ancient Egyptian Temples

Since religion was embedded in the social fabric of the ancient societies, the role of the temple went far beyond the religious aspect of their living. Egypt can truly be called a land of temples.\(^{66}\) In Egypt,\(^{67}\) temples were considered as a branch of the state, which had their own function. The human body of the king became the container for the royal \textit{ka}-spirit, the divine element of kingship that passed from one legitimate king to the next.\(^{68}\) A new dynasty might also initiate or expand the worship of a favoured god with new temples or new rituals.\(^{69}\) The overall image of Egyptian ‘imperialism,’ therefore, is multifaceted, the economic and political pragmatism of the Pharaohs often being cloaked in the hyperbole of royal rhetoric and piety.\(^{70}\) Of all the gods and goddesses of Egypt, the best known are probably Isis and Osiris.\(^{71}\)

The great temples of ancient Egypt were preceded in pre-historic times by a simple structure of dried mud or a hut of wicker-work, not differing much from human dwellings. The dried hut paved way to a stone building and additional rooms were built around the central ‘house of god.’ Thus, what had been the temple itself was now the inner sanctuary of a wide-spread temple, with all the

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multifarious buildings and chambers for purpose connected with the cult.\(^72\) The form of the statue in the temple had to reflect the "exact shape" of the deity, so the materials used had to be appropriate for a deity's body. The significance of gold, silver and lapis lazuli is made clear through texts, which tell us that the bones of deities were of silver, their flesh of gold, and their hair of lapis lazuli.\(^73\) Further, these materials had cosmic associations: silver with the moon, gold with the sun, and lapis lazuli both with the night sky and the primordial waters of chaos, out of which the creator god emerged.\(^74\)

Ancient Egyptians, however, did not see the functions, plans, symbols, and rituals of their temples quite so separately and distinctly as modern taxonomies would suggest.\(^75\) Essentially, Egyptian religion is based on the performance of ritual, and the temples are the location for that cult.

2.3.5.1. Religious role

The cult temples provided the complicated ritual, which were intended to please the gods and persuade them to act benevolently for the community.\(^76\) The whole temple had to be made as attractive and appropriate as possible to the deity concerned, so that the deity would wish to take up residence there,\(^77\) thus the presence of deity would add to the benefits.

In Ptolemaic times certain temples in Egypt had sanatoria where the sick went to get healing from the deities of healing. Temples also served as places where oracles and divine answers to certain questions were found. In times of war the temples served as fortresses that gave protection from the armies of the enemies.\(^78\) Oracles could be given in several ways. The deity could pick an individual out of a group by stopping the sacred boat in front of the relevant person—perhaps the perpetrator of some crime or the desired appointee for an

\(^74\) Refer to Gay Robins, “Cult Statues in Ancient Egypt,” 6.
office. A question could be put to the deity who would respond by moving the boat forward or backward to give an affirmative or negative answer respectively. Two statements could be placed before the deity, one the opposite of the other, and the god would choose between them by moving the boat toward one of them. How the movements of the boat that encoded the responses of the deities actually worked is unclear. Earlier Egyptologists often assumed that it was all rigged with the boat being deliberately manipulated by the priests carrying it to get the desired result, but this is surely too simplistic, on the contrary, this gives the readers an idea that the priestly class could be also manipulative at times. The use of divine oracles lasted for at least a thousand years and it is hard to believe that the institution could have maintained any authority if everyone believed that it was rigged. This is not to argue that oracles were never manipulated, but that for the system to work there had to be a fundamental belief in the truth of the oracle. Despite their spatial separation from their human subjects, the gods were believed to be present among their devotees at their temples where they were worshipped in the rituals of the state religion. This belief of the presence of God in the temple is well attested in the Biblical Scripture.

2.3.5.2. Economic roles

The king gave gifts to the gods, allotted number of sheep and cattle, on the first day of the first month of the ‘season of coming forth.’ During the Sed festival, the king crossed a piece of land and it was dedicated to the gods. The temples had their own economic organisation like their own domains, transport ships, storehouses, workshops etc. Egyptian temples were involved in trade. A number of papyrus fragments indicate that meat, wine and cakes were sold from the temple through special merchants. During the empire period (ca.1540-1100 BCE) it became very wealthy through war booty, tribute and donation of large estates. Shoshenq I (Sishak) returned home from his Palestinian campaign, he launched

85 The biblical account states that Shishak came up against Jerusalem in the fifth year of Rehoboam (the king of Judah) and took away all the treasures and gold from the temple and
immense and costly building projects on a scale never witnessed since the palmy imperial days of Ramesses II, and rivalling Ramesses III. These included the huge forecourt of the Temple of Amun at Karnak in Thebes (biggest of its kind) with a major gateway and the famous triumphal relief and list, a similar undertaking for the Temple of Ptah at Memphis, and an entire temple (and second relief and list) at El-Hiba well south of Memphis. An Egyptian inscription mentions that Sishak’s son Osorkon I, the king of Egypt gave to the gods 200,000 kilogram of gold and silver.

Since the temples were considered as a branch of the state, the money deposited was like “placing the state’s wealth in the hands of one of several government institutions to be recalled and used as and when the state wants.” Janssen has argued that the temples in New Kingdom of Egypt were institutionally and economically dependent on the state. In every temple in Egypt, the Pharaoh was depicted as the real high priest, who had total control over the temples and their wealth.

T. F. Carney also suggests that the temples in Egypt and Mesopotamia served as a central storehouse, in which the produce was stockpiled and redistributed to feed the temple personnel. The typical temple was situated within a mudbrick enclosure wall, which marked off the temple area from the profane world outside. Between this wall and the temple proper, there were store rooms, scribal offices, and priests houses, relating to the administration of the temple, and also the sacred lake where temple personnel who had access to the inner parts of the temple were purified before entering the building. Only ritually purified humans, that is, the king and priests, would have had access to the inner parts of the temple and come into contact with the cult statue.

Thus the temples played an important role in the production, storing and


87 A. Millard, Treasures from Bible Times (Oxford / Sydney / Batavia: Lion Publishing Co., 1985), 108. Millard conjectures that much of this treasure was taken from Solomon’s Temple and Palace.
90 T. F. Carney, Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1975), 57.
redistribution of resources of the state. Therefore the Egyptian temples acted as a kind of banking system and paymaster for the state. This understanding, to some extent prevailed among the scribes and the priests who were benefited by the state and thus acted as beneficiaries for the empire.

2.3.5.3. Social roles

The temples produced food, clothing and other necessities required by the temple personnel, like any other sector in the society. The temples employed a large number of workers, comprising of peasant families, craftsmen, doorkeepers, guards, butchers, bakers, artists, sculptors and stonemasons. Deities were not, however, confined to the sanctuary of their temples, because during festivals their statues, accompanied by priests, musicians, singers, and dancers were processed out of the sanctuary and frequently out of the temple. During these processions, the divine statue was, in most cases, carried in a sacred boat mounted on poles. Temples and their priests were nominally under the king's control and formed their own part of the royal administration. Hence, lot of people were involved with the temple activities. Surplus was collected by the state and redistributed. The temples in Egypt took the leadership in formal education. The priests taught the people in the temple precincts. The priests in the temple schools trained all educated males in the country for e.g. Astronomers, doctors, scribes, singers, musicians and many professionals. They all were totally under the domain of the priests. Hence, the priest played a vital role.

The temples also served as libraries, housing substantial number of papyrus rolls. The documents contained in these libraries covered many branches of knowledge including politics, religion, science, economics and law. The walls of the temple depicted the exploits of the Egyptian kings. Thus the temples in Egypt were “the repositories of all accumulated knowledge” of Egyptian civilisation.

2.3.5.4. Status of Priest

A professional group of priests in the Egyptian temple enjoyed special privileges from the king. The royal decrees of Nefirkare and Pepi II exempted the priests and temple workers from many obligations, which were demanded from other

95 Glenn S. Holland, Gods in the Desert: Religions of the Ancient Near East, 38.
The higher ranks among the priests received a larger share of the daily offerings. The priesthood controlled the vast land possessions of the temple, which led to the iron grip of the priesthood over the economy by the 11th century BCE. In some cases the high priest was the chairman of the royal court. The sale of houses and land holdings often took place in the presence of temple officials.

2.4. Summary

Temple had a prime importance in the life of the people who lived around the people of Israel, in the Ancient West Asian context. The brief analysis presented, shows that the construction of the temples in Ancient West Asia and the Jerusalem Temple had many dimensions into it. There seem lots of similarities with the temple building, role of the temple and the temple elite like the priests and the scribes with the nations in Ancient West Asia. The role of the scribes is unquestionable who wrote accounts of the kings in order that they can present the kings as truly god's agent and responsible for the temple and its activities which could affirm their credibility. There appears to be cultural and conceptual continuum between the nations. Though, we cannot take the view that all ideas originated in Babylonia and moved westward. On the one hand, Semitic world constantly influenced one another. On the other hand, one cannot completely give credit to the West Asian context for the development of the Temple in Israel as there was remarkable distinctiveness too. This chapter will facilitate in understanding the Biblical Temple and the proceedings that facilitated the move for Temple in Solomon's time in the next chapter.


CHAPTER 3

THE MONARCHIC AND PROPHETIC RESPONSE TO THE WORSHIP PRACTICES IN THE SANCTUARIES AND THE TEMPLE BEFORE THE EXILE

3.1. Introduction

The worship practice of the Israelites has its traces back to ancestral times. In this brief survey a sketch is drawn to see the pre-temple times which finally paved way for the Jerusalem Temple, the role of the Solomon's Temple and the centralisation of the cult in the Old Testament. Further to this, the full fledged activities related to the Solomon’s temple with its economic, political, religious and social domain will be explored.

3.2. The Cult during the Pre-Temple times

3.2.1. Ancestral Sanctuaries

The ancestors like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob erected sanctuaries where the nature manifested the presence of the God. The most important ancestral sanctuaries were in Shechem (Genesis 12:6-7), Bethel (Genesis 12: 8; 28:10-12), Mambre (Genesis 13:18) and Beersheba (Genesis 21:33; 26:23-25; 46:1-4). Roland de Vaux argues that these were Canaanite sanctuaries adopted by the

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1 Refer for further reading to Leen Ritmeyer, *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Carta and the Lamb Foundation, 2006).
Israelites and they continued the cult, without offending anyone. He points out that the divinities to which these sanctuaries belonged were, viz. El bethel at Bethel, El-ʻolam at Beersheba, El-shaddai at Mambre. It was considered to be legitimised by Abraham’s building an altar (Genesis 13:18). Later, however, it was rejected, and so no sanctuary legend has been preserved and finally equating Mambre explicitly with Hebron (Genesis 23:19; 35:27) and El-Berith at Shechem, are found in the Ras Shamra texts as manifestations of the Canaanite supreme god, El.4

El occupies the most important position.... He stands at the head of the gods as king, and presides over the divine assembly, He is called “father of the gods”, “father of humankind” and “creator of all creatures”; that is, he is the creator and father of gods and humans. Other West Semitic inscriptions also refer to him as “creator of the earth.” He is also the eternally wise one, “the holy one,” and “the friendly one, El, the one with feeling.” The Israelites worship of Yahweh in the sanctuary seems to have originated as a result of their desire to imitate the neighbours of Israel. This does not mean, however, that we should assume a common cultic schema throughout the entire Ancient West Asia. On the other hand, Fohrer refutes by saying that the Canaanite religion exhibits points of contact with and similarities to other West Asian religions as distant as those of India.5

3.2.2. The Desert Sanctuary: Tent

During the wilderness period,6 the Israelites had a tent7 as a sanctuary. The Tent sanctuary was the real cultic centre for the people of God in the desert period.8

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4 See, Genesis 17: 1; Judges 9:46; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, 294. When David conquered Jerusalem, he conquered a Jebusite city which would have had its own established cult and temple. Of this nothing is known for certain, although it is widely thought that the mysterious Melchizedek figure who appears in the Abraham stories (Genesis 14.18-20) is a memory of the cult of the Canaanite high god El Elyon in Jerusalem. The Old Testament never condemned El Elyon when Baal and all the other Canaanite gods were denounced, which suggests that the high God, in some form retained a place in the new cult of his ancient city. See Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: the History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 15.


There are three major terms used for what it is usually referred to as the "tabernacle": sanctuary, tabernacle and tent of meeting. In addition, a late text ascribed to rabbi Pinhas ben Ya’ir explains. “The Tabernacle (i.e. temple) was made to correspond to the creation of the world. The Two Cherubs over the Ark of the Covenant were made to correspond to the two holy names (of God: Yahweh and Elohim).

In Hebrew this tent is called the ohel moed, the tent of Re-union, or of meeting. It was the place where Yahweh talked with Moses ‘face to face’ (Exodus 33:11) or Yahweh ‘met’ Moses and the people of Israel (Exodus 29:42-43). The Tent of Meeting was utilised both for religious and political gatherings. Aramnic priesthood and sacrificial cult also were introduced into it (Exodus 29:38-46). The priestly sources indicate that considerable amount of gold (29 talents) and silver (730 talents) was used for making the sanctuary (Exodus 38:24-25). Within the tented building there were two main areas: The most holy place and holy place. Within the most holy place was “the ark of the testimony” e.g. Exodus 25:22 or “the ark of the covenant of the Lord” e.g. Numbers 10:33). Within the “holy place was “the altar of incense” Exodus 30:27, “the table of (the bread of) the presence” e.g. Numbers 4:7, and the “lampstand” e.g., Exodus 25:31.

The tent was designed to house the Ark. Deuteronomy 10: 1-5, Moses built an Ark of Acacia wood at Yahweh’s command and put inside in it, two tablets in which the Ten Commandments were written. Albertz opines, the ark was not originally a cultic object but a kind of standard which guaranteed the presence of

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7 Michael M. Homan, To Your Tents, O Israel! The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East (Leiden / Boston / Koln: Brill, 2002), 7-34.
10 Kyu Sam Han, Jerusalem and the Early Jesus Movement: The Qumran Community’s attitude towards the Temple (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 52.
12 H. Montifiore, “Jesus and the Temple Tax” in New Testament Studies 11.1 (1964): 60, suggests that the account of the levy was included in the Exodus narrative for aetiological reasons after the annual temple tax had become established. Exodus 38: 26 says that this money came mainly from half a shekel collected from every male above twenty as ransom money to prevent the divine wrath (see Exodus 30:11-16).
God in battle\textsuperscript{14} and a visible sign of the presence of God (I Samuel 4-6; 2 Samuel 6; I Kings 8) and as a receptacle of the law.

3.2.3. Pre-Temple Rural Sanctuaries\textsuperscript{15}

Biblical sources indicate that after the settlement of Israelites in Canaan they set up rural sanctuaries at Gilgal, Shiloh, Mispah in Benjamin, Gibeon, Ophra, Dan and Jerusalem.

3.2.3.1. Gilgal

Gilgal in the Jordan valley, located east of Jericho according to Joshua 4: 19, was likewise a pre-Israelite sanctuary. No ancestral clan is associated with Gilgal. The twelve stones supposedly set up by Joshua were probably in fact stele. Gilgal\textsuperscript{16} was therefore a stele sanctuary like those discovered by excavations at Gezer and Hazor.\textsuperscript{17}

3.2.3.2. Shiloh

Shiloh became the official sanctuary during the period of the judges. The ‘ark’ first became a cultic object in the sanctuary of Shiloh.\textsuperscript{18} It was the meeting place for the tribes and the Tent of Reunion was set up there (Joshua 18:1; 21:2; 22:9, 12). Sacrifice to Yahweh Sabaoth was offered here (1 Samuel 1:3). Samuel, the prophet was reared at the tabernacle in Shiloh.\textsuperscript{19} It has been suggested that the sanctuary at Shiloh was the first temple of Yahweh and the Ark was kept there.\textsuperscript{20} Shiloh remained the central sanctuary of the tribes till the Philistines in ca. 1050 BCE destroyed it.\textsuperscript{21} Unlike the open village sanctuaries, the sanctuary at Shiloh also already had a firmly established priesthood (Eli and his sons). The fact that in Shiloh the divine presence was represented by the ark, which was old war symbol

\textsuperscript{14} Rainer Albertz, \textit{A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period}, vol. 1, 57.  
\textsuperscript{15} Sam P. Mathew, \textit{Temple-Criticism in Mark’s Gospel: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple during the First Century CE} (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 12-15.  
\textsuperscript{16} Roland de Vaux, \textit{Ancient Israel}, 303. Gilgal was an important sanctuary immediately after the conquest because the Ark had come to rest there (Joshua 4: 19; 7:6). It is in this place that the Israelites circumcised themselves and celebrated the first Passover in Canaan (Joshua 5:2-12). I Samuel 11: 14-15 indicates that Samuel came to Gilgal to judge Israel because there was a sanctuary there. At Gilgal, Saul was proclaimed king ‘before the Lord’ and sacrifices were also offered there. The prophets condemned Gilgal along with Bethel (Hosea 4: 15; Amos 4:4; 5:5). As Roland de Vaux has observed that the prophets’ criticism of these sanctuaries may be due to their hostility to monarchy (see Hosea 9:15; 8:4).  
\textsuperscript{17} Georg Fohrer, \textit{History of Israelite Religion}, 644.  
\textsuperscript{18} Rainer Albertz, \textit{A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period}, vol. 1, 57.  
\textsuperscript{20} Roland de Vaux, \textit{Ancient Israel}, 304.  
\textsuperscript{21} Bruce C. Birch et al., \textit{A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament} (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 218.
from the time of the state shows the political character of the cult installed here, which was so typical of Yahweh religion.\textsuperscript{22}

### 3.2.3.3. Mizpah in Benjamin

This sanctuary played an important role in the time of Samuel and Saul. It had been the central sanctuary of the tribe of Benjamin.\textsuperscript{23} Samuel judged Israel from here (1 Samuel 7: 16). Sacred lots were drawn ‘before Yahweh’ at Mizpah to choose Saul (1 Samuel 10:17-24).

### 3.2.3.4. Gibeon

The sanctuary at Gibeon was the greatest high place under Solomon and was called ‘Yahweh’s mountain’ and is probably to be identified with the hill of Nebi Samuel, which towers strikingly above the hill-country north of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{24} Roland de Vaux opines that the rituals mentioned here remind of the Canaanite practices and presupposes that the cult of Yahweh had replaced an older form of worship.\textsuperscript{25}

### 3.2.3.5. Ophra and Dan

The Old Testament has two accounts of the foundation of a sanctuary at Ophra (see Judges 6:11-24; 6:25-32). This gives us some insights into the conflicts surrounding the assignment of a sanctuary to Baal or to Yahweh.\textsuperscript{26} The foundation of the sanctuary at Dan is connected with the migration of the tribe of Dan (Judges 17:18).

### 3.2.3.6. Bethel

The temple of Bethel, in the territory of the former northern kingdom of Israel was located only 17 km north of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{27} The Deuteronomistic theologians accused Jeroboam of having introduced arbitrary innovations into the cult of his kingdom, which led the whole land to sin. He had two golden calves made and set up in Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12: 28f.). It makes two things clear: the golden bull image was to symbolize the unbounded power of Yahweh as god of the Exodus and liberator from the oppression of Egypt and Solomon. And it was to demonstrate that the national cult of the North was the real heir of the old Yahweh traditions as opposed to the Jerusalem innovations. Yahweh was to be worshipped in Bethel, not as the god-king enthroned on Zion, fighting against

\textsuperscript{22} Rainer Albertz, \textit{A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period}, vol. 1, 88.
\textsuperscript{23} Georg Fohrer, \textit{History of Israelite Religion}, 112.
\textsuperscript{24} Rainer Albertz, \textit{A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period}, vol. 1, 84.
\textsuperscript{25} Roland De Vaux, \textit{Ancient Israel}, 306.
\textsuperscript{26} Georg Fohrer, \textit{History of Israelite Religion}, 112.
In contrast to Jerusalem, where Yahweh was enthroned in the holy of holies, hidden behind thick walls and accessible only to the priests, whereas in Bethel, He came very close to the people. And also His bond to a group of people found a much more direct expression here. Bethel also developed other sanctuaries like Dan and probably also Shechem and Penuel (1 Kings 12:25; Genesis 33:18, 20; 32:25-32).

3.2.3.7. David and Jerusalem

After the victory over Philistines in two decisive battles, which Saul could not achieve, David’s next move was to establish the kingdom more firmly by giving it a capital suitable both to north and south. The old southern centre was hardly acceptable to the north and the old northern centre of Shechem would not be acceptable to south i.e. Judah. The choice of David fell upon Jerusalem still held by local inhabitants, the Jebusites. Jerusalem was probably the most contested site in Palestine. By conquering Jerusalem, David embarks on an unprecedented campaign of territorial expansion and establishes a great empire. At the height of his fast-rising career, he receives an exceptional, unconditional promise from

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31 The Solomon’s temple was apparently erected on the sacred site of the Jebusite city. It was a rectangular, long-room building, with the entrance on the eastern side. It was extremely large in comparison with other temples in the Land of Israel, measuring 50 x 100 cubits (exterior dimensions, equivalent to approximately 25 x 50 m.). The walls were 2.5-6 m. thick. The entrance was through a broad-room porch (*’ulam*), 10 x 20 cubits. Two ornamented pillars, called Jachin and Boaz, stood in the façade of the porch; they probably had no architectural function. The main hall (*hekhal*), a vast long-room measuring 20 x 40 cubits (interior measurements) terminated in the holy of holies (*debir*), a cube, 20 x 20 x 20 cubits. Aharon Kempinski and Ronny Reich (eds.), *The Architecture of Ancient Israel: From Prehistoric to the Persian Period* (Jerusalem: Ahva Press, 1992), 183; refer for more insights to Ernst-Joachim Waschke, “The Significance of the David Tradition for the Emergence of Messianic Beliefs in the Old Testament” in *Word and World* 23 (2003): 413-420; Refer for better clarity to Amihai Mazar, “The Search for David and Solomon: An Archaeological Perspective” in *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel*, eds. Israel Finkelstein et al. (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2007): 117-140; Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible’s Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* (New York / London / Toronto / Sydney: Free Press, 2007), 121ff.
32 Lester L. Grabbe, “From Merneptah to Shoshenq: if we had Only The Bible ...” in *Israel in Transition: From Late Bronze II to Iron IIA* (c. 1250-850 B.C.E.), vol. 2, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (New York / London: T and T Clark, 2010); 74.
God: his dynasty will rule in Jerusalem forever.\textsuperscript{33} The name Jerusalem appears first in Egyptian Execration Texts of the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries BCE in a form equivalent to Urshalam.\textsuperscript{34} It is chronicled in the Amarna letters of Pharaoh Akhenaton, as a political centre and it does reach back into the mid-second millennium,\textsuperscript{35} and its strategic importance is found in its position guarding a north-south route in the hill country.\textsuperscript{36} Yahweh himself dwelt there: there were his kabod and sem; hence Jerusalem could be called the holy city and Israel the holy people.\textsuperscript{37} The growth of Jerusalem did not seize in its inception but Jerusalem suddenly grew into a huge metropolis.\textsuperscript{38}

To centralize the life of the kingdom, he next brought the ark, the ancient


\textsuperscript{34} Gnana Robinson, Let us be like the nations: A Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel (Grand Rapids / Edinburg: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., The Handsel Press Ltd, 1993), 173. Later Assyrian texts have the form Urusilimmu. In the Hebrew Scriptures the Masoretic vowels pointing indicates the pronunciation Yerusalayim; in the Aramaic parts of the OT, however, the pronunciation indicated is Jerusalem. Its meaning is “foundation of Shalem” (Miller Burrows, “Jerusalem” in IDB 2, 843). According to Burrows, “the traditional interpretation, ‘city of peace’ is as inaccurate etymologically as it is inappropriate historically.” “Shalem” was originally the name of the deity worshipped there. In the Amarna Letters the city is apparently called Beth-shalem, “the house of Shalem.” The first name under which the city appears in the Bible is Salem or more exactly Shalem (Genesis 14:18). The word Salem has the same letters as Shalom in Hebrew, and thus the meaning “city of peace” was associated with Jerusalem. The name Jerusalem is applied to the territory of which it is the capital. Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6) remained a Canaanite city-state until late (cf. Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21; 19:10-12); Lester L. Grabbe, “Ethnic Groups in Jerusalem” in Jerusalem in Ancient History and Tradition, ed. Thomas L. Thompson (London / New York: T and T Clark International, 2003): 145,146.


\textsuperscript{38} Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, David and Solomon: In the search of Bible’s Sacred kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition, 123.
symbol of God's presence into the sanctuary in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), and hence it became the centre for both political and religious life. It has been suggested that by making Jerusalem the capital, which did not belong to the territory of any of the twelve tribes, and by installing in it the Ark venerated by all the tribes, David increased his power over all Israel and ensured national unity. Hence no tribe could boast of it as their own possession.

David founded the sanctuary at Jerusalem in two stages: the Ark was installed and an altar was erected on the site of the future temple. In this new sanctuary another line of priests, that of Zadok made the appearance. This new line of priests together with the presence of Ark gave legitimacy and security to the Davidic monarchy. Some texts such as Psalms 110: 4 (also Psalms 76:3), by linking Abraham with the future capital of David, justify Israel’s temple tradition to very ancient connections with Jerusalem and the rights which the king and the priesthood held over Israel. Thus David’s sanctuary, which remained the centre of Yahwistic worship till the temple was built, was closely connected with economic exploitation by the monarchy. It was David’s aim to make Jerusalem the religious as well as the political capital of the realm, so that no tribe could show their dominance and all the people of the kingdom will feel the sense of belongingness and directly and indirectly show allegiance to the Davidic kingdom.

The elevation of Jerusalem to the status of official residence of the Davidic dynasty, the transfer of Yahweh’s presence thither, and the expansion of Yahwism through the adoption of Canaanite concepts laid the groundwork for the gradual

42 Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 310.
increase in the importance of the city, which reached its culmination only many centuries later.\textsuperscript{44} The choice of Jerusalem as capital and as religious centre finds its natural sequel in the building of the Temple during the time of Solomon, an event, which in the long run was to prove of very great significance for the religious life of the people.\textsuperscript{45} On the same site of David’s sanctuary, Solomon’s Temple may have been built. David’s sanctuary was the ‘tent’ where Solomon was anointed (I Kings 1:39). Thus David’s sanctuary in Jerusalem played an important political role also.\textsuperscript{46} M. Haran adds four more sanctuaries (Nob, Bethlehem, Hebron, Arad) to this list and points out that all these temples existed in the cities west of the Jordan.\textsuperscript{47}

David desired to build a house for Yahweh (2 Samuel 7: 1-2) since he himself had a fine house of cedar and whereas, the ark was lodged in a tent. Through prophet Nathan God responded that David\textsuperscript{48} would not be the one to build such a house for Yahweh. Further God has never needed such a house but has been content with a tent and a tabernacle (7:5-7). Temples were associated with Canaanite religion and this text may reflect opposition to the adoption of such Canaanite practices.

The survey of temples in the West Asian region throws glimpses that the temple in these regions played a vital role in all spheres of human living i.e. social, political, economic and religious. Therefore, these reasons could have given rise for the people of Israel to have a temple. Solomon’s temple succeeded in formulating a view that God could be restricted to the temple and that He was at

\textsuperscript{44} Georg Fohrer, \textit{History of Israelite Religion}, 128.
the disposal of the king and elite, and the poor were excluded. Therefore, by this time, the royal throne had its blue print and which slowly found culmination in the concrete form when Solomon made it during his tenure. And hence in the next part of this chapter the focus of the study will be on the Jerusalem temple and its existence.

3.3. The Full Fledged Temple

After having a brief knowledge about the temples in the Ancient West Asia in the preceding pages, the next few pages shall elucidate that God’s miraculous presence with his people in the wilderness and other sacred memories of the ancient Israel was to hallow this place[^49] where the temple was to be constructed. Solomon built the Temple, which was in due course of time had to become the only legitimate sanctuary and it was rebuilt after the exile to be the religious centre to which Jews from many lands would look, and which they would long to visit[^50]. Solomon established a centralized kingdom with a national building program[^51].

3.3.1. Solomon’s Temple[^52]

Solomon’s Temple was the culmination of years of planning and the subject of centuries of veneration and idealization[^53]. He built the temple as a garden sanctuary; the walls of the *hekal* were decorated with golden palm trees and flowers, set with precious stones; the bronze pillars were decorated with pomegranate patterns and the great lamp was a stylized almond tree. But the temple was also built in accordance with a heavenly plan to represent on earth


[^52]: The Iron Age temple of Ayn Dara in northern Syria has structural features that are very close to the Jerusalem Temple. A series of meter-long footprints were carved into the limestone threshold. They seem to depict a type of aniconic representation of a deity walking into the inner sanctum. At the entrance are two footprints representing the deity standing still, progressing into the temple are two thresholds each with a single footprint as the deity strides into the inner sanctum. Photo courtesy of A. M. Appa, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26.3 (2000): fig. 27. Refer to Neal H. Walls (ed.), *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East*, (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2005), xvii; Refer for more on the economic policies of David and Solomon to Sigmund Wagner-Tsukamoto, “State Formation in the Hebrew Bible: An Institutional Economic Perspective” in *JSOT* 37.4 (2013): 411ff; Matt Lynch, *Monotheism and Institutions in the Book of Chronicles* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 209-243.

the garden of God. The debir, the holy of holies, was the place of the Lord's throne, but the hekal, the great hall of the temple, was the Garden of Eden. The decorations of the temple were those of Eden (trees, pomegranates, lilies, cherubim), the seven-branched lamp was described in later tradition as the tree of life, a bronze serpent was removed from the temple by Hezekiah, and Ezekiel saw the river of life flowing from the temple.

An important tradition ascribing ancient sanctity to Jerusalem is connected with the binding of Isaac on the altar for Abraham had built his altar at a place he called 'Yahwe-Yireh'... (Genesis 22: 14). When David chose to build an altar there and to make it the site of the central sanctuary of the nation, he was renewing the bond between Jerusalem and Abraham, the father of his people. At the same time he was incorporating the covenant between God of Israel and the house of David. (II Samuel 7: 16). Religious fervour was blended with nationalism.

"Jerusalem was an essential part of the formation of the Israelite state. A visible symbol of God's approval of the monarchs' action was needed, and the temple supplied it. The legitimacy of the temple was intended to give legitimacy to the monarchy. As a state institution, the temple thus represented the intersection point of religion and politics."

3.3.1.1. Solomon’s Temple Building Project

The Temple served a dual purpose. It was a dynastic shrine or royal chapel; its chief priest was an appointee of the king and a member of his cabinet. It was intended as the national shrine of the Israelite people as it had the presence of the Ark. The biblical sources clearly show that king Solomon was responsible for the construction of the Jerusalem Temple. Nevertheless, the conceptualisation of the Temple building project is attributed to King David (2 Samuel 7:2f.). According to 2 Chronicles 22:1-5, David contacted the Phoenicians and procured all the materials needed for the construction of the Temple. However, the authenticity of the Chronicler’s version has been questioned because of the Chronicler’s...
tendency to aggrandise both David and the cult. Solomon’s wisdom had a great impact on the temple, and to the life of the dynasty. Solomon’s wisdom is now turned on Yahweh’s needs.

Solomon began building the Temple in the fourth year of his reign and the work took seven years and five months (1 Kings 6:37-38). Solomon’s Temple building project was one of his building projects, including the palace, the house of the forests of Lebanon, the ‘hall of pillars,’ ‘the throne of rooms,’ and the house of Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kings 7:2-8). Some features of the Solomon’s Temple building project are noteworthy. From all accounts Solomon’s temple was a place of grandeur and beauty.

There are some characteristics of the temple building programme.

Firstly, according to the Book of Kings, Solomon used “… forced labour … thirty thousand men” to build the Temple (1 Kings 5:1).

Secondly, Solomon erected a Temple, which was Canaanite in style. It is

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62 W. F. Albright, Archaeology of Palestine (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949) dates it 959 BCE.
64 Solomon’s forced labour force included not only the state slaves but also resident aliens and Israelites (1 Kings 9:20-22; 2 Chronicles 2:16-17; 8:7-9; 1 Kings 5:27), cf. De Vaux, Ancient Israel, 142. The considerable cost of Solomon’s building project was defrayed from the very high rate of taxation, which people resented bitterly (1 Kings 12:4). John Bright rightly points out that the ‘costs outran income’ John Bright, A History of Israel, 216. This became the cause of the breakup of the united monarchy, Kathleen M. Kenyon, Jerusalem: Excavating 3000 years of History (New York: Mac Graw-Hill book Co., 1967), 61; Baruch Halpern, The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History (San Francisco / Cambridge / New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), 147.
65 Comparable with other temples known from the area with the assistance of Phoenician craftsmen, Peter R. Ackroyd, The people of the Old Testament, 61. Solomon’s Temple thus introduced into Jerusalem, and into the midst of Israelite, the full luxury of the current Syro-Phoenician culture Kathleen M. Kenyon, Jerusalem: Excavating 3000 years of History, 61. Solomon’s temple building project exhibited a remarkable open stance toward the world of religious values and symbols. Much of the artistic beauty of the Temple came from Phoenicia (1 Kings 7:23-26), the bronze pillars “Jachin and Boaz” Peter R. Ackroyd, The people of the Old Testament, 61. (1 Kings 7: 15-22), the twelve oxen (1 Kings 7:25) and the cherubim (1 Kings 6:23-28) all resemble religious symbols and art from neighbouring countries. J. Endres, Temple, Monarchy and the Word of God (Wilmington / Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988), 118. The Jebusite-Solomonic temple, the site of which is probably to be sought northwest of the Dome of the Rock, belongs to the type of long-house temple… of the kind attested in
also true that certain cult items later came to be idolatrous (cf. the bronze serpent of 2 Kings. 18:4). It is also true that certain aspects of the symbolism of the Solomonic temple remind the reader of “Canaanite” religion as it is described elsewhere in our biblical texts (e.g.) Deuteronomy 12; 2 Kings. 17:7-20.66

Thirdly, Solomon exchanged agricultural products in return for the building materials and skilled labourers.67

3.3.1.2. Personnel of the Temple

The Personnel were composed of different groups. They are-

3.3.1.2.1. Dignitaries

The High Priest68 (kohen haggadol) and the captain of the Temple (Segan), who commanded the armed guards, which performed police duties and if the need arose, they even defended the Temple against attack.

3.3.1.2.2. Priests and Levites

The origin and the development of the priesthood in ancient Israel is a most complex historical problem and no absolute statements could be made. In the Patriarchal times it looks as if the father of the family himself fulfilled the

66 Iain Provan et al., The Biblical History of Israel (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2003), 257.
67 Solomon entered into negotiations with Hiram, the king of Tyre, and concluded an agreement with him (1 Kings 5). As per the agreement Hiram was to provide not only the timber (Cedar and Cyprus) but also the skilled workers, stonemasons and carpenters from Gebal, Phoenicia. It was agreed that in exchange Solomon should provide twenty thousand cors of wheat and twenty thousand cors of beaten oil per year (1 Kings 5:11) One cor in dry measure is equivalent to 6.25 bushels and in liquid measure 58 gallons, refer to Sam P. Mathew, Temple-Criticism in Mark’s Gospel: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple during the First Century CE, 16. This agreement resulted in peace between Hiram and Solomon leading to improved international relations. The exchange of agricultural products for building materials and hiring of skilled workers from a foreign country must have very adversely affected the economy of Israel. The temple was decorated with gold and other material, which displayed the wealth of Solomon Peter R. Ackroyd, The People of the Old Testament, 61. Thus the Temple building project of Solomon played an important role not only in religion but also in politics and economics.
68 This portion should be read by all who are interested to see the relationship of Zadok and high priest, Deborah W. Rooke, Zadok’s Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel, Oxford Theological Monograph Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Robert Hayward, “Priesthood, Temple(s), And Sacrifice” in The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies, eds. J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 323-325.
functions of a priest as in the case of Abraham and Jacob. Later Moses took this responsibility of being the priest (Exodus 24:5-8). Later, Pentateuchal narrative ascribes Aaron as the priest with all the functions.

The distinction between Aaronites and Zadokites is attested in post-exilic times. Ezekiel speaks about Zadokite priests (Ezekiel 43:19; 44:15; 48:11). Their history goes back to the time of Solomon who refused the right of asylum to Abiathar, the priest who stood by David. He then appointed Zadok as priest of Jerusalem in Abiathar’s place (1 Kings 2:27, 35). Zadok is identified as the priest of Jebusite sanctuary in Jerusalem. Levites: the origin and function of Levites is a most vexed problem in the history of Israelite religion. The Levites are clearly clergy of second grade and were assisting the priests in their duties (Numbers 3:5-4:47; 8:5-26) but they were not priests. They were divided into three clans, the Kohathites, the Gershonites and the Merarites (cf. Numbers 4:1-33). During the Wilderness wandering the Levites were in charge of carrying the paraphernalia of the sanctuary. The Levites might well have carried the ark and

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69 Ellie Assis, “Family and Community as Substitutes for the Temple after its Destruction: New Readings in Psalms 127 and 133” in Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses 85.1 (2009): 55-62. Refer to Lauren Chomyn, “Dwelling Brothers, Oozing Oil, and Descending Dew: Reading Psalm 133 through the Lens of Yehudite Social Memory” in Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament, An International Journal of Nordic Theology 26.2 (2012): 220–222. The invocation of the memory of Moses anointing his brother Aaron into the priesthood in this psalm stresses the centrality of the priesthood to Israel’s roots. The ensuing line of Aaronite priests is therefore seen, and certainly sees itself, as a continuation of Aaron’s function of conveying the teachings upon which the community’s identity is built. In what may seem at first to be paradoxical, Aaron’s memory is also intertwined with the memory of the temple. Certainly, Aaron served as a priest even without a temple, which may seem to affirm Assis’s conclusion that this psalm seeks to remedy tension in the community of diaspora and returnees by proposing ways that the community can exist without a temple.

70 Of the two priests of David, Zadok is clearly connected with local cults, while Abiathar, who survived the slaughter at Nob committed by Saul (1 Samuel 22:20), is evidently Yahwistic. Mario Liverani, Israel’s History and the History of Israel, trans. Chiara Peri and Philip R. Davies (UK: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2007), 94.


72 Rui De Menezes, The Cultural Context of the Old Testament (Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 2005), 97-99. It is believed that, after few decades after the return from exile the differences were becoming blurred and both were considered as legitimate priests. However, the members of the community of Qumran who repudiated both the priesthood and the Temple of Jerusalem usually considered themselves as the successors of the Zadokites (IQs 5:2; CD 3:21-4:3). But the Qumran documents also speak of the sons of Aaron (IQs 5:21; CD 10:5) Ben Sira expresses the harmony between Simon and the other priests, ‘the sons of Aaron’ (Ben Sira 50:13, 16). Robert Hayward, “Priesthood, Temple(S), And Sacrifice” in The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies, 320. Incidentally the New Testament term ‘Sadducees’ for ‘priests’ comes from Sadoq or Zadok. Gese uses a term called the
the tent of meeting while Israel was unsettled or had no Temple; but once they had deposited that ark and the vessels housed in the tent in Solomon’s Temple (2 Chronicles 5:4 V.), what was there for them to do? According to 1 Chronicles 23: 26–32, David addressed this issue directly, henceforth, they were to act as Temple guards, being responsible for purity; to prepare the bread of the presence and meal offerings for the priests; and to sing. These three different duties were the responsibility of three separate groups within the Levite tribe, including now door-keepers and singers.73

3.3.1.2.3. Treasurers
They (gizbarim) were all those officials concerned with general administration.

3.3.1.2.4. Porters
They were to open and shut the gates at the proper times and prevent gentiles (goyim) from entering and police agents.

3.3.1.2.5. Special Functionaries
They were the one who prepared for the daily public services.

3.3.1.2.6. Musicians
They, (mesorerim) were mainly drawn from three Levitical families.

The central event in the life of the Temple was the daily sacrifice on behalf of the people, which was publicly offered to Yahweh morning and evening.74 But on the other hand the bond to a human group, which is so characteristic of Yahweh, found no expression at all in this temple architecture. The lay people could only observe the sacrificial cult from the outer court in front of the temple, and had no access to the temple itself; in fact they were excluded from the cultic practices in the temple building.75 Therefore the construction of the Temple in

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73 Robert Hayward, “Priesthood, Temple(s), And Sacrifice,” 322.
74 Charles Guignebert, The Jewish World in the time of Jesus, 60.
many ways gave a glorious outlook in all spheres where people got a place to come in unity also, politically a good sense of security but ultimately the poor and outsiders had a very limited space.

3.4. The Role of Solomon’s Temple in the Society

3.4.1. Religious Symbolism

Solomon’s Temple was the religious centre of Israel and remained so even after the division of the kingdom. The Temple was considered as the seat of divine presence and the house of God. When the Ark was taken there, God took possession of his house and the Temple was filled with a cloud (1 Kings 8:10), which was the sign of God’s presence (Exodus 33:9; 40:34-35; Numbers 12:4-10). It was believed that Yahweh’s presence guaranteed the security of Israel and this Temple would stand unscathed for ever (2 Kings 19:43; Isaiah 37:35). The religious machinery of temple and cult needed theological, intellectual counterparts, and this is given in “a theology of presence,” whereby the God of the covenantal-liberation tradition takes up (permanent) residence in Jerusalem in the temple and becomes patron, ally, and guarantor of the dynasty. According to biblical tradition (1 Kings 6:23-28; 8:6-7; 1 Samuel 4:4; Isaiah 37:16), Yahweh is invisibly enthroned on two large cherubim in Solomon’s temple.

This theological adjustment articulates a radically changed definition of Yahweh, from a transformative agent to a guarantor. This theological transformation is congruent with and congenial to the sociological transformation of the community from egalitarian to bureaucratic-hierarchical, in which the economic issues have changed from survival to monopoly, in which the power questions no longer concern marginality but control and domination. Therefore, the temple gave a total different outlook to the society from egalitarian to domination, where the centre and periphery can be easily pinpointed.

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76 De Vaux, Ancient Israel, 325-326.
Lundquist has brought out a number of common motifs between the Temple of Solomon and the temples in the Ancient West Asia.\textsuperscript{80} This shows that in the religious sphere Solomon’s Temple functioned like the other temples in the Ancient West Asia.

Biblical and extra biblical sources, as well as archaeological evidence, testify to the fact that a temple in a palace-complex like the Solomonic temple functioned as the royal sanctuary and as a temple of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{81}

\textbf{3.4.2. Political role of the Temple}

Many scholars hold that the Solomon’s Temple was a royal sanctuary, the private chapel of the king and his household.\textsuperscript{82} The Temple stood side by side with the palace. Solomon’s successors too made gifts to the Temple but withdrew funds from its treasury freely (I Kings 15:15, 18; 2 Kings 12:19; 16:18). The kings were the patrons of the Temple, repairing and modifying the Temple buildings and its furnishings (2 Kings 15:35; 16:10-18; 23:4 f.). They had their own dais set up in the court (2 Kings 11:14; 16:18; 23:3). At times, the civil servants were ordered to look after the collection and distribution of the offerings of the Temple (2 Kings 12:5-17; 22:3-7).\textsuperscript{83} All the kings of Judah after Solomon were anointed in the Temple court. The king always had a tight control over the Temple treasury.\textsuperscript{84}

The king controlled the priesthood of the Temple. Solomon removed the high priest Abiathar and appointed Zadok as high priest. F. M. Cross has observed that, the priesthood of Abiathar had its old links to Shiloh and Nob, which is rooted in the liberation faith of Moses, and it was preserved among the northern tribes. On the other hand, the Zadokite priesthood belonged to a royal consciousness based on an urban context.\textsuperscript{85} Thus the control of the Temple priesthood resulted in the suppression of the liberation faith rooted in Moses. The high priests were dependent on the king and were actual members of the royal administrative cabinets. Albright observes that David and Solomon prevented the high priest from setting himself up as the head of the state.\textsuperscript{86}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{81} Frank S. Frick, \textit{A Journey Through the Hebrew Scriptures}, 319.
\textsuperscript{83} De Vaux, \textit{Ancient Israel}, 320.
\textsuperscript{84} Cf. Sam P. Mathew, \textit{Temple-Criticism in Mark’s Gospel: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple during the First Century CE}, 18.
\textsuperscript{86} W. F. Albright, \textit{Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible}, 139.
\end{footnotesize}
Although the Temple functioned as a royal sanctuary, its role was not limited to it. The Temple was the temple of the kingdom; a national sanctuary where both king and people offered public worship to their national God. When David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, his intention was to make it the centre of worship for all tribes. Thus the Temple was the royal chapel as well as the heart and spiritual centre of the nation. The Temple’s proximity to the other official or administrative buildings as well as the part played by the king in the sacrificial cult demonstrates the close connection between the Temple and the state. The political entanglement of the rulers had their mark on the changes or additions to the Temple and its furnishings. In order to accommodate foreign powers, foreign cultic elements were brought into the Temple. For example, Ahaz installed a new altar fashioned after the altar in Damascus to please the Assyrian king (2 Kings 16: 10-18). 2 Kings 21: 3-5 is another example. Therefore the Temple was involved in all political events both internal and external - from the time of Solomon to the fall of the Temple in 586 BCE.

Recent scholarship understands the Temple as an essential part of state formation rather than as a by-product of state formation. In popular thought the promises to David and the presence of Yahweh in his Temple guaranteed the continuance of the state. It has been suggested that the Temple at Jerusalem served to legitimise the monarchy’s right to exercise power.

By following a series of steps leading to the completion of a legitimate Temple, Solomon assured the legitimacy of the Temple as a house of God, which in turn gave legitimacy to the monarchy. It helped those who contributed labour and resources to the Temple project to be convinced that their service was divinely ordained. The divine presence and sanctions secured by the Temple included social stability, peace and prosperity.

As W. Bruggemann opines, David and Solomon reshaped the discernment of God’s relation to the community by emphasising the concept of ‘house’ and neglecting the ‘tent’ tradition to achieve their political end. While the old ‘tent’ tradition asserted the claim of mobility and freedom for God, the ‘house’ tradition, which was royal in its orientation, stressed the abiding presence of Yahweh in Israel. Since the royal regime must depend on a patron and legitimator who were

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87 Parrot, Temple of Jerusalem, 55.
90 John Bright, A History of Israel, 223.
unreservedly committed to the shrine and its social arrangements, the notion of presence is made primary and God's freedom is severely curtailed.\textsuperscript{93}

\textbf{3.4.3. Economic Role of the Temple\textsuperscript{94}}

Biblical sources indicate that Solomon lavishly used metal in the construction of the Temple. I Kings 6, tells us that he used much gold, silver and bronze for building the Temple. There were dishes, bowls, lamps, lamp stands, tongs, and door fittings of gold. Alan Millard points out that the account of the Bible regarding the use of precious metal in the Temple of Solomon falls into the known pattern of the ancient temples of Egypt and Mesopotamia and is not an exaggeration.\textsuperscript{95} The Temple was decorated with gold and other materials, which displayed the wealth of Solomon.\textsuperscript{96} It is suggested that the “additional structures” mentioned in I Kings 6:5 served not only for the use of Temple staff, but also as shops, storehouses, and storage space, such as all the West Asian temples had.\textsuperscript{97} The treasures were probably deposited within the sanctuary in convenient hiding-places underground or in the walls. “The temple, with its treasures and treasury was a kind of national bank. It was a secure structure in the most defensible part of Jerusalem”.\textsuperscript{98} However, valuable offerings came to the Temple through dues and offerings.\textsuperscript{99}

Roland de Vaux observes that there was only a theoretical distinction between the national and religious treasuries.\textsuperscript{100} The king had total control of the Temple treasury. He might deposit his war booty and his personal gifts in the Temple (Joshua 6: 9; 2 Samuel 8: 11; 1 Kings 7:51; 15:15; 2 Kings 12:19). The king’s officials were in charge of the offerings made by the people. The kings did not hesitate to draw from the Temple treasury to meet urgent needs.\textsuperscript{101}

\textbf{3.4.4. Social Role of the Temple}

The songs, fragrances, prayers and rituals gave the glimpse of the social status the temple itself enveloped. It was the biggest structure of its kind in the ancient west

\textsuperscript{94} Sam P. Mathew, Temple-Criticism in Mark’s Gospel: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple during the First Century CE, 20.
\textsuperscript{95} A. Millard, Treasures from Bible Times, 106.
\textsuperscript{96} Peter R. Ackroyd, The People of the Old Testament, 61.
\textsuperscript{98} Frank S. Frick, A Journey through the Hebrew Scriptures, 319.
\textsuperscript{99} Parrot, Temple of Jerusalem, 42.
\textsuperscript{100} De Vaux, Ancient Israel, 139.
\textsuperscript{101} See e.g., 2 Kings 12:1–16.
Asia, left an indelible impression on the senses and served as a fountainhead of religious imagery. It was also the centre of art gallery and poetry library.

3.5. The Jerusalem Temple Theology

Solomon’s Temple was the religious centre of Israel, and it remained so even after the separation of the two kingdoms even though Jeroboam built a rival sanctuary at Bethel. When Ahiyah, a prophet from Shiloh in Israel, foretold the political schism, he still spoke of Jerusalem as the city, which Yahweh had chosen (1 Kings 2:32), and the faithful in the Northern kingdom never ceased to look towards Jerusalem. Even after the fall of the City, pilgrims from Shechem, from Shiloh and from Samaria brought their offerings to the ruined Temple (Jeremiah 41: 5). If Jerusalem was regarded as the Holy City, the reason was that it had the Temple. Therefore, an attempt will be made to define the religious significance of the Temple. The presence of Yahweh on Zion was quite crudely expressed in the Jerusalem Temple theology.102 There are two centres in particular around which the Jerusalem temple theology revolved: the kingship of Yahweh and Jerusalem as the city of God.103

3.5.1. The Temple as the seat of the divine presence

The Temple was the ‘house of God’. This belief in Yahweh’s presence in his Temple was the sole reason for the worship celebrated there, and for the pious customs of the faithful. “The temple symbolized the transition from tribal organization to nation-state, with the clear inference that God approved of the transition because God ‘took up residence’ in Jerusalem.”104 Even after the exile, the Temple i.e. the holy Dwelling-place, remained the very centre of Jewish piety.105

3.5.2. Temple as a universal paradigm

As universal King of the gods and people, in the Jerusalem temple theology, Yahweh took the role from being liberator of the oppressed to being promoter of his own policy of expansion and oppression. Yahweh was connected with all spheres of the reality of the world; he was no longer only a god of history but also a god of nature. His activity was extended far beyond Israel: not only the existence of his own society but the existence of the whole world depended on his powerful and protecting intervention.106

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104 Frank S. Frick, A Journey through the Hebrew Scriptures, 319.
105 De Vaux. Ancient Israel, 325-326.
3.5.3. Temple as a sign of election

Taking up Jebusite traditions, the people of Israel claimed that Yahweh had bound himself in a quite special way to Jerusalem and was directly present in his temple; this theology claimed that Jerusalem was ‘the city of God’ ‘the holiest of Elyon’s dwellings’; Yahweh is in her midst’ (Psalms 46.5f.; cf. 48.3; 87.3); he has made his dwelling place on Zion (76.3; 87.If.), indeed Elyon has founded it himself (48.9; 87.5). A typical feature of this ‘Zion theology’ was thus its almost complete identification of Yahweh with the capital and its state sanctuary (48.4, 13-15). Thus it was no longer the liberation of Israel from Egypt but the event that Yahweh had made his abode on Zion.\(^{107}\)

3.5.4. Symbolism of the Temple

“According to Jewish tradition, Jerusalem was central in Jewish ritual because God had chosen the city as the final resting place for the ark of His covenant.”\(^{108}\) A kind of cosmic symbolism is also associated with the Temple. Jerusalem is considered as the “naval of the earth” (Ezekiel 38: 12) and the focal point of the cosmos,\(^{109}\) Zion’s existence at the same time safeguarded the existence of the whole world.

The Jerusalem court and temple theologians fused Yahweh so directly with the institutions of political power, the monarchy, the palace and the state cult, that the elite forgot that Yahweh had once been the guarantor of the freedom of the politically helpless, in the face of the attacks of the politically powerful and the dominant.\(^{110}\)

3.6. The Centralisation of the Cult

The process in which Solomon’s Temple attained the status, as the only place where sacrificial worship could be performed was a long and hard one. The Temple at Jerusalem had to struggle against many rival sanctuaries and trends of decentralisation.\(^{111}\) In any event, Yahweh’s choice of Zion and of David certainly received stress in the cult; and this led to profound theological thoughts which were of great significance. The whole architecture of the Temple also and particularly the newly created holy of holies was aimed at symbolizing the bond between Yahweh and a place. In Jerusalem temple Yahweh became a God who is enthroned and dwells on Zion.\(^{112}\) Amos also in chapter 9 gave grim prophecies in

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\(^{107}\) De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 326.


\(^{109}\) Ottosson, “ḥēḵāl,” 387.


\(^{111}\) Refer to De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 331-339.

terms of Yahweh’s more ultimate purpose to save, now in application to Jerusalem rather than to Samaria.\footnote{113}{Simon J. De Vries, “Futurism in the Preexilic Minor Prophets Compared with that of the Postexilic Minor Prophets” in \textit{SBL Seminar Papers} 40 (Atlanta / Georgia: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001): 22.}

By centralizing the cult, an attempt was made to avert the threat posed by the temple at Bethel towards which some people were closely affiliated.\footnote{114}{Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, “Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology,” 274.} This situation was likely considered intolerable by the authorities of Judah, especially in view of the new demographic situation, which called for an attempt to bind together the two sectors of the population of Judah: Judahites and Israelites.\footnote{115}{Rainey explained the centralization of the cult in the days of Hezekiah as an attempt to reach-out to the Israelite population of the north (that is, in their northern territories), after the fall of Israel, refer to Herzog, Aharoni, Rainey and Moshkovitz, “The Israelite Fortress of Arad” in \textit{BASOR} 254 (1984): 21; Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, “Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology,” 274.}

Therefore, the centralization became all the more important from political, economic and socio-cultural perspective than just religious domain. Hence leaders left no stones unrolled to have a tight grip on this factor that could unite. This will ultimately lead to the accomplishment of the plan of the powerful.

\textbf{3.6.1. Solomon’s Temple and Rival Sanctuaries}

Before the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, there were central sanctuaries of the tribes at different places at different times.\footnote{116}{Refer to Sam P. Mathew, \textit{Temple-Criticism in Mark’s Gospel: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple during the First Century CE}, 22.} In the beginning of his reign, Solomon himself went to Gibeon to offer sacrifice (I Kings 3:4-5). There is evidence of the presence of other sanctuaries besides the central sanctuary of the tribes. The law of the tribal federation, the Book of the Covenant permits as many sanctuaries in the places where divine presence was recognised (Exodus 20:24-26).\footnote{117}{De Vaux, \textit{Ancient Israel}, 332.}

When Solomon’s Temple became the religious centre, this meant not only some centralisation of the cult but also political unity of the kingdom. The Temple was thought as an earthly copy of Yahweh’s heavenly palace and as his official seat as ‘king’.

Its building and dedication are given extensive treatment, ‘YHWH’s glory filled YHWH’s house’ was a replica of how the people experienced during the time
of Tabernacle (1 Kings 8:10-11).\textsuperscript{118}

In course of time, the Temple gave to Jerusalem the prestige of being God’s residence and city, the site of the cult and the Temple city.\textsuperscript{119} Jeroboam I, understood this very well and that is why when the political division took place, it was followed and perpetuated by religious schism. In order to stop people from going to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, which is also a display of loyalty to Davidic kingdom, Jeroboam I made two golden calves and set them up at Bethel (1 Kings 12:27, 28-30).\textsuperscript{120} But John Bright succinctly mentions that the book of Kings, which reflects the Jerusalem tradition, brands Jeroboam’s cult as idolatrous and apostate. In particular, the golden bulls Jeroboam set up at Bethel and Dan\textsuperscript{121} are said (1 Kings 12: 28) to have been idols. And people did offer their worship, but they were not designed as images of Yahweh (high gods were not represented zoomorphically by the ancient Semites), but as pedestals upon which the invisible Yahweh was conceived as standing enthroned. They were thus conceptually the equivalent of the cherubim (winged sphinxes) of the Jerusalem Temple. But though the bull symbol doubtless had a long history of usage in Israel, normative Yahwism rejected it because it was too closely associated with the fertility cult. John Bright opines, since many citizens of northern Israel were not very strongly Yahwehistic oriented, such a symbol was extremely dangerous, opening the way for a confusion of Yahweh and Baal, and for the importation of pagan features into the cult of the former.\textsuperscript{122}

3.6.2. Politics behind Jeroboam’s Building Sanctuaries

Jeroboam merely wanted to set up two rival sanctuaries to Jerusalem. He chose Dan and Bethel because they stood at the extremities of his kingdom (1 Kings 12:31-32). Moreover, whereas Dan was a sanctuary dating back to the period of the Judges and was served by the descendants of Moses. Bethel could trace back to Abraham and the Ark of the Covenant was watched over there by Aaron’s

\textsuperscript{119} Georg Fohrer, \textit{History of Israelite Religion}, 200.
\textsuperscript{120} De Vaux, \textit{Ancient Israel}, 333-334. The root cause of the religious schism, as we have already seen, is the economic exploitation of the people by Solomon, especially because of the building projects. Though Elijah, Jehu and Amos attacked paganism in Israel, they did not speak against the golden calves at Bethel. Nevertheless, the loyal Yahwists, like Ahiyaa, Hosea and the Deuteronomic redactor attacked it because of syncretism and idolatry (1 Kings 14:9; Hosea 5:6; cf. 10:5; 13:2; 1 Kings 12:32).
\textsuperscript{121} A 9\textsuperscript{th} BCE bronze plaque from Dan showing a deity (perhaps Ishtar) riding on a bull / ox. Courtesy Israel Exploration Society, A. Biran, “Two Bronze Plaques and the Hussot of Dan” in \textit{Israel Exploration Journal} 49 (1999): 54; Refer to Neal H. Walls (ed.), \textit{Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East}, xvii.
\textsuperscript{122} John Bright, A History of Israel, 234.
descendants (Judges 20:28).  

The king Jeroboam built the sanctuary at Bethel and he appointed priests and controlled the cult there.

There were other rival sanctuaries besides Dan and Bethel. It appears that everyone continued to attend the ‘high place’ of his/ her town. This is evident from the Book of King’s Deuteronomic redactor’s repeatedly refrained “the high places, which did not disappear.” Barrios points out that there are archaeological and extra-biblical evidence to suggest that Mamre-Hebron in Judah and Mount Carmel in northern Palestine were active centres of pilgrimage. The prophets accused the Israelites of still going to Beersheba (Amos 5: 5; 8:14) and to Gilgal (Hosea. 4:15; Amos 4: 4; 5: 5).

3.6.3. Reforms Aiming at Centralisation

Countryside shrines were abolished and the cult was centralized in the Jerusalem Temple, probably in an attempt to prevent the new immigrants from visiting the Bethel temple in their old homeland. Although Hezekiah, the king of Judah, suppressed the ‘high places’ (2 Kings 18:14), one of the most extensively discussed events in 2 Kings’ account of the reign of Hezekiah is his cult reform (2 Kings 18:3-4). Scholars have debated about the historicity of this description, some accepts it as reliable while others raise doubts or reject it


124 De Vaux, Ancient Israel, 335. G. A. Barrios, Jesus Christ and the Temple (New York: St. Vladamir’s Seminary, 1980), 74 –75

125 G. A. Barrios, Jesus Christ and the Temple (New York: St. Vladamir’s Seminary, 1980), 74 –75.


altogether.\textsuperscript{128} But, the archaeological findings at Arad, Beer-sheba and Lachish therefore seem to be consistent: all three present evidence for the existence of sanctuaries in the eighth century BCE, but in all three sites, the sanctuaries were dismantled or fell into disuse before the end of the eighth century. It is also noteworthy that none of the large number of seventh and early sixth-century sites excavated around Judah produced evidence for the existence of a sanctuary. In sum, these data provide strong evidence for the systematic removal of countryside sanctuaries in the late eighth century BCE.\textsuperscript{129}

King Hezekiah recommended Jerusalem as the only place of worship (2 Kings 18:22; Isaiah 36:7) in order to strengthen and unite the nation. His reforms did not last long because Manasseh his successor re-established the “high places” (2 Kings 21:3).\textsuperscript{130} Thus the whole process of centralisation of the cult at Jerusalem to a great extent was politically and spiritually motivated. In Chronicles, Hezekiah is portrayed as a second Solomon,\textsuperscript{131} mainly because all members of the nation—southerners and northerners alike—are called to worship in one Temple—in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{132} The Temple is the focus of the plan for the reunification of Israel.\textsuperscript{133} Thus, this could have been affirmed by the writers to show the royal dominance and ideology.\textsuperscript{134} The emphasis of the royal throne to have the people come to


\textsuperscript{129} Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, “Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology,” 269.

\textsuperscript{130} De Vaux, Ancient Israel, 336.


\textsuperscript{132} For a slightly different point of view, seeing Hezekiah as both a second David and a second Solomon, and interpreting this as a revival of the great United Monarchy ideology, see M. A. Throntveit, “The Relationship of Hezekiah to David and Solomon in the Books of Chronicles” in The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein, JSOTSupp 371, eds. M. P. Graham et al. (London: T and T Clark International, 2003): 105-121.


\textsuperscript{134} This may very well reflect the ideology of the Chronicler, mainly his attitude toward the North. R. L. Braun, “A Reconsideration of the Chronicler’s Attitude Toward the North” in JBL 96 (1977): 59-62; H. G. M. Williamson, Israel in the Books of Chronicles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 119-125; S. Japhet, The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989); Israel Finkelstein...
Jerusalem avoided many wrong practices that were prevalent in some local shrines. On the other hand, this made lot of disparity between the priests who ministered in the local shrines and the one ministering in the Jerusalem temple. To some extent, the priestly and the elite group domination and ideology were reflected with this historical move.

Josiah made a second attempt to centralise the cult at Jerusalem. He recalled to Jerusalem all the priests of Judah from Geba to Beersheba and suppressed all the local sanctuaries, i.e. the “high places” (2 Kings 23:5, 8-9), including the sanctuary at Bethel. De Vaux135 and Haran136 gave diverse views regarding this, Josiah’s reform also did not have lasting effect and we find the presence of foreign cult and rural sanctuaries after the death of Josiah in 609 BCE (Jeremiah 7:1-20; 13:17; Ezekiel 6:1-6, 13).137 However, Josiah’s reform succeeded because during the post-exilic period, the community had only one sanctuary, i.e. the rebuilt Temple at Jerusalem.

The archaeological evidence for the elimination of countryside shrines should be evaluated from socioeconomic and political—rather than strictly religious—perspectives, probably as part of an effort to centralize the state cult in the capital Jerusalem.138 Such a policy would have been aimed at strengthening the unifying elements of the state—the central authority of the king and the elite in the capital—and at weakening the old, somewhat autonomous, clan-based leadership in the countryside.139


135 Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 339. He maintains that Josianic suppression of ‘high places’ where Yahweh was worshipped and the centralisation of the clergy and cult at Jerusalem was evidently inspired by the ‘Book of law,’ i.e. the Book of Deuteronomy found in the Temple in 621 BCE (see Deuteronomy 12:1-12, 13-14). According to de Vaux, the Book of Deuteronomy was put together in some form or other under Hezekiah, but was forgotten, lost or hidden and discovered under Josiah.

136 M. Haran, Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School, 136. He observes, the political motivation of Josiah’s reform can be seen from the fact that in this reform a covenant was first made with Yahweh by the king and the people in the Temple court, before the Lord. Refer for more understanding to Ernest Nicholson, Deuteronomy and the Judaean Diaspora (Oxford: University Press, 2014), 16-40.

137 De Vaux, Ancient Israel, 337.


Even after the centralisation of the cult in Jerusalem some rival sanctuaries continued to exist. Thus, it is clear that the presence of rival sanctuaries to Jerusalem Temple shows opposition to the centralisation of the cult. This shows the resistance of the people and the priestly class (especially not belonging to the Zadokite priestly class) who wanted to breakthrough from the oppressive force of the dominant and oppressive ideology. Ernest Nicholson in his article “The Centralization of cult in Deuteronomy” presents some of the views on the origination of his dogma, also E. Meyers. King Hezekiah and his Jerusalem elite attempted to forge a sense of common identity among the diverse population of Judah in the late eighth century BCE: by focusing the new nation around the Jerusalem Temple and celebrating the early members of the Davidic dynasty as the founding Kings of All Israel. In order to remake the nation and strengthen the authority and prestige of the royal family, the Jerusalem court engaged in two ideological projects centered on the concepts of Temple and Dynasty. The king, his entourage and priestly allies eliminated the countryside shrines and centralized the cult in the Jerusalem Temple, weakening the legitimacy and religious authority of the rural aristocracy. At the same time, the Davidic court sponsored the authorship of the early ‘history’ of the Davidic dynasty, merging formerly conflicting southern and northern traditions into a

“Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology,” 274.

140 Ernest Nicholson, “The Centralization of cult in Deuteronomy” in VT 13 (1963): 380-389. Scholar like S.R. Driver sees it as a practical outcome of the teaching of the 8th century prophets and their condemnation of the high places. Bentzon proposed a theory that the centralization of the cult is an appeal by the rural priests of smaller local shrines. They suffered economic deprivation because of the monopoly of the large and important sanctuaries accumulating most of the offerings. This appeal claims these priests to be integrated in the worship at one central place.


This chapter to a great extent has depended on the initial chapter of Sam P. Mathew, Temple-Criticism in Mark’s Gospel: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple during the First Century CE (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999).


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single narrative of the United Monarchy of Israel under the dominant who were assumed to give the identity to others who were in the periphery.\footnote{Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, “Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology,” 279-280.}

This identity did not last much long. The false security on the Temple did not match well to the aspiration that the elite had. The prophets at different times and especially before and during the 8th BCE constantly confronted the people of the false security they had on the Temple, but the people gave a deaf ear. Finally, Jeremiah condemned their false security on the Temple as the place which will stand for ever. The book of Jeremiah gives the detail of the people of God before going into exile and also the destruction of the temple which is recollected in chapter 52. Jeremiah gives an extensive detail of the Babylonian exile. Hence the trauma faced by the people was very severe. Jeremiah opposed the notion of the rulers and people, ‘Whatever happens Jerusalem will be safe and protected.’ Jeremiah says in 7:1-4, do not trust in these deceptive words: “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord”. Jeremiah’s attack was not directed at the temple of the Lord itself. It was primarily directed at the deceptive theology hanging around the sacred institution. He did not pick up some ‘mini’ institutions in order to make his protest heard. He spoke of ‘the temple of the Lord,’ the greatest institution in the life of the covenant people.\footnote{Kosuke Koyama, Water Buffalo Theology (London: SCM Press, 1974), 188. The book of Jeremiah helped its first readers to face an unmitigated calamity and come to terms with new acts of God, see J. G. MacVonville, “Book of Jeremiah” in Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids / Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006): 355.} Therefore the interpretation from Jeremiah shows the intensity of the destruction.

3.7. Summary

The Temple in Israel had similar strings attached to the beliefs and practices of the people around the neighbouring nations, though it had its own distinctiveness. It was considered a place where the presence of the deity was experienced. The Temple, which David wanted to build but was built by Solomon, was to give a place to the Almighty to whom the universe belonged. Therefore the grandeur of the temple by Solomon came under strict criticism from many quarters because of the exploitative religious structure but at the same time some Prophets were very positive towards the Temple from the very beginning of its existence. The temple had politico-economic and socio-religious factors that played a vital role in the sphere of its working. The centralization of Jerusalem temple clearly affirms the fact that religion, economics and politics are the main domain for the kingly throne to function and in the course of time can become an oppressive factor. The centralization of the cult led to the disintegration of the
traditions which were held very dear. The elite and the ruling class twisted their actions for its own propaganda even at the cost of the people who were in the periphery because the scribe gave a religious tone to the activities of the ruling class. This created a great wedge between the aristocratic priestly class i.e. the Zadokite group who facilitated the royal ideology and the royal throne supported them because they complimented them. In this course, they dismantled all that acted as a threat to their oppressive ideologies. Hence, the sanctuaries that posed a threat were erased and people were left alone. The next chapter will highlight how these dreams and aspirations were shattered when the people had gone in exile and also when the temple was destroyed. The historical event shows how the powerful exerted their power over the less powerful. The Babylonian king made the kings of Judah and the elite to be at the receiving end, once they were taken into exile.
CHAPTER 4
THE ROLE OF BABYLONIAN EMPIRE
IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE
TEMPLE AND THE EXILIC
PROPHETIC RESPONSE FOR THE
REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

4.1. Introduction

Exile generally refers to the geographical displacement of a person or community from a homeland. Exile is a reality, whether chosen or forced. First and foremost, before any theological statement is made about exile, one must acknowledge that exile is the daily reality for millions of human beings in this 21st century. Barkan and Shelton define “exile connoted suffering, a negative term evoking displacement, refugee status, and above all the myth of an eventual, and possibly soon, return.” For the people of Israel 586 BCE catastrophe not only represented a major incentive for the burst of cultural nationalism and cultural creativity, but also of feelings of humiliation and embarrassment, xenophobia,

‘lost cause’ legends, ‘divine punishment’ themes and ‘stab-in-the-back’ myths, that arose during the exilic and post-exilic periods.4

Biblical history is constantly tossed to and fro between the different empires. After the Assyrian empire came the powerful Babylonian empire.5 The Assyrian empire is not dealt because it does not have much role to play with the destruction and rebuilding of the Second Temple. The Assyrians took the people of Northern kingdom i.e. Israel to Exile, but the southern kingdom, for instance Judah still survived. Despite the Judean kings were on the Davidic throne, larger world powers frequently intervened. Assyria besieged Jerusalem in 701 BCE and had a strong military presence in Judah in 679, 677, 674, 670, and 664 BCE.6 In subsequent years, Assyria posed less of a threat to Judah because it was engulfed by its own troubles. Later, when Assyria withdrew, Egypt filled the power vacuum, exercising some control over Judah for at least 635 to 610 BCE. (2 Kings 23:28-30). After 604, Babylonians had gained control and Judah’s kings were Babylonian vassals. In 587 BCE, Babylonia besieged Jerusalem (2 Kings 25). Jerusalem never gained its independence in the face of Babylonian might. Throughout this entire period i.e. the time from Samaria’s fall to the fall of Jerusalem, it existed as a vassal or a dominated ally of a large power, like Assyria, Egypt, or Babylonia.7

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The entity known as ‘the Babylonian Period’ and ‘the Persian Period’ has an extremely forceful influence on Old Testament scholarship. The measuring rod for discussing history and literature is always looked from the perspective of ‘pre-exilic’, ‘exilic’ and ‘postexilic’ times. The concept of ‘sin-exile-restoration’ has made a major impact on theological thinking, both in the Old Testament itself and in subsequent theological discussion.\(^8\) The researcher agrees with Peter Ackroyd,\(^9\) that the period of exile and restoration under the Babylonian and the Persians are so rich in thought within the Old Testament that it is difficult to do justice to one, without the other. Therefore, these two epochs of Old Testament time are combined, to get a wider picture and a try is made to emphasize the continuum within the Old Testament. The sixth and fifth centuries BCE were great time of atrocities by the Babylonian and Persian Empires. This period led the people of Judah to exile. Edward Said rightly stated that the, “Exile is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land and their past.”\(^10\) Exile is already in itself a form of dissidence, since it involves uprooting oneself from a family, a country or a language.\(^11\) People of Judah were traumatized, miserable, and overwhelmed; perhaps some assimilated and prospered.\(^12\) The tendency of the colonized to assimilate was very much visible during this period. John Bright opines that the land had been completely wrecked. Its cities destroyed, its economy ruined, its leading citizens killed or deported, the population consisted chiefly of poor peasants considered incapable of making trouble. He continues to unravel the intensity of the devastation, by stating that the disruption of the Judean society, in no way should be minimized, and he further asserts that the people who remained in the land were depopulated and they were helpless without their


\(^12\) Johanna Stiebert, The Exile and the Prophet’s Wife (Collegeville / Minneapolis: Liturgical, 2005), 20.
leaders to organize themselves or to follow true religion. This portrays that the Judean life was over. Although, there were inhabitants, there was no society in the Jerusalem area after 587 BCE.

The biblical text mentions that the Babylon “carried away all Jerusalem” (2 Kings 24:14a), but immediately mentions “no one remained, except the poorest people of the land” (2 Kings 24:14b cf. 2 Kings 25:12). Furthermore, the text asserts the continuing presence of local leadership, in the form of Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:17-18). The wider lens will help to understand the gravity of the Babylonian exile of the Jews and the time to return under the Persian rule. The next two chapters attempt to shed further light on some of the implications that resulted because of the Babylonian and Persian hegemonial atrocities in the Mediterranean world. The event of exile and return made a massive disruption in the lives of the people of God. The continued realities of living under the imperial atrocities affected their identity and the relationship among themselves which they cherished before this catastrophe happened. Hence it becomes very important to understand, what is “atrocity”? This will enable the chapter to develop the view point of the hegemony created by the Babylonians and the Persians.

4.1.1. What is Atrocity?

Atrocity has been denoted as an act of heinous wickedness; wanton cruelty. It is that which have the ingredients of infliction of suffering in one form or the other. ‘It is a fundamental human psychological limit that Kristeva refers to as ‘the abject’.

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It is an internal bodily experience of fear, horror and pain in which the very self is brutally confronted and threatened with the reality of its own extinction. Pain stands in at the limits of felt experience for death. Through pain, the voice of the victim is silenced because pain itself resists expression in language. While all violence threatens normative reality, atrocity—excessive violence—shakes the very foundations of both self and social existence. Atrocity is a traumatising violence because it leaves an inassimilable memory in the victim and exceeds cultural discourses of law or morality. This is very true with the people of God who had no say and the Babylon and the Persian empires were ‘the perpetrators of atrocities who were rewarded with access to political power.

The people of God had a foundation shaking experience of their self and social existence and also their pain silenced their expression to a great extent because of the atrocities of these empires. This was a time when lot of changes were happening in the world at large.

4.2. The changes in the world at large during this time

It has long been realized that the sixth century BCE was an epoch, in which a variety of important events took place, not only within the more limited field of Old Testament history, but also even within the confines of West Asian civilization, and throughout the world. It is the century of Confucius, of Zoroaster and of Buddha. It is also the century of the Ionian philosophers. For the biblical scholar it is the century of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Deutero-Isaiah and others, known by name or unknown, who contributed to the development of thought. Thus, this chapter in the end will deal with exilic and postexilic prophets and their prophecies. Professor D. Winton Thomas devotes almost the whole of his attention to the historical situation, both internal and external, and to the

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*Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma* (London, New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis groups, 2002), 1, 2.


18 Michael Hamphrey, *The politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma*, 1, 2, 3.


literature and thought which belong to the Old Testament context. He notes the significance of this for the Jews, Christians and the Muslims.

The biblical texts leave the researcher in no doubt about the horror that deportation created in the lives of the people of God. The theological issue was immense and much of the exilic and postexilic biblical material grapples with the implications.  

4.3. Biblical and Archaeological Sources for the exilic period

Surprisingly, the Bible does not give us an extended description or narrative of the exile itself. A number of texts (2 Kings. 25:1-21; 2 Chronicles 36:15-21; Jeremiah 39) record the fall of Jerusalem, but we only receive glimpses of the period between the fall of Jerusalem and Cyrus’s decree that allowed Jews to return to Palestine to rebuild the temple (2 Chronicles 36:22-23). Of such, pride of place goes to Lamentations, a poetic response to the destruction of Jerusalem. We also hear some stories set in the early exilic period about those who remain in the land, particularly events surrounding the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah chapters 40-44). Other stories purport to describe events that take place in the land of exile in this period (Daniel chapters 1-5, and Ezekiel prophesies to those who were carried off to the land of Babylon beginning in 597 BCE. Habakkuk proclaims, “I am raising up the Babylonians” (1: 6). Obadiah too may find its setting in the turmoil that follows the destruction of Jerusalem. Of course, opinions vary widely about the use of these books as historical sources. But, one thing is clear that the Babylonian exile had a significant impact on the development of

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23 This point is also made by J. G. McConville, “Faces of Exile in Old Testament Historiography” in Israel's Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography, ed. V. P. Long, SBTS 7 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999): 527.
Israelite religion and on the formation of prophetic literature.\textsuperscript{26} This is particularly true in the case of the formation of prophetic literature. As T. Raitt remarks, “It is not simply the case that prophetic theology explained the exile, but also, the Exile explains prophetic theology.”\textsuperscript{27} M. Fishbane has further seen how the earlier traditions were utilized and reworked in order to respond to the crises experienced by the exile.\textsuperscript{28}

Some archaeological evidence is available for the reconstruction of this period of time. Williamson reports that the evidences show “widespread destruction of major towns in Judah to the south of Jerusalem (e.g., Lachish, Azekah, Ramat, Rahel, Arad), but of greater continuity (or reestablishment) of habitation to the north, in the territory of Benjamin (Bethel, Gibeon. Tell el-Ful, and Mizpah, the probable site of Babylonian administration).”\textsuperscript{29} McNutt adds that the gravel found in the Hinnom valley indicates that some people remained in the vicinity of Jerusalem during the exile.\textsuperscript{30} Extra biblical texts pertaining to the rise and fall of the neo-Babylonian period like the Babylonian Chronicle\textsuperscript{31} and the


\textsuperscript{28} Michael Fishbane, \textit{Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 408-419; Michael A. Lyons, \textit{From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel’s use of the Holiness Code}, LHBOTS 507 (New York: T and T Clark, 2009), 147. In other defeated societies the idea of ‘divine punishment’ proliferates, a strong notion that the people had forgotten God in favor of arrogance and materialism, hence the divine retribution. For instance, many Protestants in post-World War I Germany, following a ‘war theology’ that viewed Germany as ‘God’s favored nation,’ chose to believe that the cause of the national downfall was that the people had failed God in favor of materialism, and that consequently God had punished Germany with defeat, refer to Richard Steigmann-Gall, \textit{The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15-16; Juan Manuel Tebes, “The Edomite Involvement in the Destruction of the First Temple: A Case of Stab-in-the-Back Tradition?,” 236.


Nabonidus Chronicle—are relevant. From these texts, one can find a Mesopotamian perspective on the period. The limitedness of biblical and archeological evidences, not to speak of extra biblical textual evidences makes reconstruction of the period difficult.

4.4. The fall of Jerusalem

Kosuke Koyama very beautifully compares the Promised Land that was situated between two imperial powers. He uses a Thai image; the Promised Land was situated ‘between a crocodile and a tiger’. The crocodile of the North (Assyria and Babylonia) and the tiger of the South (Egypt) were constant threat to the people of the covenant living in the tiny land corridor. The Assyrian Sargon II destroyed Samaria in 721 BCE. Then Judah was immediately exposed to the threat from the North. She was thrown into the international power struggle, a game of treacherous military alliances and turncoat politics. In the complicated international situation, Pharaoh Necho came to help Assyria (Egypt’s traditional enemy!) against the rising Babylonian power. The great king Josiah, gambling his lot with the Babylonians, tried to stop the army of Neco at Megiddo and lost his life! The horizon was getting darker and darker for Judah. Kurt Galling refers to “an unprecedented rearrangement of circumstances” in the second half of the sixth century.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon had to deal with what one might call the "Jerusalem problem." His interim solution, in 597 BCE, was to cart Jehoiachin off to Babylon in chains and to place a new king—"a king of his liking" as the Babylonian Chronicle refers to him—on the throne. He is identified in 2 Kings

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33 Iain Provan et al., *A Biblical History of Israel*, 278-279.
24:17ff as Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah, who was given the new name Zedekiah (cf. also Jeremiah 37:1; 2 Chronicles 36:10ff.). Nebuchadnezzar's strategy in thus keeping a Davidic descendant on the throne was apparently to try to control Judah through puppet kings.

Jeremiah 51:59 tells us, indeed, of a journey by Zedekiah to Babylon. At some point in the next few years, however, Judah did in fact rebel against Babylon, Zedekiah stopped paying tribute, and a new siege of Jerusalem followed (2 Kings 25:11f.; Jeremiah 52:4 ff.), which was temporarily lifted when the new pharaoh Apries (589-570 BCE) sent an army into Palestine. The siege resumed when the Egyptian army withdrew. The city eventually fell in 587 or 586 BCE after two years, with all supplies of food exhausted. This time

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38 Second Chronicles 36:10 identifies Zedekiah, however, as the brother of Jehoiachin. 1 Chronicles 3:15-16 reports that Jehoiachin had both a brother and an uncle named Zedekiah, and it has been suggested that the two have simply become confused here, which seems unlikely, however, when both are obviously known to the authors and one is so clearly indicated in source texts that they knew (Kings and Jeremiah). Another possibility is simply that “brother” is being used somewhat loosely here in the sense of “relative”. Morton Smith mentions, that the homiletical material, which now fills much of Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and is scattered through all the prophets. These literary developments must have had a basis in satisfactory social and economic adjustments. At least one group of the Yahweh-alone party, that represented by Jeremiah, had been strongly pro-Babylonian. It doubtless won many converts after the Babylonian triumph, which could be represented as proof of its prophecies. The Babylonians were aware of its propaganda on their behalf and protected its members, for example Gedaliah and Jeremiah, Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that shaped the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 77. Refer, also for more glimpse of Jeremiah’s asking the people to remain submissive and some good things happening to Alain Epp Weaver, *States of Exile: Visions of Diaspora, Witness, and Return* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 2008), 42.

39 According to Josephus (Ant. 10.108-115), King Zedekiah began to favor the Egyptians in his ninth year. According to E. von Voigtlander, “A Survey of Neo-Babylonian History” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1963), 112, Zedekiah “yielding to foolish counsels decided to break his agreement with Babylon and to omit or perhaps reduce, the amount of the yearly tribute”.

40 Jeremiah 34: 6-7 indicates that Nebuchadnezzar assaulted other Judean cities. The Lachish Ostraca, J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 321, 322, illustrates the life in one of the cities mentioned here prior to the Babylonian assault.

41 See Jeremiah 37:1-10.

Nebuchadnezzar determined to exercise a more radical solution to the Jerusalem problem. Zedekiah managed to escape by night when the defeat was imminent and fled in the direction of Transjordan. He was overtaken by the Babylonians near Jericho, however. His sons were executed, and he himself was blinded and deported to Babylon, never to be heard of again. Nebuchadnezzar then ordered the systematic destruction of the city that included such prominent buildings as the temple and palace (2 Kings 25:8-10). He also tore down the city defenses, most significantly its walls. Further executions occurred and Nebuchadnezzar exiled many of Judah’s leading citizens to Babylon.43 The exact scope of this exile and its nature are debated.44

4.5. The term “Exile”

One can be in exile without ever leaving the land. The experience of geographical exile is a rich and resilient paradigm for a complex set of experiences of loss, rejection and new beginnings. "Displacement often leads to a sudden onslaught of dominant values threatening the very basis of the cultural identity of the exiled community, because culture which is rooted in a particular place cannot be easily ‘reconstructed’ in another place. Resettlement after displacement not only relocates groups / communities in space, it also remakes them. Often the community is reconfigured in certain ways and the local culture is pressed to change as it gets linked to regional and national market systems."45 Schuller propose the metaphor of exile, and it has a threefold dynamics: there is great upheaval and loss of what was existing, the disorientation and uncertainty of a

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43 The distress of this period appears to be reflected in the prophecy of Obadiah, which suggests in particular (along with other biblical texts) that Edom was able to exploit the situation to its own gain. Refer to Catherine Hezser, “Diaspora and Rabbinic Judaism” in The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies, eds. J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (Oxford: University Press, 2006): 120-134.

44 Refer to Iain Provan et al., A Biblical History of Israel, 280.

new situation which leads to uproot from traditional support systems that were existing before the exile; and there is some element of hope for a restoration.46

4.6. Questioning the Exile

4.6.1. Scholar’s Opinion about the reality of Exile

In keeping with a general skepticism concerning the history of ancient Israel, some discussions concerning the exile, have taken place. Virtually, every scholar is willing to agree that some traumatic event happened to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the sixth century, but they now question the extent of the trauma. There has been no unanimous agreement about the impact of Babylonian exile among the scholars. The scholars are left at bay, because the situation is not depicted elaborately in the Bible and if it was a severe impact it would have been elaborately portrayed.47 Furthermore, Scott is of the opinion that “resistance”

47 C. C. Torrey in 1910 questioned the exile, he commented that the exile “which was in reality a small and relatively insignificant affair, has been made, partly through mistake and partly by the compulsion of a theory, to play a very important part in the history of the Old Testament”, C. C. Torrey, “The Exile and the Restoration” in Ezra Studies (New York: Ktav publishing house, 1970): 285ff. See also Hans M. Barstad, The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the ‘Exilic’ Period, Symbolae osloenses 28 (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), 21-23. W. F. Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), 141f; W. F. Albright, Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1932), 171. Cf. Peter R. Ackroyd, Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC, 22. Furthermore, B. Becking argues, the fact that some evidence exists outside the Bible for the exile should lead one to give the presumption of veracity to other aspects of the biblical record that are not yet directly supported. Those contemporary scholars who question the status of the exile look back to C. C. Torrey as a father figure. Torrey had questioned the exile, but his views were overwhelmed by the wave of historical optimism that W. F. Albright and his followers represented (See his “The Exile and the Restoration,” 285-340. Secondly, in 1977 in the influential historiography of ancient Israel edited by John Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, Herbert Donner writes: “It is easy ... to overemphasize the drastic and debilitating consequences of the fall of Jerusalem and the triumph of Babylonian forces. Various aspects of life certainly were greatly modified, but Babylonian policy was not altogether oppressive. The exiles were not forced to live in inhuman conditions ... [and] remained free and certainly should not be understood as slaves. They would have been under no overt pressure to assimilate and lose their identities.” J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes (eds.), Israelite and Judean History (London: SCM press, 1977), 421, 433. Thirdly, there are scholars who do not completely negate the crisis as there are ample of evidences in the Scripture. Christopher quotes Norman Gottwald, who is not very confident of the understanding of the exile. His in-
depth study on the Book of Lamentations argues that the pain behind the lamenting poetry is worth noting. The events that took place from 597 to 538 BCE was something that made a long lasting scare on the succeeding generations. Israelite religion faced the severest test in the sixth century ca. BCE, Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, A Biblical Theology of Exile: Overtures to Biblical Theology, 31. Refer to Norman K. Gottwald, Studies in the Book of Lamentations, 19. This view had some shift in his thought as he argues that the most important factors of the exilic community, was the assigning of the “higher class” status, Norman K. Gottwald, The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 418-439. Fourthly, this mixed opinion was even evident for some time. An excellent indication of this is the ambiguity in John Bright’s thinking. On the one hand, Bright would write: “Although we should not belittle the hardships and the humiliation that these exiles endured, their lot does not seem to have been unduly severe”; and yet two pages later he writes: “When one considers the magnitude of the calamity that overtook her, one marvels that Israel was not sucked down into the vortex of history along with the other little nations of western Asia”, refer to John Bright, History of Israel, 3rd edn. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 345, 347.


Peter Ackroyd’s work is one of the major analyses of the exile. But even this work, which dealt with the exile as its main subject of investigation, reflected an ambiguity about the actual conditions of exile. In his assessment of the conditions of the exiles in Babylon, for example, Ackroyd writes that indications “are of reasonable freedom, of settlement in communities—perhaps engaged in work for the Babylonians, but possibly simply engaged in normal agricultural life- of the possibility of marriage, of the ordering of their own affairs, of relative prosperity”, Peter R. Ackroyd, Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C., 1-16, 32. Yet, a few lines later, Ackroyd also recognizes that the “uncongenial nature” of the situation should not be “understated”. Bustenay Obed is of the opinion that the exiles were “certainly put to forced labor…[but] it is highly unlikely that they were assigned the status of imperial slaves in perpetuity or that they were conscripted permanently to hard labor. The status of the slaves is mentioned in the Murashu documents, Oded, “Observations on the Israelite / Judean Exiles in Mesopotamia during the Eighth-Sixth Centuries BC” in Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East, Festschrift E. Lipinski, eds. K. van Lerberghe and A. Schoors (Leuven: Peeters, 1995): 209; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, A Biblical Theology of Exile: Overtures to Biblical Theology, 32.

Are we dealing with a historical event or an example of virtual reality? Did real people from Judah go to Babylon into exile, only later to return and rebuild their temple and nation? Or are we dealing with a theological and literary concept which served the needs of oppressed Jews, religious leaders, preachers, storytellers, theologians and writers, but was created by them from whole cloth—or at least, from some rather large off-cuts? These issues were some
rarely takes from of outright revolution or opens warfare in history, and to assess resistance only by these rarely effective events is to misconstrue the nature of human response to oppression and suppression. However many scholars may try to prove that the exile is a reflection of myth, but on the other hand, there are historical events and archaeological evidences attesting to the fact that this was a reality.

With these initial references of the scholars view about the exile, this chapter tries to venture and deal this episode in the history of God’s people reflecting the atrocities of the empire of that time.

4.7. The situation in the Babylonian Golah

Life was quite different for the Jews whom Babylonian deported. It represented a highly significant change in the pattern of their daily existence from the lives they had known in Jerusalem and environs. For those who were deported, the downfall of the state of Judah meant a deep social uprooting. The exiles understood that their hopes were not met and they took Jeremiah’s advice (Jeremiah 29) and slowly became integrated into Babylonian society without giving up much of their ethnic or religious identity. Though the Babylonian policy was congenial but their separation from land, temple, kingship and their hurt was beyond cure.

The Babylonian policy of settling the prisoners of war from individual countries as closed groups and granting them crown land eased the pain of the exiles to some extent. “2 Kings 25 depicts that the king and the officials were deported to the imperial palace in Babylon. Thus it seems that some of the exiles lived in the capital and were involved in governmental activity, whereas others were primarily involved in agricultural tasks and rural service.” In the light of typical imperial tendencies and goals in deportations, such a division of the exilic population makes sense. Imperial policies tend to involve the acquisition of labor forces subjugated into the areas of imperial need. In 587 BCE, the Babylonian

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Empire’s greatest need reflected their expansionist policies; government and food. Those exiles from Judah with governmental experience (including temple service) would have worked within the Babylonian palace and temple system. The empire would have sent other exiles to new fields, where they could organize themselves in any way possible so long as they produced enough food to pay their in-kind taxes. This parallels the two groups attested in the Hebrew Bible.

Both palace and temple needed experts in bureaucratic, imperial functioning as well as persons with foreign experience. The Jewish exiles, who had worked within the government before, as well as those with priestly experience, would have met this imperial need. Other Jewish governmental officials would have served similar functions in other levels of the bureaucracy. For instance, the ancient world had such a low literacy rates that any person who could write were held high. Perhaps Judah’s scribes found attractive the inclusion of trained personnel.53

An important source of temple revenue was the tithe. It was collected from all the representatives of the free population: agricultural labourers, shepherds, gardeners, artisans, priests and officials of all ranks, including governors. The king also paid the tithe to all important temples in the country at the same time. Everybody else paid the tithe to the temple near which they possessed land or other sources of income. It was paid on gardens and fields, on the increase of cattle, on the yield of wool, and so on. In most cases it was paid in the form of barley and dates, but quite often in silver, sesame, wool, clothing, cattle, fish, or artefacts.

The king paid partly in gold. The tithe represented more or less a tenth part of the payer’s income, though the king’s tithe was relatively smaller. The structure of temple management is best known from data contained in the archive of Eanna. The senior administration of this sanctuary consisted of the king’s governor (be / temi) in Uruk, the estate manager of the temple (qepu), the head of the temple’s administrative council (satammu), and ‘Eanna’s scribe.’ The last three managed the temple’s estates, supervised the temple slaves, and organized the allocation of the temple revenues to various purposes. Thus their functions were of an administrative, not religious character. All the higher temple functionaries, except the governor of the city who was appointed by the king, were elected from among the citizens. A more or less similar system prevailed in other important temples in the country.54

53 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach, 16.
54 M. A. Dandamaev, “Neo-Babylonian Society and Economy” in The Cambridge ancient History: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and other States of the Near East, from the
The exiles from Judah were stationed in the area of Nippur. Perhaps they also formed associations (hatru), which were given crown land to work by the Babylonian state and paid for it by doing state service. They lived in the locations in families (Ezra 2:59) or according to professional groups (Ezra 8:17); here Levites, priests and other former temple officials—despite their lack of function formed their own groups (Ezra 2:36ff.). Alongside priests and prophets, elders took over functions of leadership (Jeremiah 29:1; Ezekiel 7:1; 14:1; 20:1) and perhaps were even able to build up limited communal self-government.

In the rural areas, Babylonia’s interest was the increase of food production. Imperial strategy involved the intensification of core agriculture rather than dependence on colonial food sources. As part of this strategy, Babylonia had been opening more of its land for production. The empire may not have farmed the area between Tigris and Euphrates rivers before the early sixth century. This dry area required extensive irrigation for proper growing, and so it proved to be a more expensive project than agriculture nearer to the main rivers. At some point of time, the Babylonian Empire contributed the labour to provide the irrigation and then transplanted the exiled population in the newly irrigated region in order to farm the land and bring it into production. This intensification of the land both supported and required expansionist imperial policies. Since the rural exiles were less vulnerable to the acculturation to the Babylonian practices as they lived in their own or semiautonomous communities when compared to the urban exiles. The urban exiles might have continued in roughly the same line of work, but now the rural exiles had become farmers though they were not before the exile. Since all were from the elite class none of them were involved with food production in their Judean lives. Hence, the rural life experienced a greater change.55

However, Babylonia did require intensification, and the rural exiles may have experienced extreme taxation in order to maximize Babylonian’s profit. Even though these exiles were farming in the middle of Mesopotamian fertility or practicing their trades within the world capital, all of the exiles experienced a severe discontinuity with their pasts.56 The term slavery can be defined as: “The slave begins as a social outsider and undergoes a process of becoming some kind of insider. A person stripped of his previous social identity is put at the margins of

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a new social group and is given a new social identity within it.\textsuperscript{57} Such a removal of identity has also been described as 'social death', and this choice of metaphor seems appropriate to the exiles since it is given graphic representation in Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones (37:1-14).\textsuperscript{58} The destruction and recreation of identity also fits well with the policy of changing names of Mattaniah / Zedekiah cf. Daniel 1:6-7.\textsuperscript{59}

The exiles suffered the forced migration under the Empire. Whatever the advantages or benefits the exiled community received, nothing could compensate the magnanimity of the atrocity that they faced i.e. the uprooting experiences from their own land. In ancient Israel, land was important as it gave the Israelites security, identity and dignity.\textsuperscript{60} Thus the people of God were ransacked of these privileges by the Babylonian atrocities they assimilated and at the same time made a mimic of the Empire.

\textbf{4.8. People Left Behind}

Today, majority of scholars apparently do not believe anymore that life in Judah ceased to exist completely during the “Exilic period”.\textsuperscript{61} Obed, Ackroyd, Hermann, Soggin, Millers

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{59} Andrew Mein, Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile, 70. As Smith writes: ‘Both the policy of name changing and constant reassurances by the prophets that it was Yahweh who willed the exile and not the power of foreign gods, seem to reflect an awareness of the symbols of power that the exiles had to live with and struggle against. The Babylonian exiles may not have been slaves, but evidences suggest they were most assuredly in this continuum i.e. continuum of domination.’ He argues: In sum, exile was a punishing experience, more effective than any symbol left in the homeland, which unavoidably reminded Jews that they were conquered. D. L. Smith. The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile, 31-41
\textsuperscript{60} K. Jesurathnam, “Foreward” in Struggle for Land Rights in 1Kings 2, by Jeeva Kumar Ravela, (Delhi: ISPCK, 2012), xiii.
\textsuperscript{61} But there is other evidence supporting Noth’s contention that exilic Judah would have remained as a thriving religious community: Ezekiel 33: 23-29 speaks of a group of Judahites who use their having survived the fate of deportation as grounds for making land claims; Zechariah 7:1-7 reports that the people of the land and the priests have been fasting and mourning in the fifth month and the seventh month throughout the period of exile; the deportation numbers supplied by the Bible are relatively small; and archaeology has confirmed that all of the villages of northern Judah and Benjamin were in existence during the exile. E. Stern, The Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538-332
\end{footnotesize}
and Hayes, Ahlstrom, Gottwald, Albertz, all believe that life must have gone on in Palestine also after 586. Not only that, there are traces of worship believed to have taken place. The eighty members of the Northern delegation were on their way to make an offering of cereal and incense at a sanctuary of Yahweh (Jeremiah 41:4-5). All the sources agree that the Babylonians left some of the people in the land, typically described as the “poorest of the land” (2 Kings. 25:12; Jeremiah 39:10; 52:16). To watch over these people, Nebuchadnezzar placed a garrison of troops in Jerusalem and appointed a native (non-Davidic) Judaean leader named Gedaliah perhaps the same Gedaliah whose name has been discovered on two bullae. There seems to be the presence of low-level Babylonian imperial administration.

In the economic arena, the rural inhabitants of Judah would still need trade in similar amounts as during the monarchy. Without a centralized Jerusalem government and merchant elite to manage such trade, it may well have been more haphazard, unless the Babylonian administration helped by intervening. Trade continued but at a low profile. Thus, in political, economic, social and religious arenas, the exile had made a steep impact and severe changes were made.

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64 Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Judaean Priesthood during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: A Hypothetical Reconstruction,” 25, 26; D. R. Jones, “The Cessation of Sacrifice after the Destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.” in JTS 14 (1963): 12-31 points out that the eighty-member delegation came prepared for cereal and incense offerings but not for animal sacrifice, and he cites cultic practice at Elephantine in support of the view that animal sacrifice was discontinued between the destruction of the first temple and the building of the second.

65 Gedaliah was apparently the grandson of King Josiah’s secretary Shaphan (2 Kings 22:3-14). Precisely what position he held under the watchful eye of the Babylonian officials is unclear, since the word “governor” that appears in many translations of 2 Kings 25:22-24 in association with his name is not found in the Hebrew texts; quite possibly the Babylonians (if not the biblical authors) regarded him as a king.


67 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach, 17.

68 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach, 18.
4.9. The people in the Egyptian Golah

The Egyptian exiles could have undergone ‘cognitive dissonance.’ Concerning the Egyptian golah in the sixth century BCE we have only the scanty information in Jeremiah 43:7–44:30 and also Deuteronomistic text seems to be interested primarily in theological questions. After the murder of Gedaliah, a group of Judeans fearing Babylonian retribution decided to immigrate to Egypt. They were following a common trend. During the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty (672–525 BCE), with the encouragement of the Egyptian authorities, a great number of foreigners (Greeks, Carites, Syrians, and Phoenicians) entered Egypt, where they made their living primarily as mercenaries and merchants. Thus the band of refugees in the early exilic period had reason to hope for a good chance to survive in Egypt, especially since most of them were soldiers. According to Jeremiah 43:7–8, the group settled in Tahpanhes (Greek Daphnae), in Lower Egypt; according to Jeremiah 44:1, there were already Judeans living at Migdol, Noph (Memphis), and in the land of Pathros, that is, Upper Egypt. This means that the Egyptian golah was connected only in part with the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar; Judeans had immigrated to Egypt previously for various reasons. The most important evidence is their construction of their own Yahweh temple at Elephantine, built even before the invasion of Egypt by the Persian king Cambyses in 525 BCE. Possibly it was founded as early as the Babylonian period. It is said that the Jews lost their identity and therefore had little use for the theological renewal of Yahwism and was therefore judged extremely negatively by the proponents of

70 Eliya Mohol, “Prophetic and Popular Responses to Religious Pluralism in Jeremiah 44” in *Union Biblical Seminary Journal* 6. 2 (September, 2009): 48, 49. They were shattered by sequential disasters: ‘sword and famine’ (44: 18), an unsettled life and finally exiled to Egypt. The aftermath of exile and the final exile to Egypt also shattered them. It was a forceful exile, which they were compelled to take after the death of the governor Gedaliah (43:5). They were into worship of the queen and remarked that they had plenty of resources and no misfortune (v. 17b). Sometime the technique of argument form experience can remain indifferent to the theological ideology. Twice the Egyptian exiles betray symptoms of cognitive dissonance, firstly, they approached the prophet for inquiry (42:1-6), and they failed to obey Yahweh when their plans of going to Egypt did not match with Yahweh's directions. Secondly, they asserted that they faced disaster on account of abandoning the queen worship. Thus, theological consideration can scarcely be uppermost in the mind of the people suffering from cognitive dissonance.
71 Astonishingly, very few Jewish names have appeared in the papyri from Saqqara (Persian period); see J. B. Segal, *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqâra with Some Fragments in Phoenician* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1983), 8–9, 66–67, 77–78. See also Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, 96-97.
this renewal (Jeremiah 24:8; 44). Thus the Egyptian Golah is one of the examples of the Babylonian or colonial atrocity that made the people to have forcefully been pulled out because of the fear that had gripped in the hearts of God’s people.

The second part of this chapter deals with the Biblical texts that deal with the destruction of the temple and the role of the empire. It becomes all the more important to understand the intensity of the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonian Empire, if one has to understand the rebuilding of the Temple during the Persian Empire. The passages dealt will help in understanding the inter / intra cultural factors responsible during this time from the economic-political and religious-social strands of the empires.

4. 10. Interpretation

The best windows that one can have on the Babylonian exile in the Bible are the books of Jeremiah, Second Isaiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah and the initial chapters of the book of Ezekiel could be seen as portraying the early time of the exile and the latter part of Ezekiel chapters 40-48 give the blueprint of the Rebuilding of the Temple and also the Second Isaiah portrays about the end of exile. Jeremiah sees that there is nothing here of Realpolitik or of Babylonian expansionism. The root cause of destruction is Yahweh’s Sovereign decision to abandon Judah to its own chosen destruction because they have become unreliable, unresponsive, disobedient covenant partner to Yahweh. He expresses with the imagery of Yahweh as the affronted husband and Israel as the faithless wife Jeremiah 2:2-3, 5, 13, 17, 19; 3:1-5, hopelessness of Israel’s sickness 8:21-22, cf. 30:12-13. He mentions of the enemy 1:14; 4:13-18. Alongside the book of Jeremiah, the book of Ezekiel is the second great document of the destruction in the face of Yahweh’s judgement that is going to come. As the book of Jeremiah concerns the twin themes of “pluck up and tear down, plant and build” (1:1), so also the book of Ezekiel has the theme “of scatter and gather” (11: 17 cf. Jeremiah 10). Both articulate a “two stage” notion of Judah’s history in the 6th century. First collapse or scattering from the land into Exile is seen in Ezekiel chapters 1-24 and

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72 Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, 96-98.


74 Ka Leung Wong, “Profanation / Sanctification and the Past, Present and Future of Israel in the Book of Ezekiel” in *JSOT* 28.2 (2003): 9-31. He says that it must be noted that the land plays a key role in this profanation/sanctification (this distinction between the profane and
second, restoration chapters 25-48. Both are informed by different theological memories perspective. They are twin efforts to imagine the deep crisis of Judah through different lenses, one through a Mosaic-covenantal accent upon obedience and covenantal sanctions and the other through a priestly-sacerdotal accent upon holiness and purity.\(^75\) Jeremiah is constantly alert as a watchman and passionate as a reformer, uncompromising and aligned with the justice of God.\(^76\) Thus these prophets spoke of the coming judgement of God. The book of Jeremiah recollects the complete destruction of the Temple once the people are taken into exile and the passage from Jeremiah 52 is dealt in the succeeding pages and text about Cyrus is presented from the Book of Isaiah.


4.10.1.1. Translation

13 He burned the house of the LORD, the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem;\(^a\) every great\(^b\) house he burned\(^a\) down.

14 And all the walls around Jerusalem were broken or pulled down by all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard.

15 From the poorest of the people and the rest of the people who were left in the city and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the artisans, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard led them into exile.

16 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left\(^a\) some of the poor people of the land\(^a\) to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil.

17 The pillars of bronze that were in the house of the LORD, and the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried all the bronze to Babylon.

18 \(^a\)They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the basins, the ladles, and all the vessels of bronze used in the temple service.

sacred has to be noted. It is made explicitly three times in the MT, two of which are found in Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23 and one in Leviticus (10:10), see also Ezekiel 42:20 interaction. It is the duty of the priest to distinguish between the profane and the sacred. This is a concerned feature prominently made in Ezekiel. The profanation of Yahweh’s name due to the condition of Israel as seen in its being in the foreign land is opposed to Yahweh’s self-sanctification in renewing the condition of Israel as seen in its being restored to its own land.

\(^75\) Bruce C. Birch et al., A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament, 2\(^{nd}\) edn. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 337-348.

The captain of the guard took away the small bowls also, the firepans, the basins, the pots, the lampstands, the ladles, and the bowls for libation, both those of gold and those of silver.

4.10.1.2. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

13a-a. BHS suggests this phrase is a possible addition.

13b. Read “every great house” with LXX and 2 Kings 25:9, instead of “every house of significant person(s)” as in MT; the difference is determined by the presence of the definite article in MT. “The words look like a gloss qualifying ‘every house in Jerusalem’. But one appreciates that even if the Chaldeans intentionally set fire only to important buildings, the flames would quickly have spread to the whole city.”

The v.13 is intensified by starting from the house of the Lord, king’s house and the houses of the Jerusalem. א appears at least four times to show the destruction.

16a-a. LXX has “the remnant of the people” for MT “some of the poor of the land.” The researcher feel the LXX usage, affirms the new identity the oppressed people got. It upgraded the degraded life they experienced during the tenure of oppressive structures before exile.

18a. The various items used in temple worship that are listed as plunder taken by the Babylonians pose many textual problems. MT and LXX differ in the items listed. “The text of vv. 18 and 19 is longer than in LXX or 2 Kings 25: 14, 15.”

19a. LXX has τὰ σαφφωθ which BHS suggests it be read as תופסה “the basins.” Both masc. and fem. endings appear for this word. The meaning is simply “basin,” “bowl”. There is a degree of uncertainty about the exact size of the bowls referred here.

History is the best expositor of prophecy; and therefore, the destruction of Jerusalem is repeated and put together, to give light to the book of the Lamentations, which follows next, and to serve as a key to it. The book ends in exile. Suspended between a bleak past and an unpredictable future, the people of YHWH live in a present devoid of light.

Jeremiah 52 can be divided into four sections: The fall of the city and capture of Zedekiah (vv. 1-16), the sacking of the temple (vv. 17-23), the numbers deported to Babylon (vv. 24-30), and the release of Jehoiachin from prison (vv. 31-34). The prose editor of the book of book of Jeremiah used a text which was most probably written while Jehoiachin was still living and thus the object of considerable hope in the defeated city of Jerusalem. This chapter functions as an appendix to the book of Jeremiah. It is slightly modified version of 2 Kings 24:18-25:30, "with the exception of 25:22-26, which is the story of Gedaliah’s assassination," recounting in summary fashion the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, the looting of the Temple, the execution of some of the leaders, and the exile of many leaders, and the exile of many Judeans. Jeremiah had reiterated many times that Jerusalem would be destroyed and Judah sent to exile, and

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84 The extensive destruction by the powerful colonial power on the powerless was seen not only in Jerusalem, but also in other cities. This feeling of powerlessness, continued even in exile, Alison Schofield, “Exile” in The Eerdman Dictionary of Early Judaism, 615. We know from archaeology, for example, that, in addition to Jerusalem, the Babylonians also destroyed Lachish, Tell Zakariya (Azekah), Eglon, Tell Beth Mirsim, Tell el-Ful, Beth Zur, Ramat Rachel, Beth-Sheremesh, Bethel, Arad, Bin Gedi and others’, B. Oded, “Judah and the Exile” in Israelite and Judean History, eds. J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (Philadelphia: Westminster Press): 475. Refer to Brooks Schramm, The Opponents of Third Isaiah Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration, 54.
things happened as he had foretold. Brevard S. Childs uses the Hebrew word רעש (shake) relating to chaos in the end of the era, this is found very true in this chapter and hence the few verses are dealt in to see the exploitation of the powerful over the powerless. The exploitation was a massive one, which destroyed the identity of the colonized. The account concludes with a report of king Jehoiachin’s release from prison so that he would sit at table with the king of Babylon. “In the release, the first sign of hope for the future was given, within the life of the colonized in Babylon.” This is possible, but not in itself a firm indicator of hope. This offers a detailed account about the items taken from the Temple, enumerating the exiles taken to Babylon during three different deportations (in ca. 598, 587, and an otherwise unknown one in 583 / 582 BCE).

4.10.1.3. Explanation

Verses 12-22 are almost identical with 2 Kings 25:8-17. It describes the systematic destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. V.12 mentions about Nebuzaradan’s entry into Jerusalem on the tenth day of the fifth month (August) of Nebuchadnezzar’s nineteenth year as Babylon’s ruler. Nebuzaradan’s entry was remembered in later Judaism by a fast day (Zechariah 7:3; 8:18).

91 David L. Petersen, Introduction to Prophetic Literature; Isaiah; Jeremiah; Baruch; Letter of Jeremiah; Lamentations; Ezekiel: The New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. VI (USA: Abingdon Press, 2001), 25.
approximately a month after the entrance of Babylonian forces into Jerusalem, Nebuzaradan, one of Nebuchadnezzar’s commanders, supervised the systematic destruction of key parts of the city. The people of Judah had been guilty of the unthinkable, rebellion against their Babylonian suzerain, and thus suffered the consequences of their foolishness. Nebuchadnezzar has now become the point of political reference. It is his power that which will now determine the shape of the events.93

All of the major structures of Jerusalem were destroyed. The temple was burned along with the royal palace. In addition, the walls of the city were pulled down by Babylonian troops. ‘Excavations overlooking the Kidron Valley on Jerusalem’s east side have verified the thoroughness of the wall’s destruction.’94 The city was left in ruins. The empire policies of conquest were driven by the insatiable desire for power, wealth and status. To achieve the objectives, the conquerors slaughtered populations that resisted their invasions, made many slaves, and took the elite ruling classes into exile.95

of the survivors in the city, a significant number were sent into exile in Babylon. The group included some of the poor, artisans who had not been included in the earlier deportation (597 BCE), and those who had deserted to the Babylonians during the siege. Some agricultural labour (the vinedressers and plowmen are explicitly named) was left behind96, perhaps to care for the needs of the occupying Babylonian forces. In any case, enough persons are left in the land to make clear that the deportation was part of an imperial strategy for a continued economy in the land, not designed to “empty” the land.97 Vv 17–19 ‘before destroying the city, the Babylonians looted the temple of its bronze, silver and gold articles that would be value for them (cf. 2 Kings 25: 13-17; see 1 Kings 7:15-50). They broke the bronze articles into smaller pieces for ease of

96Chrysostom quotes Isaiah “except the Lord of Saboath had left us a seed, we would have been as Sodom and would have been made like to Gomorrah. Here again he shows another thing, that not even those few were saved by their own resources. The majority having been taken away captive and perished and some few only being saved, Dean O. Wenthe, Jeremiah, Lamentations: Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. XII (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 271.
97Walter Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming, 490.
transportation. They included the bronze pillars (probably Jakin and Boaz, 1 Kings 7:21).  

4.10.1.4. Comments on Jeremiah 52: 13-19: Sociological reading about the destruction of the temple, exile and confiscation of the temple vessels

Juan affirms the fact that the society was exposed to humiliation and embarrassment through exile by the acts of the Babylonian. The holy vessels made of gold and silver had been removed to Babylon as part of the spoils of war. The raw metal had been taken to Babylon. It was an act of desecration, deliberately defiling the house of God to demonstrate the powerlessness of the Lord God to defend his people and sanctuary. The act of violation involved two dimensions. On the one hand, the temple vessels, constituted a great storehouse of wealth which was ransacked. On the other hand, however, the wealth of the temple artifacts adds a theological dimension as everything had a theological significance as it was with a purpose in the sanctuary, so the removal led to desecration of the temple. The seizure of the temple vessels signifies a removal of all the small signs of theological legitimacy of the temple. The loss of the temple vessels means the loss of prestige for the God who presides over the temple vv.17-19. The confiscation and destruction of the temple asserts that the Babylonian gods have prevailed over the God of Israel. The society was exposed to insecurity and humiliation. This seizure of the temple artifacts is highly symbolic as well as highly profitable act that must have been salt on the open wounds of Jerusalem. This act of destruction led to utter loss and their seizure bespeaks discontinuity. The wealth of the city and the prestige of Yahweh are both forfeited in a single act of destruction. This was one of the ways how the dominant exerted their power on the powerless. These verses seem to imply that at least some of the sacred articles were melted down for their value as precious metal. Nebuzaradan slaughtered-men, he laid the temple in ashes, having first plundered it of everything that was valuable: He burnt the house of the Lord, that holy and beautiful house, where their fathers praised him. He burnt the royal palace, the king's house. He burnt all the houses of Jerusalem. He broke down all the walls of Jerusalem.

When the gold was gone, the brass soon went after it. When the walls of the city were demolished, the pillars of the temple were pulled down. It displayed bluntly that no walls can protect those, nor pillars can sustain those, from whom God withdraws. These pillars were called Jachin-He will establish; and Boaz-In him is strength; so the destruction of these, signified that God’s presence has departed.

All the vessels that belonged to the brazen altar were carried away; Those that made great spoil of them did not stand to weigh them, as purchasers do, for, whatever they could grab, it was all their own. This was the time religiously the Babylonian gods were trying to show their domination on the defeated nation (especially on Israel's God) through the colonial domination. This idea of the Marduk's superiority is confronted by the prophets during this time.

4.10.1.4.1. The extent of the Destruction and the extent of Exile

The biblical record consistently records that the physical destruction of the city was massive vv.13, 14. The land confiscated: The land-grabbing Babylonian rulers (colonizers) practiced political and economic imperialism and expansionism. In this process they shattered the economic well-being of the conquered nations by deporting them and distributing their lands to the people of other nations. First, however, what was the fate of the exiles? “According to Bright, the nucleus of what had constituted the nation of Judah, its 'political, ecclesiastical, and intellectual leadership', was exiled to Babylonia, while those remaining behind in Judah are to be viewed as 'leaderless and helpless'. They were compelled to leave their homes and the land in which their ancestors had entered centuries before. Land formed a vital part of ethical living in response to God’s grace in Old Testament, it also meant for Israel the physical-emotional foundation for life, that is, means of production and secure home. Land is an important theme in the Pentateuch and has been described as “the central theme of biblical faith.” N. Habel suggests that the land is such an important and comprehensive symbol in the Old Testament that “it could be ranked next to God in importance.” This land was promised to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12:1; 15: 12-21) “it was to some extent a return to Eden.” The occupation of Canaan is portrayed as a divine gift to an unworthy people and it was Israel's nahala which means “inheritance.” It was seen as a “heritage” or “patrimony,” a term that expresses Israel’s right to occupy this land as its own defined property. But the land is also spoken of as the “patrimony of Yahweh,” an expression that makes the land a holy land, Yahweh’s personal property. The alien land to which Israel is deported in the exile stands in contrast as an “unclean land” (Amos 7:17; cf. Ezekiel 4:13).

So the experience of having been driven out from their own land or inheritance or the legal grant from God in the form of exile was an atrocity by the Babylonian empire. As Klein reports, “exile meant death, deportation, destruction, and devastation.” They would no longer be able to serve their own interests, but would have to do the Babylonians bidding. If the enduring memory
of events and their impact upon succeeding generations is the major criterion of historical importance, then there can be no doubt that the sequence of happenings from 597 to 538 BCE were among the most fateful in all Hebrew-Jewish history.

Berquist, using hints from the biblical text as well as sociological theory, argues that they were brought to the core of Babylon in order to work in the fields as well as in administration. The expanding empire of Babylon needed more labor than the native population could supply. However, though compelled, they were not slaves. Indeed from the biblical pictures of Daniel and his three friends in Babylonia, as well as Mordecai who lived in the diaspora in Persia, one gets a different picture of how the exiles sometimes went beyond survival to prosperity and position within the oppressor state. But these are some exceptional cases, whereas many of the voices in the periphery were not heard at all.

The Babylonian destruction of the temple led to massive disruption in the sociological and theological world view. Hence some truths can be derived from the exile and the aftermath based on the texts. They are:

4.10.1.4.2. Exile as the loss of the Theological Centre

The loss of the public centre and crushing of Zion’s physical and theological institutions and dominance sent out shock waves v.14. The Temple was destroyed; property confiscated. The response of the majority was given to anger, dismay and lamentation. Exile suggests that God is not acting against Babylon, God is acting against Zion. If exile is to be understood theologically, the issue is not that the host culture is antithetical to God’s people, but that God’s people are antithetical to God. God was not happy of the people who had stiffed neck and were not obedient. Exile is a place of potentially epiphanous and ontophanous significance. In exile God’s people had an opportunity to reorient themselves to God (epiphany) and to their purposes (ontophany).

Exile exposes that God’s people should not live in misguided assumptions that their wrong internal mechanisms and ideologies have a privileged and prior position in the affection and action of God. Jeremiah had cautioned that the Temple of the Lord should not give any false notion of security Jeremiah 7:4. The Temple should not lead to covenantal complacency.
4.10.1.4.3. Exile as the Loss of Public Centre

There is no fundamental experience of disorientation for God’s people than the exilic experience. The exile stories of the Old Testament bear witness to the loss of place and privilege for the people of God, v.15. This loss occurs politically in the loss of nationhood and theologically in the loss of election. Exile brings the world of Zion crashing to the ground, and with it, in Newbigin’s borrowed phrase, its plausibility structure.

According to the book of Kings, exile comes as an inevitable consequence of idolatry, of theological insubordination. The geopolitical expansion of the empires, though they were eager for land and power, is put in a theo-political framework of the repercussions of Israel’s lusting adultery and disobedience against Yahweh. This aspect was well affirmed by the prophets, though the loss was a part of the atrocity of the Babylonians.

4.10.1.4. 4. Identity of the Exiles: Different perspectives

The people in exile were a group of people who lost their land, Temple, kingship and even Torah. They also had a difficult time to allocate their own identity. Andrew Mein rightly points that the exiles belonged to two different moral worlds- two different realms of moral possibility. On the one hand, they were drawn from Judah’s ruling elite, and, before their deportation, would have participated in decisions affecting major communal institutions like temple and the army. But, on the other hand, their new status as a dominated minority within the huge Babylonian empire brought little or no political autonomy and posed serious threats to their communal identity. Sociologically they were faced with the identity crisis.

Exile offered some to assimilate, and that happened to some extent as many did not want to come back. There are another group of people who affirmed the exile. Exile is a part of the new thing God does.... Jeremiah also prophesied optimistically about those who went into exile. The exile threatens to crush the people of God, but it also threatens to break them open. It offered the exiles a retrospection and critique, a way of reorienting oneself theologically. Hence, the exiles had a difficult time to have an identity with so many questions at the back of the mind about the past and the struggle in the present and how the future will be. One of the most important features of the Babylonian exile was the success of at least some Jews in retaining their communal and ethnic identity.
4.10.1.4.5. Missiology of Exile

A missiology in exile is not about “feeling at home” or about returning home. But it is about realizing that one is not at home in exile and therefore one needs to be alive and work in exile. It is to engage with the subverting experience of exile and the subverting culture of exile and the subverting God of exile. Exile challenges us to see being God’s people as a dialectical process of “living and becoming.” In other words, it has to be lived out over and over again in a multiplicity of ways in our multiplicity of contexts. Exile offers us the dialectic of “living and becoming” through a valuable if disturbing self-critique of “My people”-“Not My people”. It gives a critique that is rooted both in ethical and missiological terms. It is suspicious, alerting and challenging. It leads to be sceptical of our own pronouncements vv. 15, 16. This means taking of responsibility of our actions and the impact of our actions on others, on God and on oneself.

4.10.1.4.6. Theology of the Victims of Exile

In expressing the concern, the researcher is taking the perspective of empathy as a springboard for seeing the horizons of the suffering people vv.15, 16. This is to rebuild a social life from the pieces left by the Chaldean militias of the sixth century. The actual social circumstances had moved from the world of power and influence in Jerusalem to the far limited world of exile in Babylonia. Kern as a historian does not wish to forget the horrific realities and especially the atrocities on women and children those who are more vulnerable to siege warfare. According to Nebuchadnezzar’s inscription, he appointed in Jerusalem “a king of his liking, took heavy booty, and brought it into Babylon.” The Priestly concerns about separation, purity, and “quarantine” of the “holy seed” reveal a community responding to serious perceptions of social pressure and subordination. Though Jeremiah mentions in chapter 29 “to marry your sons and daughters” in exile, there is very little doubt that the Babylonian policies were different than the Assyrians. Kern helpfully summarizes the similar tactics of siege warfare: “it is apparent that all conquerors of cities considered both people and property at their disposal.” Looting was universal, massacres or transportation common.

On the other hand, though the people faced difficulty and alienation, one can affirm with Bruggemann as ”Exile did not lead Jews in the Old Testament to abandon faith or to settle for abdicating despair, nor to retreat to privatistic religion. On the contrary, exile evoked the most brilliant literature and the most
daring theological articulation in the Old Testament.” God always helped His people to see that there is a silver lining behind every dark cloud of unrest, exploitation by the dominant. God always comes to the rescue of His people. He promised redemption of His people which is dealt in the last interpretation from the Isaiah 45.

4.10.1.5. Comments on Jeremiah 52: 13-19: Postcolonial reading about the destruction of the temple, exile and confiscation of the temple vessels

The king’s palace and the Temple were destroyed. The age long tradition or the legacy was shattered within no time by the Babylonians. It was an atrocity to make the royal kingdom and its temple relationship to be shattered completely and making the Kingdom of Judah to be rubble.

4.10.1.5.1. The power game of Babylonian Empire: Motives behind the destruction and confiscation of the Temple and its vessels.

Temple is the greatest target by the nation that wants to colonize and show its dominance and its destruction is for sure in the West Asian context. This was very true when the Babylonians destroyed the temple vv.13, 14. The urgency is seen that as soon as the Babylonians entered Jerusalem, they destroyed the temple and the palace. We also get the impression that Nebuzaradan did a thorough job of gutting the temple.

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99 When considering the question of the use of the temple, whatever its condition, as the locus for some type of religious observance, one must be cognizant in the first instance of the central role temple ideology played in the ancient world. It is unlikely that a functioning society could exist without regular ritual mediated through a cultic setting. In the ancient world the temple represented the place through which people experienced the divine. In particular, the temple in Jerusalem represented the royal palace of Yahweh from where He exercised cosmic authority, (The literature on this is vast. For an introduction to the conceptualization of temple ideology in Jerusalem and further references, see R. E. Clements, God and Temple (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965); R. J. Clifford, The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament, Harvard Semitic Monograph 4 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972); T. N. D. Mettinger, The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies, Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament Series 18 (Lund: Gleerup, 1982): 19-37; Jill Middlemas, The Troubles of the Templeless Judah, 124.

100 Leslie J. Hoppe, “History of Israel: Monarchic Period,” 566.

The destruction of the temple symbolized that the deity does not reside anymore and thus debarring the blessings.\textsuperscript{102} The temple was destroyed, and many of the religious vessels of worship were carried into exile with the people.\textsuperscript{103} It appears that the policy of Nebuchadnezzar was to place captured religious implements or statues in the temple of Marduk in the city of Babylon in order to symbolize the capture of the people and the defeat of their gods. In the case of the Jews, a capture of temple vessels served the same purpose and may well be the tradition underlying the story of Belshazzar’s feast in Daniel 5, as well as the ability of Cyrus to magnanimously return them in Ezra 1-6.\textsuperscript{104} The destruction of temple and ransacking it was a humiliation and inflicting shame on the defeated nation. Consider the role of shame in Jeremiah 6:15. Shame can be, for example, a form of embarrassment, of humiliation, or of regret; or it can be connected to great sadness as in circumstances of shame brought about by trauma. Shame, therefore, is not a psychology, it is a politics.\textsuperscript{105}

A puzzling feature of the accounts of booty is the absence of any reference to the Ark of the Covenant, one of the most important items of the Temple equipment.\textsuperscript{106} Manasseh removed the ark from the Temple, Josiah replaced it, and that it stayed there until it was removed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and was

\textsuperscript{102} J. J. M. Roberts, “Jerusalem Temple” in The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 5, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009): 500. One should note that David brought the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of Yahweh’s presence, into his capital city Jerusalem only after he observed that the presence in the house of Obed-Edom has resulted in obvious blessings on him and his entire household (2 Samuel 6: 11-12).


\textsuperscript{105} Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, A Biblical Theology of Exile: Overtures to Biblical Theology, 120, 121.

\textsuperscript{106} It was not in the temple at the time of the invasion of Titus (Josephus, Jewish War V, 219).
perhaps broken up for the sake of the gold with which it was overlaid and decorated.\textsuperscript{107}

This colonial empire used its might and regime to dominate the colonized, especially targeting the temple and its belongings, to show their power and domination vv. 17-19. Their attempt was to target and dethrone the political and religious beliefs of the colonized. This directly and indirectly nullified the colonized and made a mockery of their existing beliefs and showed colonial dominance over the colonized subjects.

The event reflects the symbolic embrace of Yahwistic violence by the vested aspirations of the colonial elite.\textsuperscript{108} The implication of Judah’s fall and her enduring colonization was considered by the people as the responsibility of Yahweh which is argued in the oracle\textsuperscript{109} and other books.\textsuperscript{110} It was not that Yahweh had failed the people but it was that the people failed Yahweh by not heeding to Him.

Jeremiah 52\textsuperscript{111} combines devastation with a glimmer of hope for the future. The description of Jerusalem’s destruction and of the fate of her citizens leaves no

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\textsuperscript{108} James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (eds.), Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible, 612.

\textsuperscript{109} James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (eds.), Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible, 612.

\textsuperscript{110} In Deuteronomic theology this deportation was interpreted as punishment for breaking God’s covenant (e.g., Deuteronomy 4: 23-28). The biblical prophets also assess the exile in terms of the conditionality of God’s covenant; it was for the result of divine judgment (e.g., Isaiah 5:13; 44:9-20; Amos 5: 26, 27), the test of Israel’s faithfulness Ezekiel 20:5-26. Gary N. Knoppers, “The Relationship of the Priestly Genealogies to the History of the High Priesthood in Jerusalem” in Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period, eds. Obed Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (USA: Eisenbrauns, 2003): 109-134. Even in the Second Temple Literature, 4 Ezra (Chapters 3-14 of 2 Esdras) refer to The Oxford Study Bible: Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha, eds. M. Jack Suggs et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1030, set in Exile concludes that God delivered Jerusalem to her enemies because of transgression (3:2ff), and 2 Baruch confirms that Judah’s sin led to her downfall (1:4-5). Refer to Alison Schofield, “Exile,” 616.

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doubt about the finality of Jeremiah’s message. In this complete colonial domination, as it can be seen throughout history, the women and children are more vulnerable to the colonial domination and hegemony. Jeremiah however uses the terrors, women experience in war to highlight the coming disaster (cf. Jeremiah 38: 22-23; 40:7). This is very true when the powerful empire devastated the people of God.

4.10.1.5.2. From Independent Israelites to Colonized Jews

Harry Thomas Frank very well frames, “The pain wracked processions wound their way slowly along the road that led northward from Jerusalem along the spine of the mountains.” Unmitigated grief was their companion, and surrounding hills echoed to the lamentations and bitter wailings of those who, left behind, witnessed the destruction of the Judah vv. 15, 16. For the period immediately following the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, one can draw on relatively contemporary sources in Jeremiah 40:7–43:3 and Lamentation 1–2; 4–5. These sources, however, paint totally opposite pictures of the situation of those left behind. The Jeremiah narrative describes an opportunity for rapid improvement of the survivors’ living conditions in cooperation with the Babylonians. The book of Lamentations, especially chapter 5, bewails the sufferings of the populace under the heel of the occupation forces. The impression is given of large-scale devastation and deliberate destruction (cf. II kings 25); the depopulation is indicated as wholesale (25:11), in addition to executions and sieges.

Gedaliah and his supporters saw the breakdown of the structures of national government and the deportation of a large percentage of the upper class

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116 Ezekiel divides those remaining in Judah into three groups (Ezekiel 33:27): those living in the ruins, those in the open field, and those in “strongholds and caves.” He is probably envisioning the situation shortly after 587, as reported to him by the deportees. Refer to Margaret S. Odell, Ezekiel: Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, Ga.: Smyth and Helwys, 2005), 530-535; Nancy R. Bowen, Ezekiel: Abingdon Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010).
as a great opportunity to establish in Judah a less-stratified society, based on Deuteronomic brotherhood ethics. Jameson-Drake arrives at a very negative assessment of the situation in Judah during the exilic period through a statistical analysis of archaeological evidence. He speaks of a “complete societal collapse” and an “almost complete dissolution” because of the collapse of the centralized administrative control and distribution system in Jerusalem after the removal of the elite who managed it. There followed a sharp drop in productivity; famine and emigration reduced the population drastically. As the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar clearly show, the primary aim of Babylonian policy was to promote the architectural splendour and prosperity of the Babylonian heartland as much as possible by exploiting the subject provinces. The situation will have been no different in Judah. The Babylonians supported Gedaliah’s reform policies only to the extent that the policies furthered their imperial purpose by restoring agricultural productivity. It is therefore quite understandable that this attempt failed after a relatively short time. Although warned in advance, Gedaliah was slain as a despicable Babylonian collaborator by Ishmael, a commander belonging to a collateral line of the royal house, who had been one of Zedekiah’s chief officers (Jeremiah 41:1–2).

Even though the Babylonian provincial administration became increasingly oppressive, taxes, corvée, and socage hardly differed from what they had been under Judean kings. There are even hints that it was possible under the Babylonian regime to establish a limited degree of self-government based on elders (Lamentation 5:14). The military weakness and uncertain legal status of Judah in the exilic period thus led to the shrinkage and fragmentation of the area of Judean settlement and to constant confrontations with foreigners from the surrounding states. Without any effective means of resistance, the population could only gnash their teeth and learn to live with the political and economic influence of these foreigners. Although they were dwelling in their own land, those who remained in Judah had largely lost their territorial social integrity. Ezekiel 11:15; 33:24 on the other hand, shows that the majority of those who remained in the land were positive about the division of property and even justified it theologically. They felt that the oppression they had undergone during the time they were under the kings was compensated by this act of exile.

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118 It is therefore unlikely that Gedaliah assumed the title of king. Cf. Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, 92.
4.10.1.5.3. The colonial hegemony to destroy the Kingship and the ‘religious significance of Jerusalem

The significance of Kingship and the religious significance affirmed to Jerusalem were totally smashed to the ground by the colonial hegemony vv. 13, 14. The narrative in Samuel-Kings highlights the Davidic connection with Jerusalem. It is quite likely that a Zion tradition was associated with Jerusalem prior to David’s time. Psalm 46, which a number of scholars identify as originally a Canaanite cultic song, clearly ties God to the city, naming it “the holy habitation of the Most High,” but there is no mention of David or the monarchy in this hymn. Similarly, in Psalm 48:1-2 God’s “holy mountain” is identified as Mount Zion, and an invitation is offered to other kings and nations to “walk about Zion... count it towers, consider well its ramparts” as a physical symbol of God’s presence and protection (48: 12-14). The antiquity of this challenge to compare the city of God with all others is seen in a parallel passage from the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh, in which the semi divine hero calls on his companion to “walk on the ramparts of Uruk” and be amazed at his great city. Given this separate, pre-Israelite tradition, it would have been useful for the emerging Davidic monarchy to push all previous divine associations in Jebus / Jerusalem to the background or to merge them with the attributes of the Israelite God. In this way, greater legitimacy would be achieved for David’s rule as Yahweh’s “earthly regent in Jerusalem.”

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120 Zion and David are often seen as complementary reflexes of the same tradition. See, Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult*, JSOTSupp 41 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 53; Elizabeth Keck, “The Glory of Yahweh in Ezekiel and the Pre-Tabernacle Wilderness” in *JSOT* 37.2 (December, 2012): 201-218.


People had the false notion that God was with them even if they had violated the will and word of God to the maximum extent. From Jeremiah’s temple sermon, one can conclude that even those who did not consistently follow Yahweh put great pride in the temple and presumptuously believed that the presence of the temple would preserve them from defeat (Jeremiah 7:26). In fact, the city of Jerusalem, referred to as Zion in many of the Psalms (Psalms 48, 78, 125, 132, 137), was even equated with God’s person as a means of reassuring the people that God would continue to provide a sure refuge.126 "They had the tradition of Invulnerability of Jerusalem.”127 In the end, however, Ezekiel’s vision describing Yahweh’s abandonment of the temple on the eve of the defeat of Jerusalem was understood as representing reality more accurately (Ezekiel chapters 9-11).128 The prophets proclaimed “the utter redundancy of the temple or its outright destruction”129 because they had false sense of security. Throughout the history of the divided monarchy, the implicit dangers of an unconditional, blind faith in Jerusalem’s invulnerability were confronted by several prophets who pointed that temples, shrines, altars and priestly communities could not withstand God’s wrath.130 Hence, full credit to the dominant ideology of the Babylonians cannot be given, because this was in relation to God’s wrath, in which the empire played a vital role.

The destruction of the city had devastating consequences for the people of Judah that may be seen in the book of Lamentations. Lamentations is a poem in the literary tradition of the Mesopotamian city laments, like the Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur, that bemoaned the destruction of Ur after it was plundered by the Elamites from the east and the Amorites from the west at the turn of the third to the second millennium.131 The book of Lamentations "offers a window into the struggle of the people of God in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem

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Narrative that Shaped the Nation (Grand Rapids / Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 146, 147.
126 Ben C. Ollenburger, Zion, the city of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult, 74, 75.
128 Iain Provan et al., A Biblical History of Israel, 280.
129 Nicholas Perrin, Jesus the Temple (Michigan / Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 89.
130 Victor H. Mathews, Old Testament Turning Points: The Narrative that Shaped the Nation, 156.
and the demise of the kingdom of Judah.”\textsuperscript{132} It is found in the Jewish canon as one of the Megillot, the Five Scrolls. The LXX placed it after Jeremiah and Baruch, assuming the prophet to be the author, thus leading to its current place in the Christian canon. Almost all scholars agree that the book of Lamentations was written in the years immediately following the destruction of Jerusalem. Certainly these five poems express the kind of shock and despair that we might expect from an eyewitness, yet their form and style demonstrate that they were created as an act of reflection on their tragedy and as a memorial. Lamentation was written as an expression of grief rather than a systematic theological reflection. This pain has affected all levels of society, whether rich / poor, male / female, young / old, all aspects of society ( economical, cultural, physical, social, religious) and even ongoing generations of society (past and present).\textsuperscript{133} Thus the people of God were torn from the core to the periphery. The Babylonian empire ransacked the temple and made a booty of all that existed to demonstrate their power in all levels.


The prophecy that was done in this chapter is greatly affirmed in other West Asian sources. Cyrus’s entry into Babylon is fully recorded in ancient sources. The Babylonians were ready for a change in government. In the month of Arahsammu, the third day (October 29, 539 BCE) Cyrus entered Babylon; green twigs were spread in front of him—the state of peace was imposed on the city.”\textsuperscript{134} Herodotus has an account of a long siege, which is generally discounted today. The Cyrus cylinder adds: “All the kings of the entire world from the Upper (Mediterranean) to the Lower (Persian Gulf) Seas, those who are seated in throne rooms … all the kings of the West land living in tents, brought their heavy tributes and kissed my feet in Babylon.”\textsuperscript{135} Cyrus ascribed as the ‘shepherd’ and ‘anointed’ was an unknown title ( s) for an outsider, in the social fabric of the Biblical land.

Persia’s increased interest in the region because of the Egyptian campaign of Cambyses could well have provided a propitious moment to launch such an expedition. The Persians wanted to be assured of loyal vassals on their flanks as their army marched into Egypt. Cyrus and Cambyses have recorded their


established policy of returning idols and supporting the rebuilding of temples that Nabunaid had abandoned. The edict that Ezra mentions has those policies. Thus, all these sociological reasons and the empire’s motive could be seen as some reasons for this prophecy coming to fulfilment.

4.11.1. Translation

24 Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, who was forming you from the womb: I am Yahweh doing all (this): stretching out heavens by myself, beating out the earth, from myself, with myself.

25 Frustrating omens of wiseacres, he makes fools of diviners, making the wise turn backwards when he makes their knowledge “wise,”

26 Confirming the word of his servant and the counsel of his messengers he performs. The one saying to Jerusalem: “Be inhabited!” and to the towns of Judah: “Be built up!” and to her ruins: “I will raise them!”

27 The one saying to the ocean deep: “Dry up!” and to your rivers: “I shall dry (you) up!”

28 The one saying to Cyrus: “My shepherd who will fulfil all my pleasure, who will say to Jerusalem, Be built! and to (the) Temple, Be founded.”

45:1 Thus says Yahweh to his anointed, Cyrus (whom) I have grasped by his right hand, To subdue nations before him; I have loosened the loins of kings, To open doors before him, Gates will not be shut.

4.11.2. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

24. a. “The Kethib reads (“who was with me”). Qere and DSS reads מיא אתי implies a pointing of מי who like 31 Heb. MSS, LXX and Vg MT’s (read as מיא תמי with nun dropped out) “from me” is supported by Syr. It adds “and your helper” “from me and for me” and “from with me” or “by myself”. Though the reading of Qere seems to have a good parallel in the preceding verses, it lacks the necessary support (cf. LXX רֶּ֑צֶּף מִי אִתִּי BHS, BKS. Targum has בגבורתי “by my power” = “by my might”. The translation follows MT although most modern translations and interpreters emend to an interrogative. The Kethib reading presupposes a rhetorical question; further, “who was with me” in a regular feature in Deutero-

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138 Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, *The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the Nations in the Book of Isaiah* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 84.
Isaiah and its implied meaning is also “by myself.” It is better to keep the Kethib reading.”

25a. MT רעיםר "liars" “prattler” or “babbler” DSS adds the word over the line. LXX εγγαστριμθων “ventriloquists,” Σψευδων “liar,” Syr. “those who communicate with the dead,” Tg. רעים "lying oracle,” Vg divinorum “of diviners.” This word usually means “idle talk.” Only here and in Jeremiah 50:36 does it refer to persons. “In the present context Deutero-Isaiah indirectly hints at the claims of the Babylonian soothsayers and diviners. Therefore, it is better to render the word along with the New American Bible as “boasters” without changing the MT reading to רעים as some scholars have done.

26a. MT has “his servant” וֹ֔עַבְד, but “his messengers” וֹ֖כָּאָמַֽר, and is followed by DSS LXX (except for LXXA) Syr. Vg. Many modern interpreters emend to רעים "his servants" to make both plural. Targum has interpretatively rendered it as “the righteous servants.” Textual evidence supports MT. Those who take the singular reading consider the servant either as Deutero-Isaiah himself or the Israelites.

26b. One MS has only רעים "and his counsel” instead of “the counsel of his messengers.” DSS LXX Syr. Tg. Vg support MT. However, the idea is that Yahweh has executed his own plan, which is uttered by his servants.

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Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, *The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the Nations in the Book of Isaiah*, 86.


Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, *The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the Nations in the Book of Isaiah*, 86.
26c. BHS would drop this phrase, perhaps because it is a third stich. That is a metrical bias. The stich should be kept. The unusual length of vs. 26, the repetition of 26 b in vs. 28b. The omission of at the beginning of the line, the existence of the 3rd per. sg. fem. suffix in the following sentence ("I will raise up its ruins") suggests the possible later addition of the line here. This must have been a marginal gloss written by a scribe who probably presumed that the address was not about the re-establishment of Jerusalem. Later this must have been incorporated in the text.146

27a. Tg. adds “concerning Babylon.” occurs only here and is usually understood as a shortened form of "depth, deep".147

28a. MT יְֽרֹעִ "my shepherd" is supported by six MSS, Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, Peshitta, Vulgate, Dead Sea Scroll (Isaiah) may also mean "my friend." Scholars such as Budde, Marti, Cheyne, Kittel, Stade and Klostermann have followed this reading.148 LXX φρονεῖν "to understand" apparently sees a word from the root רָעִ as in v. 20.149 G. R. Driver suggests that it come from רַעִי, like the Aramaic “intent, purpose.” BHS’s suggestion of רַעָי "my friend" had support earlier, but does not in recent commentaries. Tg. interprets “make him the king.” Targum too presupposes the idea of “shepherd” when it paraphrases “He will give him the kingdom”. Given the context of the whole oracle in Isaiah 44: 24-45: 7, MT reading seems to be the more authentic one.151

28b. Vg complebis “you will fulfill” makes the address to Cyrus explicit.

28c. MT לאמר, means “to say.” The previous three lines begin with לאמר “the one saying.” One can emend to make this line parallel to the first three. If MT is kept, this becomes the goal of the first three. LXX and Vg suggest emendation. DSS 1QIṣa supports MT, and Syr. And Tg. change their translation in the fourth line. MT should be kept.

146 Cf. BHK, BHS, K. Elliger, Deutero-Jesaja 40:1-45:7, 454 f., 472f; Refer to Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the Nations in the Book of Isaiah, 86.


151 Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the Nations in the Book of Isaiah, 86, 87.
28d. BHS "היכל" adds the preposition where MT simply uses a dative without preposition to mean "to the Temple." Syr. Tg. all support MT. Another issue is the gender of "היכל" which is usually masculine. Here the verb is in the fem which implies that "היכל" is also thought to be fem.152

Isaiah 45: 1a, the first stich seems metrically superfluous. Consequently scholars have attempted to shorten the stich by deleting a word or two as unauthentic or parenthetic. Torrey, followed by Smart, deletes לכורש arguing that Yahweh’s address is to the servant Israel, and “to Cyrus” must be a parenthesis.153 T. J. Meek deletes אשר by arguing that it is not a stress unit in the Hebrew poetry as it has no thought factor.154 J. L. McKenzie considers all the phrases following Cyrus in vs. 1 to be parenthetical.155 While Peshitta and Targum agree with the MT reading, LXX has “to my anointed”. Following LXX, BHS proposes that the original text have been למשיח if there is an essential need to shorten the line, then the only possibility would be to delete which has no direct significance poetically or grammatically.

"Chapter 44 comes to a climax with a series of magnificent utterances expressing the nature and purpose of God in terms unsurpassed anywhere in the OT."156 The setting continues to be that of the heavenly court, a herald steps

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155 J. L. Mckenzie, The Second Isaiah (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 75; Refer to Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the Nations in the Book of Isaiah, 87.

forward with a royal announcement. “God’s work through Cyrus is the governing concern of this main section, and in 44:24-45:8 that activity is introduced.”

There is no consensus among scholars with regard to the unity and literary genre of 44: 24-45:7. While a majority of the exegetes argue in favor of the separate unity of 44: 24-28 and 45: 1-7 respectively, a few scholars have advocated the unity of 44:24-45:7. "The scene’s structure demonstrates its unity of its three distinct parts the first and third is parallel and addressed to Israel about Cyrus. The centre section is addressed to Cyrus, describing the role that Yahweh is assigning to him. He is considered as Yahweh’s “anointed” (Isaiah 44:28) and as his “shepherd” (Isaiah 45: 1) both royal Davidic titles.

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All three sections emphasize Yahweh’s authority and sovereign acts which demonstrate His right to do this thing. The internal development of themes in the first and third are parallel and follow the same order (rather than the reversed order of an arch structure”). Although it is possible to argue that the passage has two units and genres, as many have done, the repetition of the hymnic participle יצר in 44: 24 and 45: 7, the phrase אכתי יהוה עשה כל in 44: 24 b and 45: 7 and the address to Cyrus in 44: 28 and 45: 1, raise the question of an intrinsic relationship between the presupposed units.

The passage is separate from what goes before and after. It introduces a new cycle of themes which continue some of those that went before. But now the centre of attention is Cyrus. The passage is formed in hymnic style (cf. Psalm 103), but it functions as a disputation. It introduces the act, like an overture touching on the themes that will continue to be developed later in the act. In doing so, it forms a bridge between what has gone before and what is to come. Note the themes of redemption, creation, ridicule of idolatry and necromancy, fulfilment of prophecy, the rehabilitation of Jerusalem, control of nature, and the relation of Cyrus to the main theme of the larger section, the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The first part (44:24–28) transmits Yahweh’s assurances to Israel connecting His election of Israel and His creation of the world with His determination to sustain His own word which specifically calls for Jerusalem to be rebuilt, for restraints to be laid on chaos curses, and for Cyrus to do the work. “Form critics have debated both the genre and the scope in this unit.”

Begrich, followed by von Waldow and Schoors argues that 44: 24-28 is a “disputation”. He argues that אכתי יהוה is not a “self-glorification formula” but a “self-introductory formula” by which Yahweh tries to convince his hearers (“Israelites”) that the God who at present says to Jerusalem “You shall be

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inhabited” and to Cyrus “my shepherd” is identical with the God who has created the world and guided the historical process in Israel’s salvific history. According to these three scholars the use of the self-introductory formula in 44: 24-28 does not presuppose Yahweh’s encounter with the gods and consequently a trial situation, this formula was prevalent in Israel’s cult (cf. Exodus 6: 6-8; 20: 2) and taken over by Deutero-Isaiah in order to prove to his hearers that their God, Yahweh continues to manifest his power in the present historical process, too.\(^{165}\)

Christopher agrees with Westermann that this serves the purpose of introducing, in a somewhat deliberative way, the royal oracle concerning Cyrus in the following unit (45:1-7) and, therefore, is not, strictly speaking a separate unit at all. Rather it is hymn like introduction. This is, of course, more of a literary category than a form-critical category, consistent with the creative freedom of the author.\(^{166}\) It serves to identify Yahweh clearly, and the three announcements, with his work in electing Israel and the creation of the world. The choral section in 44:25–28 expands on Yahweh’s self-identification to form the setting for the induction of Cyrus into his position as Yahweh’s servant.\(^{167}\)

Fohrer argues that Isaiah 44:24-28 is a mixture of hymn and discussion: the hymn praises Yahweh for his creative action in the history of the world (24-25), and the discussion passes from the undisputable assertion of Yahweh’s redemptive action in favor of Israel to the disputable one of appointing a foreigner as Yahweh’s instrument and calling him as “Yahweh’s shepherd” (26-28a).\(^{168}\)

K. Elliger argues that there is no “self-glorification form” in 44:24-28. According to him these verses comprise a “speech” of Yahweh which is modeled

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around a “royal decree”. The passage assumes an “assembly in the heavens” where Yahweh the king, announces his decision “to commission the Persian Ruler Cyrus” to fulfill Yahweh’s work of leading the historical process. Like Westermann and others, Elliger too, accepts Isaiah 45: 1-7 as a “Royal Oracle” that echoes the ritual for the enthronement of a king (cf. Psalms 2 and 110) in the Ancient West Asian world.

The centrepiece is Yahweh’s announcement to Cyrus which ordains him to the task God as anointed for him. His work will be military and political, relating to nations and kings. Yahweh will go before him to provide favourable circumstances for the accomplishment of these tasks and will reward him with rich booty. But it must be clear that Cyrus is Yahweh’s tool (not the reverse) and that Yahweh’s primary responsibility and attention continues to be to Israel. Cyrus is employed to do what Yahweh wants for Israel.

4.11.3. Explanation

24. Israel is addressed. Your Redeemer picks up the theme of previous chapters (43:1, 14; 44:6, 22, 23). This verse forms a chiasm with the previous one v. 23. ‘Who formed you in the womb’ shows God’s providence began at the nation’s very inception and conception. For the claim of God that He is the One who created everything, and He alone controls the history cf. 45: 7; Jeremiah 10:16. According to Ketib, “who was with me” a rhetorical question cf. Aquila, LXX, Vulgate, 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a,b}. It shows God alone is responsible for the creation of the Universe. “Heavens and earth’ are a merism emphasizing totality. Exilic Israel found it difficult to see redemption or salvation in the conquering Persian advance on Babylon. They apparently expected God to make Israel the new ruler of the empire. But Yahweh insists on doing it His way. The Persian conquest is His doing and will provide redemption for His people, Israel. The reminder, that Yahweh is the creator of all [this] puts Israel’s claims in perspective. God is also responsible for the world beyond Israel.

25-26. God’s greatness manifests itself also in His ability to evade the powers of the Babylonian diviners and boasters. The prophet polemicizes against the all-

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pervasive practice of divining in Mesopotamia, whereby the diviner was able to understand what the gods had in mind. Each hemistich here forms a separate chiasm. The diviners interpreted omens which appeared in the liver and other viscera of sacrificed sheep and lambs, and through which they were able to explicate the will of gods; cf. Ezekiel 21:26; 2 Samuel 17:14; Job 5:12. He makes fools of the boaster here is a polel stem from the root הָלַל (to make a fool of, to cause to go mad), see Job 12:17, Ecclesiastes 7:7.

To turn the wise back, making it invalid, cf. Psalm 44:11; Lamentation 1:13; 2:3. He makes fool of diviners, boasters and wise people but the word of God’s servant is always validated cf. 1 Samuel 15:11; 1 Kings 2:4. On the contrary, He fulfills all the plans of His messengers, and the impossible task of resettling the desolate place is obvious.

27. The Exodus event serves as the potency of God’s future redemption. It is He who commanded the deep, a hapex legomenon variant of the depths of the sea to be dry, cf. Exodus 14:21; Joshua 3:17.

28. The announcement’s climax mentions Cyrus, the Persian emperor, who is entering Babylon. By this time every prophet in the city claimed responsibility for his success. But Yahweh yields nothing in the claim that Cyrus belongs to him. He is Yahweh’s shepherd (cf. 40:11; Zechariah 10:2–3; 11:3–9, 16–17; 12:7). The emphasis here is on the pronoun ‘my’. Cyrus is Yahweh’s protegé who will fulfill his pleasure. The words are important: יְשַׁלֵּם “fulfill” is the verb from which חֶפֶץ “pleasure” is used to express Yahweh’s will (cf. 46:10; 48:14; 53:10; 55:11; 56:4). Jerusalem is the focus of Yahweh’s strategy. The call of Cyrus and the fall of Babylon are to prepare for the restoration of Yahweh’s city.

45:1 While Deutero-Isaiah’s portrayal of a foreign king as “Yahweh’s shepherd” would be radical to the traditionally oriented Israelites, Cyrus’ designation as “his anointed” (משֶה) is more revolutionary yet, for “the anointed of Yahweh” was the title given only to the reigning kings of Israel, especially to the Davidides.

175 A major part of references to the “Anointed” are found in the Deuteronomistic historical narrative and in the tradition of psalms, especially in the royal psalms (1 Samuel 16:6; 26:7, 11; 2 Samuel 1:14, 16; Psalm 2:2; 18:51. The only reference in Isaiah 40-66 to a king as “anointed” is found in Is 45:1. Therefore, the author of Deutero-Isaiah was very much carried away by portraying a foreigner king to be “anointed” which is next to impossible from Jewish context. Hence, the author was succumbed to some extent by the colonial flavor. Refer to Lisbeth S. Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah? The Historical Background of Isaiah 45:1” in HTR 95 (2002b): 373-393.
4.11.4. Comments on Isaiah 44:24-45:1: Sociological reading especially the use of “My Shepherd” and “the Anointed one”

These two titles when it is seen from the perspective of West Asian societies it has very clear indications.

4.11.4.1. Cyrus as Yahweh’s Shepherd

Yahweh’s address to Cyrus as “my shepherd” (מָשָׁ֖ר) in the context of his re-creative actions in the world has not only direct implications for his chosen people but also to the peoples of the nations at large. In Sumerian, Assyro-Babylonian and Egyptian texts, a king who is appointed by a deity is generally addressed as “my shepherd.” This is to identify the king’s reign as the representative rule of the deity. In some Sumerian royal inscriptions the king is designated as “shepherd of his people.” The king as “the deity’s shepherd” implies that the king is appointed by the deity. For example, Hammurabi speaks of himself at the beginning of his law book: “I became the beneficent shepherd, called by Enlil.” Designating the king as the shepherd of the people signifies that the king has to protect, take care of and lead the people. The king is responsible to protect the interests of the people in the socio-political realm. By the beginning of the second millennium BCE, Akkadian and Amorite kings were using conventional shepherd language to describe themselves. The royal ideology with this title had an emphasis on fertility and peace in the sociological level.

In the Old Testament the title is never given directly to the reigning king, it was only given to David (2 Samuel 5:7). David is seen as the shepherd. It is very likely that Deutero-Isaiah has identified Cyrus as the David redivivus, and must have typologically identified Cyrus as the New David who was looked for. His purpose, Milton Moreland, “Archeology, Land of Israel: Second Temple Period” in The

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179 Timothy S. Laniak, Shepherds after My own Heart: Pastoral traditions and Leadership in the Bible, 63.

180 For an intriguing example of shepherd imagery emphasizing well-being and prosperity embedded in an Akkadian prophecy of a coming savior see J. B. Pritchard (ed.), Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 604.

181 Timothy S. Laniak, Shepherds after My own Heart: Pastoral traditions and Leadership in the Bible, 104.

182 Yahweh has found in Cyrus the right instrument at the present moment of history to fulfill his purpose, Milton Moreland, “Archeology, Land of Israel: Second Temple Period” in The
task as shepherd of Yahweh is extended to the nations also. 41:1-4 highlights the fact that Cyrus’ rise to power has a great salvific significance to the nations at large. 183

4.11.4.2. Cyrus as Yahweh’s Anointed

This title was given in the sociological sense to the king who ruled God’s people and especially to the Davidides. Particularly when the Israelites themselves were illtreated by their Babylonian overlord, to call another foreigner Yahweh’s anointed is remarkable because of the intrinsic significance of that title, משיחו always denotes the kings in relation to Yahweh. Although historically, Cyrus was never anointed in the name of Yahweh, Isaiah 45 envisages an enthronement ritual which must have been enacted at every New Year festival in Israel following the West Asian pattern. Anointing is a symbolic sign of divine election, appointment, commission and authorization of a king as Yahweh’s vicegerent to fulfill his purpose. This is reminiscent of Psalm 2: 6-8 and Psalm 110: 1 where the Davidide has been promised a universal rule. There is in all probability that Deutero-Isaiah identifies Cyrus with the Davidide, and the anticipated universal rule is ascribed to Cyrus. 184

4.11.5. Comments on Isaiah 44:24-45:1: Postcolonial reading especially the use of “My Shepherd” and “the Anointed one”

Deutero-Isaiah’s theology is also developed in the context of Empire especially. His theology helps us to analyze what is going on, especially where empire

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183 Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the Nations in the Book of Isaiah, 95, 96.
184 For very close correspondence and parallel with the present text compare the Cyrus Cylinder J. B. Pritchard (ed.), Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 315f; Amélie Kuhrt, “The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial policy” in JSOT 25 (1983): 84f; Claus Westermann, Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary, 157f. Although the vocabulary used in Cyrus cylinder with regard to Marduk’ appointment of Cyrus, Cyrus’ call, Marduk’s accompaniment with Cyrus in his campaigns, etc. has similarity in the Cyrus Song in Isaiah 44:24-45:13, the process of election has more prominence in the Cyrus Cylinder. According to the narrative in the Cyrus Cylinder, Marduk examined all the countries to find a just and righteous ruler who would be upright in his intentions. As he found in Cyrus an upright prince, he called him and, nominated him to be ruler of the entire world. In all likelihood, the Cyrus Cylinder must have been composed after the capture of Babylon and the format of the narrative might have been taken from the Biblical text as it must be written before the fall of the Babylon. Cf. Claus Westermann, Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary, 158; Norman K. Gottwald, All the Kingdoms of the Earth (New York: np. 1964), 334. Refer to Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the Nations in the Book of Isaiah, 96.
assimilates concepts of the ultimate; his theology can also bring us to new
directions and give us new hope. Throughout its history, such a theology has often
been employed in the support of empire and sometimes in the critique of it, and
often there is only a thin line between the two. Nevertheless, the existence of
ambivalence is itself a witness to the limits of empire. Postcolonial theorist Homi
Bhabha notes how this ambivalence is disturbing to colonial discourse and how it
"poses an imminent [sic] threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledge's and disciplinary
powers."185 Cyrus’ ascription as ‘the shepherd’ and ‘the anointed’ has facilitated
the plan of the colonial power although the social setup of the Biblical times never
knew such a title for an outsider. Though the speech is addressed to Israel and
Cyrus, it is a powerful self-assertion by Yahweh about Himself. He relates himself
to Israel, to the whole universe, and to Cyrus-and through Cyrus back to
Jerusalem and history on a broader scale.

Goulder writes that the whole chapter has the temple on Zion in mind.186
Walter Bruggemann argues that the temple in the ancient society had the
significant function of a core symbol of an integral unity, a meeting place of
heaven and earth, the singular assurance of a reliable cosmic order.187 The temple
epitomizes a theology which holds that though YHWH is fully present in heaven,
temple is the only abode for YHWH’s name on earth. Yahweh’s name is fully
present in the temple.188 Temple construction perhaps is one of the ancient
attempts to prevent schisms that lead to disunity.189 But one thing has to be kept
in mind that the discursive practice of aid is also closely tied to conditionalities, be
they economic (tied aid), ideological (neoliberalism), or political (foreign policy
objectives).190

185 For the notion of ambivalence, see Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London:
Routledge, 1994), 86, 88. Bhabha connects this term with more famous notion of “mimicry”:
“the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence” (emphasis in original). By
repeating colonial images with a slight difference, rather than representing them accurately,
mimicry establishes a challenge to the colonial narcissism and fiction of self-identity. Refer to
Kwok Pui et al., (eds), Empire: The Christian Tradition, New Readings of Classical
Theologians (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 7, 8.
187 Walter Brueggemann, Solomon: Israel’s Ironic Icon of Human Achievement (Columbia:
University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 87. Refer to M. P. Joseph, “Ecumenism and
Empire: Soul mates or Antagonists” in Light to the Nations-II: Theology and Vision of ECC
188 Walter Brueggemann, Solomon: Israel’s Ironic Icon of Human Achievement, 96.
190 Ilan Kapoor, The Postcolonial Politics of Development (London / New York: Routledge,
2008), 78.
It is likely that the author of Isaiah 44.28, whom scholars refer to as author who lived in Babylonia during Cyrus’ reign (559–530 BCE) was familiar with the story recorded on the Cyrus Cylinder. As mentioned earlier, to some extent J. L. McKenzie makes sense that Cyrus had already gained great power and a just short time before the actual fulfilment of these events. C. C. Torrey affirms the fact that the name Cyrus (Heb. Koresh) as a later textual addition, C. Westermann could see similarities between the vocabularies used in the Cyrus Cylinder.

This official account of Cyrus gave him credibility to control Babylon by the Marduk god. He was to act as an agent to rescue the nation from the grip of the evil king Nabonidus. Cyrus also restored many temples of the various nations who were exiled, thus returning to their homeland all the gods that Babylonians had alienated. The account on the cylinder itself is written as a building dedication inscription and probably was placed as a foundation deposit in the rebuilt temple of Marduk in Babylon. The version of history propounded, gave Cyrus authenticity and claim, as a divinely chosen deliverer. This perception of thought

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191 Deutero-Isaiah wrote in Babylon during Cyrus’ rise of power and perhaps even slightly after his death. The prophet’s concern with the goal to return to Jerusalem, a goal that Cyrus supported and hence there was an overlapping of goals. For this reason the author offered almost complete and unquestioning allegiance to Cyrus’ plans, while making it very clear time and again that he was a tool in God’s hand, Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 42; C. Westermann, Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969); Michael Goeller, “Deutero-Isaiah of Jerusalem,” 351; Susan VanZanten Gallagher, “Mapping the Hybrid World: Three Postcolonial Motifs” in Semeia 75 (1996): 231.

192 M. Smith, “II Isaiah and the Persians,” 415-421. He interpreted the Cyrus Cylinder as political propaganda. Refer Appendix 1.

193 J. L. McKenzie, Isaiah 40-66: Anchor Bible, xviii, 78. 88, 97, concludes that this could be a time at exile, but such a date could eliminate the role of prophetic inspiration because almost anyone observing these events could have predicted that Cyrus would take control.

194 C. C. Torrey, Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation, 41, concludes that the name Cyrus was a latter addition to 44: 28 and 45:1. J. D. Smart, History and Theology in Second, 115-123, saw this as a creation of fifth century group in Jerusalem that referred to God’s Servant before the beginning of his reign.

195 ANET, 315-316, refers to Marduk who beheld Cyrus’ hand. M. Smith, “II Isaiah and the Persians” in JAOS 83 (1963): 415-421, also noted numerous similarities between the first part of the Cyrus Cylinder and this section of Isaiah. Claus Westermann, Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary, 155-157, sees Marduk chooses Cyrus, called him by name, gave him success, took pleasure in him, and gave him world dominion, but he does not think that Isaiah’s text was dependent on Cyrus Cylinder.

would have been widely circulated as official propaganda within Babylon and perhaps, more widely in the former Babylonian empire to show that Cyrus is the one who is accepted by all and this created a profound goodwill among the colonized.

Postcolonialism and sociological reading offers the interpretation to be focused on imperial practices, including the imperial production of culture. Postcolonial theory can shed light on the ways that empires used texts to expound and expand their imperial ideologies. At the same time, the social location of the text's production reflects a wedge between empire and colony and so postcolonial opportunities are embedded within the text itself. Hence the early stages of the Hebrew Bible’s canonization can be seen as an imperial production of ideology during the reign of the Persian Empire. Cyrus is one of the kings who founded a most extensive and powerful empire of the ancient world and his contribution is highly welcomed and there is very less doubt that he enjoyed the great extravagancy of a very good press.

In 538 BCE, Cyrus had taken control of Babylon, thereby ending the rule of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and replacing it with the rule of the Persian Empire. He did not limit himself with political agenda of stabilizing himself but resorted to restoring deity statues to their traditional sanctuaries and reinstating their cults and giving the temple vessels. There are very close resemblances

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198 Amélie Kuhrt, “The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy,” 83, Even historian Xenophon (430-354 BCE) chose Cyrus as the subject of his novel the Kyropaideia and presented him as an ideal king and a paragon of every conceivable moral virtue. He gives us a graphic word sketch of Cyrus and shows us how he was indeed a character who impressed greatly on the generation, George A. F. Knight, Servant Theology: A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 40-55: International Theological Commentary (Edinburgh / Grand Rapids: The Handsel Press / William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1984), 85.
199 The Persians were a subject people within the Median Empire. The Medes and the Persians were closely related people of Aryan stock who had migrated southwards from the plains of Southern Russia some centuries earlier: they first appear in Assyrian annals of the ninth century B.C. The Median Empire at the time of Cyrus’ birth was extremely extensive, covering roughly the area of modern Iran together with part of ancient Assyria and northern Mesopotamia and a large part of Asia Minor. Cyrus’ father was king of Anshan, a small vassal kingdom east of the Tigris, R. N. Whybray, The Second Isaiah (London / New York: T and T Clark, 2003), 10, 11.
which can be noticed when a comparison between the wordings of the Cyrus cylinder on which Cyrus recorded his takeover of Babylon and his acts of deity restoration with ideas that are mentioned in the chosen text of Isaiah expressing about Cyrus. These ‘seem’ to stem from his direct borrowing of ideas from Cyrus’ propaganda of the day rather than from coincidence or from a shared world-view in which each was generated independently of the other. In both, the native god selects Cyrus to be his human agent of change and restoration. ‘Marduk scanned and looked through all the countries, searching for a righteous ruler willing to lead him (i.e. Marduk) in the annual procession. Then he pronounced the name of Cyrus, king of Anshan, declared him to be ruler of the entire world. This same idea is echoed in Isaiah 43:14 and 45:1-2. There Cyrus is called the shepherd, the anointed one of Yahweh, whom Yahweh has called by name to send to Babylon to break down all the bars and turn the shouting of the Chaldeans to lamentations. Yahweh has grasped Cyrus’ right hand to subdue nations before him and ungird the loins of kings. Cyrus’ main job after conquering Babylon is to restore temples that were destroyed so that their gods can be returned to their habitations and to enable the exiled groups return to their former homes. I also gathered all their former inhabitants and returned to them their habitations. Furthermore, on the command of Marduk, the great lord, all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus has brought into Babylon, to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed, in their former chapels, the places that make them happy. His restorations were intended to win the support of all those who were angry at the cultic reforms that Nabonidus had introduced. Yahweh was not included in this group of deities.

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203 In the eyes the author of chaps 40-55, this mighty warrior has value solely as the instrument of mission, just as much. Cyrus is chosen from all other possible alternatives to be his instrument. In this way God has chosen the unlikeliest of persons to be his instrument. The second part of Isaiah (chaps. 40-55) portrays Cyrus who will carry the lambs in his bosom home to the ruins of that Jerusalem which figures centrality in God’s cosmic plain (cf. Matthew 16:21; Mark 10:33; Luke 9:31; Revelation 21:2). Cyrus is no less than an “arm of the Lord” (cf. 63: 11-12). George A. F. Knight, Servant Theology: A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 40-55, 86.

Nevertheless, the author had dreamt of repatriation and the rebuilding of Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem on the basis of the rhetoric contained on the Cyrus cylinder. He could pretend that Cyrus' actions would include the return of Yahweh and his people to Judah, prompted not by Marduk but by Yahweh. But to do so, he felt obliged to adapt the certainty expressed by the priests of Marduk about Cyrus. He had been a chosen divine agent, which had come from knowledge that Cyrus had ordered restoration work to be done on various temples. He also took initiative to send home some statues of the deities. He was well aware that no such edict had yet been issued on behalf of the temple in Jerusalem and the Judeans in exile. He was left to assert and contextualize that Cyrus had been chosen and called by Yahweh. Cyrus appeared to be blurred of such an understanding: "For the sake of Jacob my servant and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name; I surname you, though you do not know me" (45:4). In this way, he could see a scapegoat for a delay in Cyrus' decision to include Yahweh and Judah as Cyrus was not fully aware of his status as Yahweh's agent in the restoration program. His logic could even cover the failure of the hoped-for repatriation to materialize, since he did not know that he was acting as Yahweh's agent instead, wrongly believed he was Marduk's chosen agent. In this sense, Cyrus could develop ‘Samson syndrome’ (Judges 13–16); being unaware that he had been selected by Yahweh, he would misuse or misdirect his talents. Evidence of Cyrus' restoration work on some temples has been confirmed archaeologically. On the other hand, he probably limited such work to very

worthy and pious substitute; he finds in David, but Marduk searches and found a worthy and pious substitute in Nabonidus and Cyrus.


Excavations at Uruk in the sanctuary named Eanna, which was dedicated to the goddess Ishtar, uncovered bricks bearing a stamp that read ‘Cyrus, king of the lands, who loves the Esagila and the Ezida, son of Cambyses, the mighty king, I’. Esagila was the temple of Bel-Marduk at Babylon and Ezida was the main temple of Nabu at Borsippa. Every year the statue of Nabu was carried in procession from Borsippa to Babylon at the New Year feast to receive homage beside the statue of Bel-Marduk. A brick uncovered at Warka bears a similar stamp: ‘Cyrus, builder of the Esagila and the Ezida’. At Ur, Cyrus restored the Enunmah temple complex that Nabonidus had altered. Bricks from that excavation bear a long inscription: ‘Cyrus, king of all, king of Anshan, son of Cambyses, King of Anshan, the great gods have delivered all the lands into my hand; the land I have made to dwell in peaceful habitation’. Roland de Vaux, “The Decrees of Cyrus and Darius on the Rebuilding of the Temple” in *The
important sanctuaries with long-standing traditions and high visibility, especially ones that Nabonidus had neglected, so that he could receive the maximum propagandistic benefit for the least investment of resources. So this was a well-planned strategy which the biblical text also facilitated to a great extent. Here the prophet shows how God is going to use His plans for Cyrus and thus Cyrus too got his advantage.

There is a possibility to see that the name included and the worth ascribed to the Persian king Cyrus which, could be a latter interpolation into the text and could be because of the strong influence and the goodwill the author wanted to generate. According to Sugirtharajah, “What Postcolonialism did was to introduce power and politics into the world of literary criticism in such a way as to expose how some literature, art and drama were implicitly linked to ‘dominant’ colonialism.”


According to Said, “Knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control.” Sugirtharajah further opines, “The key to power is knowledge, and true power is held with the conviction that the ruler knows better than the ruled, and must convince the ruled that whatever, the colonial master does is for the benefit of the ruled.”

Therefore, the text at times could be used to portray and demand the worth that the dominant should get as the knowledge is promoted. The benefit of the press and the elite at the disposal of the colonial superpower would promote their interest.

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4.12. Summary

This chapter is very essential in making clear that the Babylonian Empire which was responsible for the destruction of the first temple and the deportation of the people had its own agenda. The temples in the West Asia had lot of economic, social, religious, political attachments. An important source of temple revenue was the tithe. It was collected from all the population. The king also paid the tithe. There were many strata of people serving in the temple. They managed the temple’s estates, supervised the temple slaves, and organized the allocation of the temple revenues to various purposes. Thus their functions were of an administrative, not religious character. The similar layer of the priest could be noticed during the time when the Jerusalem temple was destroyed showing similarity with the West Asian world. The destruction would lead to total mockery of the whole system of Judah. The Babylonian empire as dealt in the passage clearly indicates the ransacking of the Jewish Temple and displaying the power by totally destroying the temple and the things present. The books in the Bible are demonstrating the exilic time, it shows the extent of the damage done to the people of God, the loss they underwent in terms of losing their homeland, which led to the ransacking of the theological foundations that they held for so long, the loss of Kingship, the Temple and the thorough and strategic destruction in its fullness by the Babylonian Empire. The exilic period shows the Babylonian empire’s role in confiscating the sacred vessels and defaming the people of Israel to assert the superiority of their gods and goddesses. Though, the pain that the people had undergone was unrepairable and heart breaking as result of disobedience to God, the first text dealt from the book of Jeremiah clearly portrays. It is a chapter that made the people to recollect during the exile of the fate that they had met in their history. The Temple was ransacked, completely destroyed and people taken into exile, some people left behind and the others forced to take by themselves, the Egyptian exile. The theological significance is dealt elaborately in this chapter. On the contrary, the other text from the book of Isaiah portrays that God did not leave His people but when discouragement was at its peak, God gave the people a great hope of the returning back to the land of their forefathers. God promised His people through the prophecy where the author presented Cyrus as the shepherd and His anointed. This title was totally new for an outsider as dealt in the text. This chapter helps to see the urgency of the author to use these titles. This helped both ways from the empire’s perspective to assert that he is the redeemer and also from people who were longing hope of their return. This makes the chapter very important for the understanding the transition time and its importance for the rebuilding of the Temple during the early period of the Persian kingdom. The role of empire to
present its emperor as one who is very much important for the restoration program, the designation which was not used for any other person outside the fold of the people of God is suddenly given a new dimension. This portrays that religion, politics, economics, social and cultural dimensions are facilitated and decided by the dominant and people in the periphery are made to oblige generously to the dominant.
CHAPTER 5

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE AND ITS BACKGROUND STUDY REGARDING THEIR POLICIES TOWARDS THE TEMPLE BUILDING

5.1. Introduction

The restoration of the exilic community ranks among the most dominant themes in prophetic literature.\(^1\) Therefore this chapter will deal with the details of how the restoration and the other development took place. In the last few decades, resurgence in the study of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods has been undertaken. Biblical scholars and archaeologists alike have made a ransacking effort to unravel the textual and artifactual imprints of emergent Israel,\(^2\) the "golden ages"


of the monarchical rule\textsuperscript{3} and Israelite prophecy\textsuperscript{4} on the one hand and setting the stage for the emergence of nascent Judaism and Christianity on the other.\textsuperscript{5} There

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\textsuperscript{5} There is a marked tendency for New Testament Introductions to begin their discussion of historical backgrounds with the Hellenistic period. See, e.g., H. C. Kee, \textit{Understanding the New Testament} (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983); J. B. Tyson, \textit{The New Testament and
appears that not much consideration was given to the postexilic (initial time of the return) in depth, hence, it was common for the province of Yehud to be treated as sidelined or in periphery. Thus, Yehud has rarely been dealt elaborately in full-length. Instead, it has more often been examined in journal articles or as part of more traditional histories of Israel, of Judaism or of the Persian Empire or period.

6 This Yehud province included those who had remained on the land during the exile and those who returned from Babylon during the Persian period. These returnees certainly identified themselves as the ‘true seed of Israel’ and had at best an uneasy relationship with the ‘people of the land’. Charles E. Carter, The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study, 33.


Recently, scholars have begun to pay more attention to the Persian period and to Yehud, spawning a number of significant studies.\textsuperscript{11} The Society of Biblical Literature sponsored a study group devoted to the Sociology of the Second Temple;\textsuperscript{12} the Cambridge History of Judaism came up with a volume on the Persian period;\textsuperscript{13} it is now commonplace to see references to the Persian period as the time in which all significant literary activity relating to "ancient Israel."\textsuperscript{14} Achaemenid History


\textsuperscript{14} One has to be aware of the fact that biblical Israel is a problematic construct. Schurer outlines the historical development of scribes/Torah scholars and describes their activities in the period
Workshop began its deliberations in the early 1980s and first published its proceedings in 1987.\textsuperscript{15} It was a privilege to participate in a seminar that took place in a place called Eisenach (Germany), the topic was Die Hebräische Bibel und die Perser.\textsuperscript{16} Hence all the developments in relation to the period of Yehud are an eye opener but to reconstruct with limited resources is a difficult endeavour, too. There are lot of articles and books which came into the modern era of discussion during the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century\textsuperscript{17} are taken into consideration for doing the research for this chapter.


\textsuperscript{16} This Seminar was held from 14\textsuperscript{th} May-17\textsuperscript{th} May, 2015 in Eisenach, Germany. Many papers on topics like, “Die Perser und der Pentateuch” by Reinhard Achenbach, “The Persians in Esther” by Isaak Kalimi, “Die Perser im Dodekapropheton” by Anselm C. Hagedorn, “Die Perser in der griechischen Literaturgeschichte” by Thomas Paulsen, “Die Perser im Buch Jesaja” by Uta Schmidt, “Die Perser bei Esra und Nehemia” by Uwe Becker, “What is Late Biblical Hebrew?” by Steve Fassberg, “Pseudo-Classicism in Late Biblical Hebrew” by Jan Joosten were presented.

5.2. Evidence for sources and scribes in the Persian Period

The difficulty that is faced by any researcher is that, it is impossible to reconstruct the development of the temple-state with any degree of precision and certainty, given the uncertain dating and reliability of our sources for Judah in the Persian period. The biblical evidence for the early postexilic period is more extensive than for the exile. ‘Judean sources, however, do give many indications of the political-religious struggles that were involved.’ The decree of Cyrus and the initial return of exiles to Judah are narrated briefly at the end of Chronicles (2 Chronicles 36:23-24). The most extensive witness to the period is Ezra-Nehemiah, in reality a single book. However, a close look at its contents shows that it presents a somewhat restricted view. Ezra 1-6 is a historical record largely of the events of the early postexilic period, namely, from the decree of Cyrus until the rebuilding of the temple, thus 539-515 BCE. The Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs, discussed below, describe what takes place during the first year of Ezra’s return (458 BCE) and for the twelve years in which Nehemiah served as governor of the Persian province of Yehud (445-433 BCE). It is very difficult to deal with the date of writing and the research does not allow us to get into all the details of the time of the books. On the other hand, it

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21 The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are more problematic as sources. The respective missions of Nehemiah and Ezra are now dated to the middle and end of the fifth century BCE, respectively, and the books based partly on their “memoirs” come from later in the second-temple period. Yet they present a telling picture of the rival forces engaged in the struggle to consolidate, subvert, or reform the nascent temple-state in Jerusalem—a struggle that seems to have continued through much of the Persian period. Refer to Richard A. Horsley, Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea, 16; Iain Provan et al., A Biblical History of Israel (Louisville / Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 285-286.
would be right to mention very precisely that the date of the canonical Books of Ezra and Nehemiah could have been between 400 and 200 BCE. The book of Esther purports to narrate a crisis in the Jewish community in Persia that takes place during the reign of Xerxes / Artaxerxes (between 486 and 465 BCE). The postexilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi also provide some insight into this time period.

There are some extra biblical sources that are relevant to our study. Among the most helpful are the Cyrus cylinder, which is already mentioned earlier, the Behistun inscription, the inscription of Ushaarazash, as well as the Aramaic Elephantine papyrus. These and other texts come into play as we try to fill out the picture of the period. Interestingly, we also have the testimony of early Greek historians like Herodotus, Xenophon and Ctesias, all contemporaneous with the Persian Empire. Traditionally, Herodotus has been considered basically reliable because he researched his study and showed himself critical of his sources at points, but Xenophon and particularly Ctesias have never met with the same level of confidence. However, in the present skeptical climate, no ancient historian escapes suspicion, including Josephus, the first century CE Jewish historian, particularly since he wrote long after the events of this period and often simply paraphrased the biblical story line. Extra biblical texts like those of the archives of the Murashu family bolster this assessment. The Murashu family was a prominent commercial agent during the mid to latter half of the fifth century BCE, thus overlapping with the events described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Archaeologists have recovered 879 tablets belonging to this archive, which describe their financial dealings. They were located in Nippur in Achaemenid (Persian) Babylonia, and their commercial dealings radiated out from there. Of interest to us is the mention of some eighty

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23 While the books of the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi surely reached their present form much later, they provide a (highly supportive) picture of the initial foundation of the Temple in the late sixth century. Refer to Richard A. Horsley, Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea, 16.
individuals with Jewish names. This accounting shows that at least some of those Jews who stayed in Persia rather than returning to Palestine were integrated into the society, although these tablets make clear that at least in this case the Jews were not at the top of the social ladder. They are cited only as witnesses and as small landowners. Even the successful integration of some in any case fails to mitigate the suffering endured by many who remained behind in the diaspora. McNutt also acknowledges this limitation but cautiously suggests that “the archaeological data we do have some consistency with some elements in the biblical record.” Grabbe affirms to the fact that the books Ezra-Nehemiah constitute the main source for the early postexilic period but history should not be just spelled out based on these biblical sources but the Persian inscriptions, papyri, coins and archaeology should be allowed to speak in their own right.

5.2.1. Bullae

Ten bullae from the province of Yehud which form the seal of a scribe have been preserved with two seals. On palaeographical grounds they have been ascribed to the late 6th century BCE and therefore can be connected with the Persian province of Yehud, i.e. the early postexilic period. These bullae provide evidence for the employment of scribes in the Persian administration of the province of Yehud. This non-literary evidence is comparable to references to the scribes Ezra, Zadok and Shimshai in Ezra-Nehemiah and documentary evidences from Egypt under Achaemenid rule.

5.3. Persians as the Colonial Power

The Persian Colonial Empire was continually forced to grapple with the forms of law and governance appropriate to Exilic Israelite community, taken during the

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28 This point is well stated and defended by Smith-Christopher in “Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact.” Refer to Iain Provan et al., *A Biblical History of Israel*, 283.


Babylonian Exile. This question of the necessary, possible and desirable relationship between colonial law and Israelite community produced a plethora of policies and dilemmas. It also created a new political significance for issues demarcated as social; particularly those related to religion especially the rebuilding of the temple, to those related to elite priestly class, to property, economic production and exchange. The web of Colonialism refers to the political, social, economic and cultural domination of a territory. Therefore, it is clear that the influence of colonialism did not disappear just because formal independence had been granted. The Persian Imperialism was extended even after once the people were allowed to go back to Judah for rebuilding the temple.

5.4. Transition from the Babylonian Empire to the Persian Empire

The Old Testament contains very little information from Palestine during the half century between the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar (587BCE) and the fall of Babylon to Cyrus (539BCE). Babylonians are attributed of taking the people of Judah into exile but the imperial strength did not last for long. Babylonian’s power quickly waned after the Jerusalem’s destruction. Babylon under Nabopolassar (626-605BCE) and his son Nebuchadnezzar (605-552BCE) was a formidable empire. After the latter’s death, however, he was succeeded in relatively quick succession by his son Amel-Marduk, his son-in-law Neriglissar, and his grandson Labashi-Marduk. We are not certain what brought Nabonidus to the throne as the final king of Babylon (555-539 BCE), but his idiosyncrasies helped explain what led to the final demise of an independent Babylonian empire. Nabonidus was from Harran, which was the worship center for Sin, the moon god. In any case, his privileging of the cult of the

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34 Imperialism is the policy of extending the rule of a nation or empire over other nations, Conrad Phillip Kottak, *Cultural Anthropology*, 346.
moon god led to the alienation of the powerful Marduk priesthood and eventually the loss of the people's affection. Indeed, though we are uncertain of his motives, Nabonidus moved to Tema in what is today Saudi Arabia and left his son and coregent, Bel-shar-usur (Belshazzar) on the throne in Babylon. Sources indicate that he returned to Babylon in 543 BCE in the light of threats from over the Zagros Mountains.

In the meantime, on the other side of those mountains, Cyrus was on the rise. He was the son of a Persian king (Cambyses I) who had married a daughter of the Median king Astyages. The rise of another empire, Media, threatened to take away Babylonia’s influence in the Mesopotamian region. Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, made an alliance against the Median Empire with one of its vassal, Persia. Quite possibly Persia was not taken seriously by the Babylonians since it had never been the world power, since it was a barbarian tribe from north, an area that Babylonia had never considered a significant threat to its imperial security. Assisted by the alliance, Babylonia directed its attention toward the west and south, entering into successful battles against the Syria and other regions under nominal Babylonians control. Persia's king, Cyrus, then attacked Media, led by his father-in-law, Astyages.

From 555 to 550 BCE, this alliance was effective in expanding Babylonian and Persian territory at Medias's expense. In c.a. 550 BCE, Cyrus' Persian forces took Ecbatana and effectively controlled the earlier Median Empire. From this position of power, Cyrus attacked the Median Empire's western holdings, surrounding Babylonia by 547 BCE. Despite Nabonidus' western retreat southward into Arabia, Cyrus succeeded in defeating the whole Babylonia by late 539 BCE. The near decade of Persian threat to Babylonia created a slow, gradual war, often noted for its use of propaganda and internal dissent. With the defeat of Babylonia, the Persian Empire, a

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37 Perhaps Tema was built as a shrine to the moon god, as a way to develop commercial and military connections. More likely, however, is the explanation that Nabonidus moved there in the light of a developing power struggle with the Marduk priesthood. Refer to Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the nations in the book of Isaiah (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 28.
number of changes took place in imperial administration. The time of exile soon ended and the character of Judah’s existence changed once more. Daniel 5 reflects the eve of the empire, with Belshazzar throwing a banquet where the writing on the wall indicated his almost immediate defeat. Before reaching the city of Babylon, Cyrus had defeated a major Babylonian army at Opis. Ancient tradition explains that the alienated elements within Babylon assisted Cyrus so that he did not have to shed blood as he entered the city. The year was 539 BCE a date that marks the transition, because of what followed Cyrus’s victory, to the postexilic period.

The Persians, a royal dynasty derived from Achemenes (thus Achaemenian and Achaemenid) and at this point led by Cyrus II, better known as Cyrus the Great, or just “Cyrus,” found themselves de facto rulers of Mesopotamia and all the eastern Mediterranean-including Palestine. The Exile ended in 539 BCE, when Cyrus of Persia, having conquered Babylon, permitted the Israelite exiles to return to their traditional homeland. It was a vast empire, larger and wealthier than its predecessors, wielding a high degree of influence over the eastern Mediterranean seaboard, including the province of Yehud centered on Jerusalem.

Once Persian imperial rule replaced the Babylonians, however, the previously deported Judean elite were restored to prominence and power in Jerusalem. The return of the exiles from Babylon afforded a chance to build up Jerusalem again and they tried to recapture national glory. But it could never be the same. Not only were the Persians firmly in control, but the Hebrews- now the Jews- had also undergone the pedagogy of the Exile.

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41 Herodotus provides an alternative tradition where Cyrus stopped the flow of water through a city river gate, allowing him to forcibly breach the city. Refer to Iain Provan et al., A Biblical History of Israel, 285ff.
Many did return, and a priestly commonwealth in and around Jerusalem was established under the Aramaic name Yehud. It was not a large community but by 522 BCE it may have reached a population of 20,000, when Zerubbabel (“offspring of Babylon”) succeeded Shesh-bazzar (Ezra 1:5-2:2). Of course, there was a mixture of motives. The religious zealots returned to rebuild the Temple and reinstitute the sacrificial services of Judaism: their attitude was shared by the Chronicler. But there is sufficient evidence to indicate that not all the returning exiles were so enthusiastic, and thereby we come upon one of the chief difficulties in understanding the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The Chronicler preferred to write in such a way as to make it appear that the returned exiles set to work immediately on the Temple. Perhaps they did, but if so, no significant progress had been made during Zerubbabel’s time or even later. Voices were raised in protest against the delay because, it was assumed, God could not begin his messianic age until the sacrifices were in order.47

5.5. The Brief sketch of the Empires in the Bible

The Hebrew Bible spells out different empires that made an impact on the people of God. Throughout the Old Testament Israel’s history, one can observe that one superpower or another dominated the political, economic, cultural, and religious life of the world as Israel knew it—Assyrian, then Babylon, then Persia, then Greece.48 A superpower or the dominant naturally thinks it is in a position to formulate any sort of plans and implement them. Formulating plans is integral to the life of a dominant. A nation does not become a superpower or dominant without making plans, and it does not remain one without making plans. And those plans can be means of implementing YHWH’s own intentions. So in reality, the superpower is not always able to implement the plans it formulates. Only a greater colonial power is in that position. The dominant can easily think it is the all-powerful, but it is not, because in some way or the other the colonial powers are at the disposal of YHWH. This fact undergirds Judah’s political destiny (e.g. Ps 46:7, 11) and thus affects people involved with Judah.49

All empires had huge political entities that lasted for hundreds of years and exercised power far beyond the reaches of their initial domain. The first one talked in the book of Genesis and Exodus is the Egyptian empire. Pharaoh’s imperial court

was wealthy, autocratic and dynastic. The empire dictated the lives of those inside, choosing where people would live and what work would occupy their days.

Although Egypt may be the first empire mentioned in the pages of the Hebrew Bible, other empires invite for attention within the Old Testament too. The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, based in Mesopotamia, exercised much more direct influence over the existence of Judah and Israel. The Assyrian Empire was responsible for the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel. The Assyrian Empire scattered the Israelites and assimilated into larger empire, so that their individual identity was lost to great extent.

As the time passed, a new empire conquered Assyria- the Babylonian Empire. Based in modern-day Iraq, the Babylonian Empire exercised great influence over politics and life throughout the region and came to control the politics of Judah and Jerusalem. “The Jews lost their identity as a nation. They were just another race of conquered people stirred into racially diverse soup of the Babylonian empire.”50 The earlier chapter has extensively dealt about this, so the researcher does not need to elaborate the details of the resistance and accommodation in the Babylonian Empire.

As powerful as the Babylonian Empire had become, it was not invulnerable. By the middle of the sixth century (ca. 550 BCE), some of the neighbouring people began to attack the Babylonian Empire. Some of these people grouped themselves together under the leadership of a family that traced itself back to ancestor named Achemenes.51 This group battled the Babylonian Empire and finally defeated it, setting itself up as an empire of its own, known as the Achaemenid Empire, or the Persian Empire. Its roots were in the once in the region called Persia and now known as Iran. “The Achaemenids also tried to shape the political, social, and demographic systems in Palestine according to their own military, economic, and governmental interests.”52

The Persian Empire lasted for more than two hundred years, from 539 BCE until forces led by a Greek from Macedon named Alexandria conquered the Persian

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51 *The Persian Period*, also called the Achaemenid Period, which refers to matters concerning an empire of southern and southwestern Asia during 539-333 B.C.E., whose emperors traced their lineage to the family of a certain Achemenes. Jon L. Berquist, “Constructions of Identity in Postcolonial Yehud” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, 53.
armies in 333 BCE. For those two centuries, Persia was the chief political influence over its peripheries, including the area around Jerusalem. To understand the development of the Old Testament during this time and especially the whole process of the rebuilding of the Second Temple, one must first understand Persia as an imperial power, and how empire works.53

This chapter tends to concentrate on the time of Persian domain and their influence on God’s people and in their outlook. The Babylonian imperial influence has come to an end by this time and the effect sent shock waves to the people in exile. Now, this section will deal with the background study of the Persians in relation to the rebuilding of the temple and scholars view on the Persian influence.54

5.6. Scholar’s Perspective on the Early Postexilic (Persian) Period55

The life in a postexilic community under Persian rule was for about two centuries, until Persia’s defeat in c.a. 333 BCE. Although these outlines are clear, the exact nature of the community’s life and faith during these two centuries requires careful analysis. And more concentration will be given to the early part of the Persian period as the topic demands to limit with the initial time of Persian influence during the rebuilding of the Second Temple. Most of the scholarly views are already mentioned in the first chapter. The scholars have given various reasons and strands that led for a hearty reception of the Persians.

In a very succinct manner, one can get the glimpse of various strands that were promoted by scholarly thinking. Some affirm the fact that internal force like the Jewish community not satisfied with the previous religious norms wanted to find a

54 Bruce C. Birch et al., A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament, 2nd edn. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 425. The author clears makes a very interesting distinction, the era about which we will comment is often called the post-exilic period, a phrase that is both useful and problematic. The phrase is useful because it points to a time in the mid-sixth century when some Yahwists were able to return from exile. However, the phrase is problematic because the “post-exilic period” has no end. From the time of the Babylonian exile, there were Jewish communities outside the land. One could say that the post-exilic period continues down to our own time. Hence, some scholars prefer to speak about “the Persian Period”, which commences with the imperium forged by Cyrus and concludes with the next empire to include Syria-Palestine that created by Alexander the Great. (The next era may be called the Greco-Roman period).
55 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social Historical Approach, 3-9.
different outlook. On the other hand, few scholars have emphasised that the Persian policies promoted the life of the people of Yehud. Both the strands appear to be very strong and therefore the researcher feels that it is better to take a middle strand and see that both the external and internal factors had contributed to the life of the Yehud after the return of the people of God. The developments in Judah depended on the contingencies and policies of the Persian regime. Recent years scholars have produced a far more critical and circumspect scholarly treatment of the history and literature of the Jerusalem temple-state, which questions the traditional understanding of the conducive role of the Persians.56

5.7. The Domains of the Empire

Empires are diversified and diffuse systems for organizing human life at all levels. This imperial organization is not benign; empires operate out of self-interest of the elite rulers. One must understand that the Persian Empire was not just as an organization that distributes resources, but as one that causes a directional shift of resources to serve the interests of a few and especially the empire itself. In order to conduct this directional movement, empires work by domination and by exploitation.57 This is true even with the Persians, they were no exceptions, Cyrus’ father whose name is Cambyses. Xenophon refers to him only as Cyrus’ father. He is introduced for one purpose only to offer military advice to his son on the eve of his departure for war. Nothing suggests that the advice given by his father was ill-considered, on the contrary, after hearing Cyrus goes on to lead a very successful military and political career putting his father’s advice into practice.58 As Gera

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57 Jon L. Berquist, “Resistance and Accommodation in the Persian Empire,” 43.

58 For Cyrus’ use of his father’s advise see, B. Due, The Cyropaedia: Xenophon’s aims and methods (Aarhus and Copenhagen: Aarhus University Press, 1989), 92-114; for other discussion
mentions, ‘The Persian king encourages his son actually to use such deceitful, unprincipled measures against the enemy in his forthcoming campaign....” 59 A successful king will give advices concerning the conduct of war and treatment of enemies as a legacy to his son. 60 Hence the Persian Empire had a legacy and all that they did was not for the benefit of the colonized but to suit their own gain.

Cyrus traditionally enjoyed a very good press. He was presented as plucky, honourable and lacking in vicious traits by Herodotus who also provides the interesting information that the Persians themselves regarded him as a ‘father.’ 61 Cyrus is well portrayed as a deliverer and showed concern even to the people of God. Colonists and exiles try to make their own space 62 and in the course of time both assimilate or selectively adopt culture of another. 63

### 5.8. The Cyrus’ Edict 64

In the first year of Cyrus’ reign in Babylon (538BCE), 65 in three places, 66 it has been mentioned that Cyrus issued a decree, that the exiles from Judah be allowed to


60 Gabriel Danzig, “Xenophon’s wicked Persian or, what’s wrong with Tissaphernes? Xenophon’s view on lying and Breaking Oaths,” 30.


65 Harry M. Buck, *The People of the Lord: The History, Scriptures, and Faith of Ancient Israel*, 379. He says that, despite the literary problems of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah there is no reason to doubt the substantial historicity of either of these two accounts. Duplication will be found in II Chronicles 36:22-23 and I Esdras 1:1-58. ‘The first year’ is not the first year of Cyrus’ reign, but the first year that Cyrus had contact with the exiles, 538 B.C., when Yahweh stirred his spirit. The Exile was concluded before the seventy years prophesied in the Book of Jeremiah.
return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple that had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The version found in Ezra 1:2-4 (see also 2 Chronicles 36:23 and, in Aramaic, Ezra 6:3-5):

“A superficial reading of the book of Ezra suggests an early return of the exiles. There are, however, no sources from the Persian court that independently support the historical claims in the book of Ezra. The Cyrus cylinder has been interpreted as showing a liberal policy of respect towards other religions. The inscription would make clear that Cyrus’s policy towards the Jews was not unique but fitted the pattern of his rule. Kuhrt, however, has made clear that the inscription is of a

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66 Cyrus issued a decree ordering the restoration of the Jewish community and cult in Palestine. The Bible gives two reports of this: in Ezra 1:2-4 and ch.6:3-5. The latter is part of a collection of Aramaic documents (Ezra 4:8 to 6:18) presumably preserved in the Temple and incorporated by the Chronicler in his work, the authenticity of which need not to be questioned, R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), 823 ff. Also read, John Bright, *History of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 361.

It is in the form of a diakroma (Ezra 6:2), Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel* (Grand Rapids / Michigan: Baker Book House, 1998), 366. i.e. a memorandum of an oral decision of the king filed in the royal archives. It provides that the Temple be rebuilt and the expenses taken care by the royal treasury, lays down certain general specifications for the building, and directs that the vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar be restored to their rightful place. The other report (Ezra 1:2-4) is in Hebrew and in the language of the Chronicler; its authenticity is widely questioned, even by many who accept the Aramaic version, John Bright, *History of Israel*, 361-362). It takes the form of a royal proclamation as announced to subjects by heralds E. J. Bickerman, “The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra1” in *JBL* LXV (1946): 244-275. It states that Cyrus not only ordered the rebuilding of the Temple, but also permitted Jews who wished to return to their homeland; and those Jews who were remaining in the land were asked to assist for this venture. The Chronicler also reports the return of the sacred vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 1:7-11), and tells us that the project was placed in the charge of Shesh-bazzar “prince of Judah”—i.e., a member of the royal house. In all probability, Shesh-bazzar was the same as the Shenazzar who is listed in I Chronicles 3:18 as a son of Jehoiachin (The name appears as “Sanabassar” in I Esdras and in Josephus. For further reference read John Bright, *History of Israel*, 362. He quotes W. F. Albright, “Date and Personality of the Chronicler” in *JBL* 40 (1921): 108-110.


propagandistic and stereotypical in nature. The text reflects the world-view of the Marduk priests of the Esagila temple at Babylon. They present Cyrus as a ‘good prince’ replacing the ‘bad prince’ Nabonidus. The return of divine images and people related in Cyrus cylinder 30-34, if not mere propaganda, refers to measures taken on a rather local scale. It is divine images from cities surrounding Babylon that are brought back to the shrines from where they were exiled by Nabonidus. This passage has nothing to do with Judaeans, Jews or Jerusalem. This decree triggered a return to Judah that probably took place in waves, most of which we do not hear about. The text is selective, and we only read about those groups that returned under the leadership of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel with the intention of rebuilding the temple. On the surface, this gesture seems to have remarkably the magnanimous hand of God in it and expresses gratitude toward Cyrus. On the other hand, William Robertson Smith in his Lectures on the Religion of the Semites (delivered in 1888-89 and first published in 1894) was certainly correct when he concluded: The worship of the second temple had lost the greater part of their original significance though it was an antiquarian recovery of forms because the intimate connection was lost with the national life.

5.8.1. Cyrus frees political prisoners

Additional information concerning Cyrus and his foreign policy, however, calls into question any idea that Cyrus was acting with entirely selfless motivation or with any special interest in Judah or its God. His generosity to the Jews was not unique but was paralleled by his benevolence to the Babylonians and to others. A clay cylinder inscribed with cuneiform writing and dating from Cyrus’s reign confirms that he conquered Babylon and that he released all Babylonian prisoners so that they could go back to their homelands, rebuild their temples, and worship their gods.

72 Iain Provan et al., A Biblical History of Israel, 286-288.
74 Refer to Appendix 1
Unsurprisingly in a document with a focus on Babylon, no mention of Yahweh or Judah is made here. Furthermore, the Cyrus Cylinder makes very clear that Cyrus resettled the exiles upon the command of Marduk. However, this text confirms what looks like a widespread Persian foreign policy of allowing at least certain people who had been subjugated by the Babylonians to return to their homelands and rebuild their cults. Because of the idiosyncratic religious views of Nabonidus described above, the Babylonian people, including the powerful Marduk priesthood were benefited from Cyrus’s policy of restoring certain native cults.

The Persians desired to satisfy their vassals, particularly those on the fringes of the empire like Judah, who could serve as a buffer toward their true enemies, whether Egypt or Greece or both. Since Palestine lay near the Egyptian frontier, it would have been to the king’s advantage to have a nucleus of loyal subjects there, and this may have influenced Cyrus’ decision. Yet even though Cyrus acted out of his enlightened self-interest, and though he certainly did not acknowledge Yahweh as Second Isaiah had expected, the Jews had a reason to be grateful. Persian presence forced biblical authors to rethink and formulate their theological and historical concepts in an attempt to maintain their ethnic identity.

Observers have long commented that the Cyrus edict in Chronicles and Ezra seems to reflect a Jewish perspective, which has raised doubts in some minds about its authenticity. Note, however, that the Cyrus’ Cylinder itself has a Babylonian perspective. Perhaps Cyrus entrusted native scribes who were reliable to him, to compose these decrees in a language that their recipients could understand and appreciate. Only in recent years has fuller attention been given to the ways in which imperial rule impinged on life in second-temple Yehud, because of Persian military

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75 Michael B. Dick, “The “Historical David’s Rise to Power” and the Neo-Babylonian Succession Apologies” in David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts, eds. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2004): 6. He makes comparative study between David, Nabonidus, and Cyrus. Yahweh searches for a worthy and pious substitute, he finds in David, but for Cyrus, Marduk searches and found a worthy and pious substitute in Cyrus. Josephus (Ant. XI, I, 1f.) would have us believe that Cyrus was moved by reading the prophecies of Isaiah (Second Isaiah) concerning him which is most unlikely. This to some extent could be said but he was more appreciative of Marduk as the Cyrus cylinder points to the fact and that he had his own agendas.

76 Iain Provan et al., A Biblical History of Israel, 287.

77 John Bright, History of Israel, 362-363.


contingencies and strategies, imperial policies of taxation, or imperial concern to control local populations and local conflicts. The result is greater awareness of how Persian imperial rule was far more intrusive than previously imagined. In some cases literature and inscriptions previously read as evidence for Persian imperial grants of local autonomy and affirmation of local tradition turned out rather to indicate Persian steps to control local affairs.\textsuperscript{80}

Alternatively, the text in Ezra 1:2-4 is a paraphrase and selective rendition of the original Cyrus decree.\textsuperscript{81} No matter what the Persian motivation or the scope of its restoration, the Jewish community living in exile saw the hand of God in this decree.\textsuperscript{82} The decree of the Persian king Cyrus recorded in Ezra 1:2-4, authorizing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple, is certainly consonant with Cyrus’ religious policy in general, as set out in Cyrus cylinder.\textsuperscript{83}

5.9. The Early Postexilic Period: The Silver Spoon Treatment but to Facilitate Their Own Hidden Agendas

5.9.1. The initial years of the Returnees: A time of hardship

The Biblical record, however, highlights a different feature of Persia’s imperialist expansion into the West Asian Mediterranean seaboard. The Persian Empire allowed and perhaps encouraged resettlement throughout the empire. In particular, the empire allowed Jews living in Babylonia (whose grandparents were probably the ones deported by the Babylonian Empire from Jerusalem to Babylonia) to move to Jerusalem. This gave Babylonian Jews the option of leaving behind the relatively wealthy core of the empire for Yehud, a territory that was more provincial, less populated, less prosperous, yet potentially growing faster and more open to social change. During the first two decades of Persian imperial rule, this migration of Jews from Babylonia, which they referred to as a “return” was rampant and more people tried to move to their ancestral lands. Porter labels them as the Charter Groups

\textsuperscript{82} Iain Provan et al., \textit{A Biblical History of Israel}, 286-288.
which must be understood in the broader context of the “sociology of power”. Power is defined as the “recognized right to make effective decisions on behalf of a group of people”. He defines a Charter Group as an ethnic elite that moves into a geographical region, establishes its power base, and creates a sociological and cultural structure distinct from the one already existing in that region. Thus, a Charter Group is “the first ethnic group to come into a previously unpopulated territory, as the effective possessor.” “A Charter Group may have to conquer an indigenous group to establish its claim.”84 Taking use of this Charter Group, John Kessler brings three important point of convergence with the Sociology of early Persian Yehud that is worth noting: The Charter Group may be understood as transplanted, enfranchised elite, supported by external political structures. Given the realities of imperialism, colonialism, ethnic enclaves, and dominant elite in the Achaemenid Period, the Golah functioned as a Charter Group: (1) the nature and purpose of the Golah’s geographic displacement and enfranchisement; (2) the Golah’s control over key sociopolitical institutions; and (3) the Golah’s ongoing struggle for self-definition and the inclusion and/or exclusion of outsiders.85

Over time, this migration changed the Yehud’s social structure. There may have been a noticeable increase of population and there may well have been conflicts around issues of language, culture and lifestyle. Some of these migrants were likely to be more supportive of the Persian Empire which led them to the coming in positions of power.86 The early Second Temple Yehud87 was a place of conflict and disillusionment.88 The time of the returnees was not an easy time. The political

86 Jon L. Berquist, “Resistance and Accommodation in the Persian Empire,” 47.
87 “Yehud,” a term found in texts and artifacts from Palestine from the sixth century through the fourth century BCE. Yet scholars have not been able to agree on common borders for this polity. As a result, estimations of its social, economic, and demographic resources radically differ. John W. Wright, “Remapping Yehud: The Borders of Yehud and the Genealogies of Chronicles” in Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period, eds. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006): 67.
scenario of the world changed (538-522 BCE). The prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah did not come to be as real as people expected. There was no sudden and universal triumph of Yahweh’s rule; no flocking of Jews to Zion; no turning of Cyrus and the nations flocking to worship. On the contrary, Cyrus was more interested in extending his campaigns. All the western Asia was under his flag, no one could compete with his strength. He created absolute peace and no nation dared to revolt against him. Soon after his death, after one of his campaigns his eldest son Cambyses (530-522) took the lead. His greatest achievement was including Egypt in his territory which he achieved by 525 BCE. Many other nations like the Greeks of Libya and others submitted to him. Elephantine text of a century later mentions of Cambyses as one who destroyed the Egyptian temples, but it is unlikely that he brought any changes to his father’s religious policy regarding the Jews.

The returnees did not get a red carpet treatment and their situations were disheartening and full of frustrations. As Zechariah 4:10 says it was ‘a day of small things.’ One of the reasons was that the community was very tiny. The people by 522 BCE who were already and who later joined would have been little above 20,000. Jerusalem remained largely a ruin (Nehemiah 7:4).

The returnees faced years of hardship, privation, and insecurity. ‘The returnees found that their land had been occupied in their absence, and if they forcibly repossessed that land, then this, together with the information from Nehemiah 13: 5, suggests a picture of communal strife, for at least some part of the period.’ They had to make a fresh start, they had to face sequence of poor seasons and partial crop failures (Haggai 1:9-11; 2:15-17), which ruined them without adequate food and clothing (Haggai 1:6) and made their progress slow. The aristocrats of Samaria, who had regarded Judah as part of their territory was openly intimidating. It is unlikely to believe that Jews who resided in the land were complacent the people who were left behind during exile were not very happy of

89 ANET, 492.
90 K. Gallling, “The Gola List According to Ezra 2 / Nehemiah 7” in JBL 70 (1951): 149-158. The total population then was less than 50,000. But even if there were that many in ca. 520 BCE, this would perhaps be less than half the population of Judah before 587BCE.
the returnees and therefore might have welcomed with much reservations. They had regarded the land as theirs (Ezekiel 33:24) they would have been least interested to give place to the newcomers and consent in their claims to ancestral holdings. The fact that the returning exiles considered themselves the true Israel and tended to draw a separating line from Samaritans and their less orthodox brethren as from people who are unclean (cf. Haggai 2:10-14) created a greater wedge of tension. This internal bitterness might have led to violence and public safety was at stake (Zechariah 8:10). “The question of identity was one of the most important concerns faced by the post-exilic community.”

In Ezekiel 11: 1-21 and 33: 23-29, the elite returnees are considered as the true possessors and the people remained are seen as illegitimate usurpers. Similarly in Jeremiah 24:1-10 the exiled people are considered as good figs and those who remained are bad figs. Ezra and Nehemiah doesn’t mention of them. The returnees found themselves in a variety of complex relationships.

It is, therefore, scarcely surprising that work on the Temple, before taking the momentum came to a halt. The people succumbed to the struggle for existence and had scanty resource. Their energy was sapped out and hence could not continue the project. The aid promised by the Persian court probably never materialized in effective proportions as mentioned earlier because Cyrus was involved in constant fights. Hence different reasons enhanced inertia altogether which reduced the pace of development. A few years later no one at the court had any recollection of Cyrus’ edict at all (Ezra 5:1 to 6:5). Many Jews, who were discouraged with the poor structure they were building (Haggai 2:3; Ezra 3:12f.) were ready to give it up. Meanwhile, Shesh-bazzar was succeeded as governor by his nephew Zerubbabel, son of Jehoiachin’s eldest son Shealtiel, who had apparently arrived in the interim at the head of a further group of returning exiles. Direction of spiritual affairs was assumed by the high priest Joshua ben Jehozadak (Haggai 1:1; Ezra 3:2; etc.), a man of Zadokite lineage born in the exile (1 Chronicles 6:15), who had apparently

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95 Ezra-Nehemiah and Haggai and 1Chronicles 3:19 make him the son of Pedaiah consistently, Shealtiel’s younger brother. Was he a physical son of Pedaiah by Shealtiel's widow through levirate marriage? His name, like Shesh-bazzar's, is Babylonian: “Offspring of Babylon.”
returned at the same time.⁹⁶ He was certainly present (cf. Haggai 1:1, etc.) by the second year of Darius I (520BCE), and all that could be said is that Zerubbabel arrived between 538 and 522 BCE. At least, it appears from Haggai 1:3- 11; 2:15-17 that the major return of exiles (probably led by Zerubbabel) took place quite a few years before 520.⁹⁷ In any event, eighteen years after work on the Temple had begun, it had not progressed beyond the foundations—indeed, had stopped altogether. The community was too poor, too harassed, and too disconsolate, to keep it going. The powerful have always their own vested interest and it was true with the Persians and also the charter group who came with the support of the Persian Empire.

### 5.9.2. The Identity and Function of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel who facilitated the Persian interest

Control and supervision of Yehud, moreover, was maintained by governors sent by the imperial regime. The personal names of governors stamped on the handles of storage jars along with papyri and literary sources now enable us to construct a list of ten or more governors sent by the imperial regime through the whole period of Persian rule.⁹⁸ That is, Yehud was a subdivision of the Persian Empire and not an autonomous temple-state.⁹⁹

Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel¹⁰⁰ are two names associated with the early postexilic period. They are both described as leaders of the community, and they

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⁹⁷ A short note written by A. Gelston, “The foundations of the Second Temple” in VT 16 (1966): 232-235. This mentions the clarity about the using of the תֹּס (Haggai 2:18) meaning restore repair and make firm”. It is also interesting to note that in post-Biblical Hebrew it can have the meaning ‘rebuild (a ruin).” Hence this short note helps to get clarity about the foundation being laid by Zerubbabel in Haggai 2:15, 18 and Zechariah 4:9.


¹⁰⁰ According to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, just as ‘God’s people’ were taken into exile, so also ‘God’s people returned from exile and rebuilt the temple. Judah had a governor appointed by the Persians; however, at the beginning of Persian rule, Judah could be said to be under a ‘diarchy’ of Persian governor and high priest. Some have objected to this concept. Refer to Deborah W. Rooke, Zadoks’s Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University, Press, 2000), 128-135; Walter H. Rose, Zemah and Zerubbabel: Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period, JSOTSupp 304 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), arguing that the governor was in charge of the province. In the case of Zerubbabel, though, he is frequently mentioned in
both have connections with the rebuilding of the temple. However, some ambiguity surrounds their identity, and not surprisingly, scholarly controversy has arisen concerning their role and their relationship. The two main figures of the Persian period, Ezra and Nehemiah, carry out their missions as agents of the Persian government. Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah have all been traditionally understood as heroes of the restoration of Judah. Yet these figures known from later biblical books, two of them as governors and the other an imperial envoy, all had conjunction with Joshua the high priest (Haggai 1:12, 14; 2:2, 4; cf. Ezra 3-5), as if they worked closely in harmony. Lester L. Grabbe, A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, vol. 1, Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah, 147. When we proceed into the later history of Judah / Yehud we come upon Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel. Sheshbazzar’s status is not easy to grasp; the titles of נֵבֶנְו (Ezra 1:8) and מֵט (Nehemiah 5:18) are ascribed to him in later sources. The royal status held by Zerubbabel is clearly alluded to in the book of Haggai (Haggai 2:23). Also the book of Zechariah alludes to the royal status of Zerubbabel who sits on a throne and reigns (Zechariah 6:13). In other texts in the book of Haggai Zerubbabel is called ‘governor’ (Haggai 1:1; 2:2, 21). According to 1 Chronicles 3:17-24, Zerubbabel had a Davidic descent, he had the twofold rank i.e. Royal figure and Governor. Besides, it is important to note that Sheshbazzar was of Davidic origin as was also his successor, his nephew Zerubbabel. So Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were both from Judean kingly line and Persian governors. It was only under Darius I between 520 and 515 BCE that the Davidic monarchy came to an end by a civil war which was won by the priests. H. Niehr, “Religio-Historical Aspects of the ‘Early Post-Exilic’ Period” in The Crisis Of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times, eds. Bob Becking and Marjo C. A. Korpel (Leiden / Boston / Köln: Brill, 1999): 230, 231. Some scholars are of the opinion that both could be one, the above is a straightforward reading of the biblical text concerning these two important biblical personalities. Scholars have recognized some problems with the biblical picture presented. One of the most important has to do with the relationship between Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel in connection with the temple: they are both said to have laid the foundation of the temple. This confusion has led some to raise the possibility that there is really only one individual here and that this one individual has two names, (A recent advocate of this view is J. Lust, “The Identification of Zerubbabel with Sheshbazzar” in ETL 63 (1987): 90-95.) We only have to look at the book of Daniel to see that an individual can have two names (Daniel / Belteshazzar). ‘Zerubbabel, whose role appears to have been primarily rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, has previously been interpreted as a descendant of the Davidic monarchy, even as a “messianic” pretender. He apparently did have ethnic ties to the deported Jerusalemite elite, but he had become a Persian courtier’. Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach, 57. Refer to Richard A. Horsley, Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea, 18, 19.

101 Iain Provan et al., A Biblical History of Israel, 288.

102 Ezra is seen as the friend of Artaxerxes who sent him to Jerusalem with full political, administrative and religious powers (Ezra 7: 25-26), Refer to Giovanni Gerbini, History and Ideology in Ancient Israel, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1988), 151.
either Babylonian names (Zerubbabel) or roots in the imperial court (Nehemiah and Ezra). Although all three apparently had ties with the deported Jerusalemites who were living in Babylon, they were all clearly appointed by and were taking orders from the Persian imperial regime. And finally, the reconstituting of the community under Ezra as one defined by allegiance to the ‘law’ took place with explicit Persian permission and may also have been instigated by them as well.

Sheshbazzar is only mentioned in the book of Ezra (1:8, 11; 5:14, 16). He is called “the prince of Judah” (1:8), not necessarily indicating a connection to the royal (Davidic) family but certainly pointing to the fact that he was a recognized and important leader or head of an investigative team to gather information. He is associated with the first return after the decree of Cyrus and is charged with the return of the temple vessels that had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar and placed in his temple in Babylon. In Ezra 5, Sheshbazzar is again mentioned, this time in the context of a letter written during the reign of Darius (522-486 BCE) about his earlier activities. We here learn that Cyrus had appointed Sheshbazzar as governor of Yehud (the name the Persians gave to the province that occupied the area formerly known as Judah) and that he laid the foundation to the temple.

Zerubbabel, who is more extensively mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah as well as in Haggai and Zechariah, is also mentioned in conjunction with an early returnee to Yehud soon after the Cyrus decree, most likely in the late 520BCE. Zerubbabel was made civil commissioner, who was associated with Jeshua / Joshua, the high

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priest, in Ezra 2, and the two are also related in Zechariah. According to Ezra 3, Zerubbabel and Jeshua rebuilt the altar and started official sacrifices again; strikingly, in light of what was attributed to Sheshbazzar above, they are also said to have laid the foundation of the temple itself (Ezra 3:10). However, the text informs us that Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the others were approached by “the enemies of Judah and Benjamin” who volunteered their services in the rebuilding. After they were rebuffed, the “enemies” succeeded in shutting down their efforts, and the construction project languished for some time. At this moment, the text abruptly narrates later opposition to the resettlement of the people of God (Ezra 4:6-23) before picking up the story of the rebuilding of the temple. Ezra 4:24-5:1 describes how the prophets Haggai and Zechariah started exhorting the people of God to complete the job of rebuilding the temple. This will be dealt in detail when the texts will be dealt in the next chapter. This rebuilding took place in the second year of Darius (520 BCE), and again there was opposition, this time associated with Tattenai, the governor of the province of Trans-Euphrates. Hence the difficulties the returnees...
had to face were both a reluctant local population and hostile neighbours.'

However, after Darius checked the official records from the time of Cyrus, he determined that this project should be completed, and so it was. After a divine decree issued by Darius, the elders of the Jews completed the project (Ezra 6.14-15).

The first chapter of Haggai describes God’s message to Zerubbabel to return to the task of rebuilding the temple. Haggai also records Zerubbabel’s obedient response to God’s demand, which took place in Darius’s second year 520 BCE. When Haggai pointed this out to the people, they duly repented. Then, under divine inspiration and the leadership of Zerubbabel, the local governor, and Yeshua, the high priest, they set to work and built a new temple. Here divine jealousy led to human punishment, human repentance, divine forgiveness, and the divine inspiration of human agents, who then took direct responsibility for the work of temple rebuilding. On the other hand, yet according to the larger narrative, none of these people would have acted without divine mandate or divine inspiration. The temple-rebuilding was not their idea. Though this was under the regime of empire and elite and with their unspoken and unheard agendas, it would not have being possible if God was not behind.


114 The prophet Haggai, however, never identifies himself as a Davidide. It is possible that the notion of a diarchy (rule by a high priest and a prince) was influenced by later views of early second-temple times. The “memoirs” of Nehemiah make it clear that he was sent by the Persian court as governor (Nehemiah 2:9-10, 19-20). Richard A. Horsley, Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea, 19.


In this chapter, Zerubbabel is governor of Yehud. The book of Haggai’s tantalizing conclusion is a divine oracle to Zerubbabel that, though circumstances are dubious at present, the people of God have a momentous future. Indeed, the book concludes with a strong affirmation of the governor: “I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you” (Haggai 2:23). Zechariah, a prophet who also encouraged the rebuilding of the temple at this time, has an oracle that not only prods Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the people to the task at hand but also positively appraises the governor. His importance is associated with the rebuilding of the temple according to Zechariah 4:7-8. He and Jeshua are the two olive branches, besides the two gold pipes that pour oil into the gold lampstand. They are those who are “anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth” (4:14).

In conclusion, Sheshbazzar and Zerrubbabel were Babylonian-appointed governors of a small part of the Persian Empire. They were commissioned to return with other exiles and begin the process of restoring the community in Jerusalem and specifically the reconstruction of the temple. The work began during Cyrus’ reign, but was halted for a while because of opposition from the “enemies of Judah and Benjamin.” The work of the temple was then completed during Darius’ reign in 515 BCE. The broader historical context indicates that the Persians could have their own self-interest in mind and this will be explored more once the texts are interpretated. The Persian government was interested in having loyal vassals in their native lands that could support the expansionist and defensive strategies which lay at the core of the empire.

5.10. The Rebuilding of the Temple

The edict of Cyrus the Great allowing a group of exiles to return to Jerusalem could be seen as a well-calculated policy that was aimed to serve the interests of the Persian Empire. The Persians tolerated and even promoted local cults as a way to ensure the loyalty of local groups to the wider empire. The Persian kings encouraged the rise of loyal elite in Yehud, because of the province’s strategic and sensitive location on the border of Egypt. These loyal elite were recruited from the Jewish exiled community in Babylonia and were led by dignitaries who were closely connected to the Persian administration. Though the returnees were a minority in

Yehud, their religious, socioeconomic, and political status, and their concentration in and around Jerusalem gave them power far beyond their number.\textsuperscript{118}

The “Cyrus Decree” focuses on the temple. According to Cyrus, God had appointed him to rebuild the temple destroyed by the Babylonians. This commission led him to allow the returnees right after he took control of Babylon and its vassals. According to Berquist, Cyrus was motivated less by his stated theological reasons and more by military-economic goals.\textsuperscript{119}

5.11. The Effects of the Persian Kingdom on Yehud from various Perspectives: A Part of the Atrocity Program of the Persians

The Persian Empire and the colony of Yehud existed as a close knit social system. The Persian imperial history and society was an influential factor for Yehud’s internal development.\textsuperscript{120} Rebuilding temples such as the one in Jerusalem gave credence to the Persian imperial propaganda that the great emperor was the liberator who restored gods, temples, and peoples, after the terrible destruction and deportations of the Babylonians.\textsuperscript{121} The Persian imperial administration selected its government and enforced its own laws on the people of Yehud. At times, Persia’s influence differed as per the kings and their times: at times tolerant and at times, was more dictatorial and oppressive. Nevertheless, at all times Persia kept Yehud within this role as province or colony, as constructed by the empire itself.\textsuperscript{122} It is


\textsuperscript{122} Jon L. Berquist, \textit{Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach}, 131ff.
often overlooked that empires shape not only political and economic structures but also cultural, intellectual, religious and personal realities. In the current situation of Empire, people’s subjectivity is shaped in the new ways often unconsciously.\(^{123}\) This could be true with Persian Empire too and hence in the next few pages the impact is evaluated and this could be divided into political, economical, religious and socio-cultural dimensions.

**5.11.1. Political dimension\(^ {124}\)**

The promise of a Davidic monarch had the potential to destabilize the political situation in Yehud, especially early in the Persian period. During the rule of Darius I (522-486) there were rebellions in various parts of the empire, including Persia itself.\(^ {125}\) Consequently, it is hard to imagine that the Persians, as the occupying power, would have been untroubled by the community’s expectation that one of their own would one day appear as king and rule them. If the passage was understood by the Yehud community as referring to Zerubbabel, then it must have caused a great sense of both expectation that something wonderful might happen, and also apprehension about Persian reaction. The latter would hardly have looked favourably on one of their own appointees becoming the focus of a colonized people’s hopes for liberation. On the Yehudite side, a small section (the elites returned) of that community dependent on Persian goodwill to maintain positions of leadership or control would also not appreciate anyone threatening to upset the status quo. If projects such as the rebuilding of the temple and the construction of the walls of Jerusalem were dependent on the good graces of the Persian colonizers the local leadership in Yehud would not want such projects to be thwarted by any movement focused on the appearance of new king.\(^ {126}\) Similarly, where Jeremiah


\(^{126}\) John Hill, “The Book of Jeremiah (MT) and its Early Second Temple Background,” 168.
33:17-18 connects the Davidic monarchy with the restored worship, Ezekiel 43:1-2 and 44:1-3, minimize the role of the king.\(^\text{127}\)

The relation of the Persian Empire and the Yehud can be easily described from the political perspective of core to the Periphery or as the Colonizer and the Colonized. The differentiation between areas, classes and other sorts of grouping thus necessitates the comparison of imperial core and periphery.\(^\text{128}\) In ancient empires, a common distinction between the core and the periphery is the flow of food. Typically, the periphery contains peasants who produce food and send their surplus to the governing core, in which the inhabitants live as merchants or other types of elite but not as peasants. The peasants depend or exist within the framework of the core, though they produce their own food. The core provides military protection, trade and ideology.\(^\text{129}\) This was very much true with the people of Yehud, who were cultivating the land so that the Persian overlords could have enough food, when they have their garrison installed to fight up against the Egyptians. In this also, a political dictatorship is very much reflected but it is not very much spelt out and could be seen as a sugar coated atrocities on the colonized.


5.11.1.1. Colonialism

The political influences of the Persian Empire upon Yehud fall under the rubric of imperial-colonial relations. Persia developed Yehud as a secondary state. The book of Ezra also presents very clearly that the exile still continues by using the word ‘relief.’ The actual shape of God’s mercy: a remnant returned (Ezra 9:8b-c: תּוֹדֵד + פֶלֶטֶת, הֵיפֵיל). The mercy becomes manifest in the mere existence of a rest (versus total destruction) and in the return of this rest to Judah (versus a continuous exile). There are other tangible signs of mercy: the rebuilding of the temple and political and military safety (Ezra 9:9). All this is qualified with the twice mentioned word ‘relief’: “a little relief” (Ezra 9:8e, 9d: מַחְיָה מְעַט, מַחְיָה מְעַט), and this word is ambivalent. There is no total destruction and no more exile, but the political servitude continues. Therefore: “a little relief in our servitude.” As such a secondary state, Persia allowed Yehud to function on its own as long as it provided extensive support for the empire’s core in taxation and labour. The Persian Empire formed itself as a state and expanded itself into neighboring states in order to fulfill its own internal needs as an imperial power. Through its intrusion into neighboring non state organized regions, such as the Jerusalem area, it produced secondary states for the purposes of exploitation of resources. Yehud was such a colony, operated for the benefit of the Persian Empire. Yehud thus organized itself as a state, but its statehood operated within the limits imposed upon it by the empire.

Empires work by actually strengthening a local elite and turning them into collaborators. Any empire needs people who will maintain affairs at the local level, and often the best candidates for such work are those you know the local area very well. If not the local people, then the empire can relocate people from the imperial core to the periphery, where they can take on governmental functions that assist the empire in assimilating the new periphery. This seems to be the strategy of the Persian Empire, which allowed the considerable size to be deported. These people became the local leaders, and they in turn helped the empire with managing the

130 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A social and Historical Approach, 234.
131 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A social and Historical Approach, 134, 234, 245.
regional and local populates on the empire’s behalf. This act could be seen as mutual collaboration, the empire invested on them, and they in turn helped the empire. This collaboration given by the empire gave considerable freedom to the elites to decide and act. They probably accepted the empire’s investments because they saw advantages for themselves in becoming local elite. They could use these positions of power to accomplish their own personal and group goals. Nevertheless, they experienced a symbiotic relationship with the empire, in which their rise to local power assisted the empire and vice versa.\textsuperscript{134}

Yehud’s organization involved the presence of political leaders such as Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. These officials received their power on the basis of Persian appointment and fulfilled administrative tasks for the purpose of strengthening Persian influence and gain from Yehud. They also possessed ties to Yehudites culture and shared their allegiance with the goal of preserving Yehud as a state of its own, albeit a secondary state dominated by Persia. These governors managed the Persian program of intensification to increase the imperial use of resources.\textsuperscript{135} Control and supervision of Yehud, moreover, was maintained by governors sent by the imperial regime. This was not simply a temporary device at the outset (Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Elnathan at the end of the sixth century) and revived at times of disorder (Nehemiah, mid-fifth century), but then discontinued once a high-priestly regime consolidated its authority in Jerusalem. The personal names of governors stamped on the handles of storage jars along with papyri and literary sources now enable us to construct a list of ten or more governors sent by the imperial regime through the whole period of Persian rule.\textsuperscript{136} That is, Yehud was a subdivision of the Persian Empire and not an autonomous temple-state. Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah have all been traditionally understood as heroes of the restoration of Judah. Despite these positive portrayals, there is no indication of messianism. That is, there is no evidence that Yehud understand any of its governors as political leaders behind whom the populace should rally in rebellion to the

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ramond F. Person Jr. “The Ancient Israelite Scribe and Performer” in \textit{JBL} 117.4 (Winter, 1998): 608. This help through their writings as the scribes who could influence the most literate in their society and the illiterate by the oral teaching given based on the writings passed on to the literate.
\item Jon L. Berquist, “Resistance and Accommodation in the Persian Empire,” 45.
\item Jon L. Berquist, \textit{Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A social and Historical Approach}, 144.
\end{enumerate}
They were called pehah, “governor,” instead of some more explicitly royal title such as “king” or “chief.” Yehud consistently avoided any reference to kings that could create a perception of competition with the Persian government. Instead, the governors cooperated with Persia in administration of Yehud. “The goal of the colonial administration was to maintain the imperial extraction and to reproduce the conditions of imperialization. In other words, the local governor and his administration not only paid taxes and tribute at due time but they also had to keep a check on the Yehudites and their ideology so that they could see the benefit of remaining loyal colonials of the Persian Empire.” The local elite occupy a strange space within the colonial social world. In part, they are the colonized, but they are also active in the process of colonization and the reproduction of imperial / colonial ideology. Within the colony, they are the highest ranking local officials; within the empire, they are the lowest bureaucrats possible.

Zerubbabel, whose role appears to have been primarily rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem, has been previously been interpreted as a descendant of the Davidic monarchy, even as “messianic” pretender, but he becomes a Persian courtier. The “memoirs” of Nehemiah makes it clear that he was sent by the Persian court as governor (Nehemiah 2:9-10; 19-20). Similarly, Ezra was also commissioned by the Persian imperial regime to impose order on the situation in Judah, one that

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137 Many scholars have argued that Zerubbabel represents such a messianic figure in the depictions offered by Haggai and Zechariah. Refer to Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A social and Historical Approach*, 136.

138 Although this second title receives usage in Ezekiel 40-48, there is no mention of a “king” at any point in this literature. In the extant texts, Yehud never envisioned itself with a king and never desired the reestablishment of sovereignty within the Persian period. Refer to Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A social and Historical Approach*, 136.

139 More accurately, none of Yehud’s extant records reflects a competition with Persia for control of the Jerusalem area. Since Persian state expansion created the secondary state of Yehud, and since Yehud controlled most of the Populace’s modes of writing and literary preservation, it is not surprising that the extant records from official Yehud offer no evidence of opposition which would have originated outside the elite who ran Yehud. These elite recorded and preserved no significant divergence of opinion, although the preservation of dissident voices in Isaiah 56-66 indicated some minimal admission of difference. Refer to Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A social and Historical Approach*, 136.


141 Jon L. Berquist, “Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization,” 30.

repeatedly became contentious. The Persian governors operated as representatives of the empire, to impose order on the province, even to forcibly require the restored but recalcitrant elite to implement imperial instructions. The emperor had also sent with Nehemiah “officers of the army and cavalry,” that is, imperial military forces known as “King’s men.” It is clear that the labor on the (re)building of the Temple was to be done by details of corvee, “forced labor” from all the Yehudim (Nehemiah 2:16; 3:1-33). All of these measures—the deployment of Persian imperial troops, the fortification of cities, and use of forced labor among subject peoples—were standard Persian imperial practices. Their purpose was clear: control of local populations. Therefore, from all these reflections it is clear that Persians had very clear strategic plans to make the colonized assimilate many good plans from the colonial power but it all ultimately served the interest of the elite and the powerful.

5.11.1.2. Promoting the aspect of Fear

The imperial domination may be military based, as in cases of conquest. Certainly, the Persian Empire exercised great military force in the area of the province Yehud and Jerusalem at its center. Although target of Persian military campaign was not Jerusalem, there was a significant presence of the imperial army throughout the eastern Mediterranean area, especially during the initial years of the Persian Empire. The people at Yehud were well aware that if the Persians wanted to invade and promote their plans they could easily do that. The people of Yehud were very vulnerable and were at their mercies. The empire dominated militarily not only through conquest but also through the threat of attack and even through the nearby presence of military force. Thus displaying of the military defense mechanism was

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146 Jon L. Berquist, “Resistance and Accommodation in the Persian Empire,” 43.
one way of psychologically creating a culture of dominance, which will lead to diffusing of any rebellion.

5.11.2. Ideological and Religious dimensions

Empires dominate not only by military and economic means, but also through ideology. The very idea of an empire is a belief that one power is virtually unstoppable and nearly omnipresent. In the colony of Yehud during the Persian period, this institution of state power was the Persian imperial administration. These statist powers reproduces ideological superstructure that justifies the social system. Thus there is no problem to expect that Persian Empire creates ideologies to maintain the power of ruling class. The imperialist ideology gets mixed itself in various laws, norms, customs and habits of the society. The postcolonial theory can shed light on the ways that empires used texts to expound and expand their imperializing ideologies. Jon L. Berquist considers the early stages of Hebrew Bible canonization as an imperial production of ideology during the reign of the Persian Empire over colonial Yehud. The empire propagates this belief system, and the people accept it as part of the imperial domination. Although an empire is the collection of its people, the people must believe that the empire is more above any individual and that the empire can exist apart from its constituent people, and by doing so, the empire can control the populace. Symbols of imperial might communicate this power, and the Persian Empire displayed its imperial control through art. They often depicted the emperor along with the Persian god Ahura-Mazda (shown often as a sun disk with wings) and sometimes accompanied by texts that explained the emperor's power over many diverse areas. Texts are another way of manifesting symbolic or ideological domination, and Persia was portrayed as a mighty force (perhaps empowered by divine force). Ideological domination includes

150 Jon L. Berquist, “Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization,” 15. (The author does not negate the contribution of the forefathers as the conservative believe, but the final shaping could be seen as influenced by the empire as they were very interested to legalized the vernacular or the local laws to maintain peace and order cf. footnote 152).
more than just symbols of imperial power, however. The ideology may well depict the empire as beneficent, as a good instrument for development towards the colonized. Dominating ideology can threaten or cajole the people into being faithful subjects of the empire. Darius invested resources in Yehud in order to maintain Yehud as a colony for long-term extraction, not only for short-term imperial benefit. Thus, the effect of imperialization and colonization has its domain not only on the materialistic, infrastructural, economic level; there are also important effects in social structure and in the ideological superstructure of the society.

According to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the initiative came from the Persian imperial regime. The copy of Artaxerxes’ commission letter elevated the status and position of Ezra. The importance ascribed to the Persian king as exceedingly generous and giving due worth to the God of Jews. The powers ascribed to Ezra on the level of a governor or satrap even though he is never designated as such, gives enough space to imagine that the author may have edited an already existing document in order to underline the desired status and power.

In this respect the (re)building of the Temple in Jerusalem fits the standards of the Ancient West Asian pattern. According to the ubiquitous imperial ideology, temples were built by kings. Under the Davidic monarchy the divinely anointed king of Judah / Israel had built the Temple. Much of the narrative of Solomon’s kingship is devoted to his building of the original Temple in the Jebusite city of Jerusalem, which King David had conquered with the aid of his mercenary troops (1 Kings 5-8; 2 Samuel 5: 6-10). Now, however, the Persian emperor was the divinely directed builder (Ezra 1: 2). Although Judeans provided the labor, it is the Persian satrap of the province Beyond the River and the governors of Yehud appointed by the emperor, Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, who were designated as the builders (Ezra 1:8, 3: 8-13).

Far from attempting to hide this, literature produced by the restored Jerusalem elite appealed to imperial initiative for its own legitimation as well as the Temple’s authorization. The book of Ezra appeals to an imperial edict as the divine authorization for the project: “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build

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151 Jon Berquist, “Resistance and Accommodation in the Persian Empire,” 44.
152 Jon L. Berquist “Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization,” 18.
153 On account of the lack of comparative material it is difficult to either prove or disprove its authenticity, but serious doubts are raised on several grounds. Refer to Christine Schams, Jewish Scribes in the Second-Temple Period, 51.
him a house at Jerusalem in Judah” (Ezra 1:2). It also claims that by decree of the emperor Darius I, based on the earlier decree of Cyrus found in the Persian archives, the cost of building the “house” of “the God who is in Jerusalem” was “paid from the imperial treasury” (Ezra 1:3; 6:1-12). In the quid pro quo that restored the elite to power in Jerusalem, the exiled elite seemed too eager to acclaim Cyrus with the title of the Davidic king, “YHWH’s Messiah,” along with the traditional Davidic imperial ideology of the nations falling under his feet. The priests of Marduk acclaimed their conqueror Cyrus as “King of Babylon,” and the priests of certain Egyptian temples honored Darius with the title of Pharaoh. Similarly, the long prophetic poem in Isaiah 40-55 proclaimed that YHWH had commissioned the first Persian emperor as His messiah: “I have aroused Cyrus in righteousness; he shall build my city and set my exiles free” (Isaiah 45:1, 13).

The Persians were very lenient in their religious policy. Scholars are of the opinion that the specific interest shown by Cyrus in the Jerusalem cult could be because the Persians practiced an ethical monotheism. The Old Persian rulers would recognize the Jerusalem cult as one more in line with their own religion. As part of Achaemenid ideology, the central aspect of the Persian imperial god Ahuramazda, the creator of the world, had given to all the nations their land with Persepolis as centre of the world. Hence, this was one of the way the Persian kings promoted keeping their throne directly or indirectly at the prime place. There was no longer any pressure from above and the decrees which limited freedom of religion or worship was canceled. The statues of the gods and the sacred vessels which had been taken from the temples and carried off to Babylon were restored to the cults of the countries from which they had come. This generosity does not come from the heart overflowing with kindness, but in order to win the favor of these deities. The

politicians also introduced, on Persia’s behalf, a new law under the reign of Darius. This law may well be strongly connected to the laws of the Pentateuch in their current form. These laws served to limit Yehud’s activities and to define the society in accord with an ethic of not questioning the Persian Empire. The laws produced a sense of status quo in which adherence to this Persian-sponsored law would be likely. Persia’s contributions to Yehud’s official texts also emphasized other aspects of the status quo, such as creation stories. The Persian Empire also used the construction and promulgation of law codes to unify the entire imperial administrative structure. Although apparently there was no attempt to produce one law for the whole empire, Darius I, attempted a partial standardization of the law throughout the empire’s colonies. Under his reign, the Babylonians and the Egyptians, presumably as well as other Persian-ruled colonies, codified their earlier religious and legal traditions and produced single, unified statements of their own native law. Certainly the Persian Empire did have some influence upon the content of that law, but the exact extent is unknown.  

The creation story (Genesis 1:1-2:4a) offers the emphasis that the Sabbath rest was not only preordained by God but also was the apex and highest purpose of creation. Elements within Third part of the book of Isaiah 56-66, emphasize the Sabbath as a key religious observance, over against earlier biblical traditions that showed a monarchic-period interest in the Sabbath without raising it to some dominant status. Sabbath observance as a ritual offers opportunities to a sense of solidarity and to thank the powers that grant the time of rest. Sabbath also provides an easy way for all citizens to have access to temple worship, especially when the Persian Empire required taxes to be paid within the temple. Sabbath provided a solidifying ritual for use in the early Persian period and beyond; its ability to survive and find relevance in different cultures has been clearly demonstrated by subsequent history. By linking religious devotion with the cycles of work and production, the religion and ritual creation of reality enforced the Persian imperial


160 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A social and Historical Approach, 138, 144.


162 E. P. Sanders, Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah (London / Philadelphia: SCM Press / Trinity Press International, 1990), 7. According to Nehemiah 10:31 the Israelites pledged not to buy things from Gentiles on the Sabbath this indirectly could provide security to the Persians to some extent.
goals of intensification of productivity. If work and its absence are regularly cycled intentions of God, then the increased production of further work could also be a desire of the Deity. Ritual and politics combine once more for the service of the empire.\textsuperscript{163} Religion often flourishes within the empires, new priesthods allowed the imposition of religious ideologies throughout the large geographic area, and thus the religion and its concepts form a strong group of free-floating resources. Those elite who gain the approval of the religion find themselves in situations of increasing power; in this sense, imperial religion tends to be highly politicized.\textsuperscript{164} Imperial religion thus tends to widen its referents, finding new social settings as the elite push the growth of legitimating religion to the borders of the empire. This removes the religion from its original settings, and the disembodiment of religion from its former social setting can cause an increased formalization, leading to codified sacred books and schools for interpreting texts. The texts themselves function as free floating religious resources.\textsuperscript{165} The roots of formative Judaism and early Christianity are clearly evident in the religious changes and innovations of the Persian period.\textsuperscript{166} Many times the codified texts are at the disposal of the elite scribes and they formulate it on the basis of political, economic, religious, social and cultural strands. This could be very true even during the Persian period to which many scholars affirm.

5.11.3. The Social and cultural dimension

The kings of Persia adopted a completely new policy towards their subject people, especially in comparison with that of Assyria, and indeed of Babylon.\textsuperscript{167} If empires grow by expansion and then by subjection of local populaces through strategies of domination, then empires continue to hold power over a period of time by providing order for their provinces. Power lies in the creation of discourses, institutions, objects and identities. Power is all about making and remaking the world in a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{163} Jon L. Berquist, \textit{Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A social and Historical Approach}, 143.
\end{flushright}
particular way.’ This requires structures that work at least partially for the benefit of the local populaces, as well as ideologies that make sense of a world in which the empire rules. The Persian Empire seems to have allowed a large degree of local autonomy. The empire did not try to enforce a single imperial language, culture, legal system, or religion. Instead, it allowed local groups to set their own cultural values and norms, to be regulated in large part by local custom and the plans of local elite. The empire desired order - not necessarily a Persian way of life in the provinces, but a way of life that made sense to the natives while assuring a dominant place in their society for the empire. Although the Persian Empire influenced or controlled many aspects of Yehudite life and social structure, the empire allowed certain degrees of freedom and local autonomy. The Persian Empire seemed to promote a degree of acceptance and tolerance, even of pluralism, within all of its provinces. The empire did not require uniformity of culture. There was hardly any attempt made to shatter the ethnic structure of their captives, instead Persia wanted each local government to use its own local traditions, language, and religion to manage its populations. They were now treated considerably with little more respect. This was probably not so much an expression of generous tolerance, because the power remained formally in the hands of the court and the officials appointed. The main reason was that it was simpler and cost less, for the Persians to obtain the spontaneous collaboration of their subjects at a local level rather than, to impose their sovereignty by force. The ‘Cyrus cylinder’ states the policy explicitly, though without mentioning the Judeans. One new thing was that the emperor did not force his language on the people which appears in the royal inscriptions. The government appears to be more liberal in official correspondence and public acts. Therefore, many of the nations accepted the reign of Cyrus with great joy and celebrations.

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173 *ANET*, 316. All the inhabitants of Babylon as well as of the entire country of Summer and Akkad, princes and governors (included), bowed to him (Cyrus) and kissed his feet, that their faces were jubilant. Happily they greeted him as a master through whose help they have come (again) to life from death (and) all were spared from damage and disaster, and they worshipped his very name.
One important thing that has to be kept in mind is that Yehud has become a secondary state of the Persian Empire. Therefore, this centralized government controls the power to enforce laws, to collect taxes, and to conscript labour. State exercises their powers in the midst of multiple communities within that area. Organizational structures within Yehudite society contributed to the creation of the province. Power flowed in fixed patterns, and all these patterns shaped social life in the province. There were also significant ideological components, such as law and the concepts of royalty and empire. Other effects of the creation of a province include material and economic impact of population, trade, taxation, and military presence. In all of these ways, the Persian Empire created the entity of colonial Yehud as part of its own program of expansion and imperial strength. Whereas the inhabitants of the Jerusalem area had been a relatively non organized group before the beginning of the Persian Empire, the advent of imperial organization allowed Persia as a state to encroach upon that populace and to transform this group of people into a state of its own, although highly dependent upon the more extensive structures of the Persian Empire. The influences of the Persian Empire were not felt directly. Instead, the Persians worked through their agents in Yehudite leadership in the form of governors, and they exercised the local control of government. At times, there may have been extensive freedom about how exactly the local leaders carried out Persian policies. The Persian Empire created controlled environments in which independent, yet related cultures could grow. This benign support depended on two factors: the colonial society must maintain its political and economic allegiance to the Persian Empire, and it must provide sufficient political stability and internal social control that it does not represent a threat to the empire itself. Ezra and Nehemiah dealt with another important issue of Ethnicity and Marriage which facilitated the stand of the Persians directly or indirectly. However, the texts suggest that the problem took slightly different form for Ezra than for Nehemiah. For Ezra, the concern focuses on Yehud’s leadership especially Yehudite men, including Priests, Levites and officials, who have married to women from other neighbouring areas (Ezra 9:1, 2).

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175 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach, 233.

176 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach, 133.
The Book of Nehemiah presents the problem differently, there Nehemiah confronts Yehudite men who married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab, who were traditional enemies of Israel (Nehemiah 13:23). The more specific problem is that the children of such marriages speak only the native languages of their mother (13:24) and thus they may not know the Hebrew language which will disqualify them from taking leadership roles in Yehud. Whereas Ezra deals with all foreign women, Nehemiah focuses on the marriages that involve the more traditional enemies of Israel. Nehemiah offers a comparison to the problems that arose due to the intermarriages with other nations and this will comply with the issues of colonial policy. Nehemiah’s perception of the dangers of intermarriage seems clear: it could produce opportunities for foreign officials to exercise undue influence on Yehud’s internal matters (Nehemiah 13:28). Thus this could even create threat for the colonial power i.e. the Persians.

Ezra and Nehemiah shared concerns about the economic and political effects of religious, social and cultural factors in Yehud’s life. Both the officials of the Persian Empire gained a strong hold on Yehud and a deeper commitment to law and to autonomous existence. Collusions with other regional governments were exposed and minimized, which made the Persian hold intact. Thus, in all sense the Persians were using all means for keeping their grip on Yehud so that no deviance occurs and the allegiance may not change to any other nations. The Greek and Egyptian influence was on the increase on the struggling Yehud during this time, the transfer of resources and personnel’s ensured threat of Yehud to the Persians. The western reaches were more secured by the new imperial policies exercised by governors. These officials utilized political, economic and religious modes in their administration of Persian imperial policy in Yehud. Within these restrictions, Yehud found good scope for development. Yehud took great advantage of the Persian system of administration to create its own distinctive Temple system as a dominant social institution, priesthood, and to canonize large portion of still-extant documents.

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178 Jessica N. Whisenant, “Writing, Literacy, and Textual Transmission: The Production of Literary Documents in Iron Age Judah and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible” (Phd diss., University of Michigan, 2008). This work will further enhance the understanding on the scribes in Ancient West Asia.

Thus in Eisenstadt’s theoretical framework as quoted by Trigger, both material causes and ideological factors play a vital role. These resources create the potential and the power of the elite’s shapes that fits well into imperial institutions.

5.1.4. Economic dimension

Empires rule through the control of local resources, modes of production and cultural modes of reproduction. Though paying of offerings to the temple was not a Persian innovation, but constituted the means by which the non-land-owning Jerusalem in the beginning stage of Persian period could traditionally generate its income. Josephus mentions that this continued for long period and the people in exile who had not come also contributed continuously. Domination of the empire is also economic by exploiting the peripheries, and the simplest is taxation. It has been suggested that the policy initiated by Darius to exploit the empire for maximum revenue and its emphasis on taxation in coin, led to the impoverishment of the small farmer. Empire often uses taxation systems to dominate the region’s populace. In case such as the Persian Empire, the imperial taxation rates may not be so high that it impoverishes a region or eradicates the people, but the taxation can remove enough of the resources and wealth from an area that innovation and resistance

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180 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach, 233.
182 Jon L. Berquist “Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization,” 30.
183 Refer to Melody D. Knowles, Centrality Practiced: Jerusalem in the Religious Practice of Yehud and the Diaspora in the Persian Period, SBL, Archaeology and Biblical Studies 16 (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2006), 105ff. Joseph Blenkinsopp argues that the temple may have accumulated some amount of donated property (“Did the Second Jerusalemite Temple Possess Land?” in Transeu 21 (2001): 61–68). According to Josephus, an annual tax for the temple was collected from all Jews over the age of twenty whether they lived in Judah or the Diaspora. He also writes that funds were sent by Diaspora Jews for the Jerusalem sanctuary both during and prior to the Hasmonean period: “all the Jews throughout the habitable world . . . had been contributing to [the Jerusalem temple] for a very long time”. Refer to Magen Broshi, “The Role of the Temple in the Herodium Economy” in JJS 38 (1987): 31–37.
become much more difficult. Richard Frye, comments from standard histories of the Persian Empire on matters of economics, which seems to be very interesting. Taxes...abounded in the Achaemenid Empire. It seems there were all sort of fees like harbour fees, market taxes, tolls on the gates and roads, tax on the domestic animals, perhaps ten percent and other taxes. Whenever the king travelled, extra hardships were placed on the population. Corvee labour, for roads, public buildings was employed extensively by Satraps as well as the king. So life for the common person must have been at times oppressive. The local public works were probably financed by local taxes, while gold and silver streamed into the king’s coffers. Joachim Schaper has drawn attention to taxation practices in Achaemenid Babylonia and the practice of the “king’s chest,” which was a tax-collection device by which part of the temple income was diverted from the sanctuary to the ruler. Though acknowledging that tax-collection practices in Yehud are not well documented, he has made a good case for a similar practice in Jerusalem and other Achaemenid sanctuaries. Melody D. Knowles concludes, that the biblical and archaeological evidence points to temple devotees who were the largest contributors of money to the Jerusalem Temple. Therefore, the funding for the temple came largely from the adherents and not the Colonial power i.e. the Persians (despite the claims of biblical texts like Ezra), so the help in the form of “king’s Chest” seems to be highly objectionable for the growing community at Yehud, since it was the sacrificial gift of the faithful that had been hijacked by the Persian colonizers for their own purposes. The complaint in

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189 Joseph Blenkinsopp points out that the temple was a integral part of the social and religious life of the Jewish community and so the control and access to the temple would be a prime factor even beyond the Persian Period, Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 69.
Nehemiah 9: 36, 37, makes very clear the resistance voice of the poor colonized who felt the oppression and distress. So one can imagine the fate of the Yehud that the atrocities they faced were very crucial, though they were allowed to go and rebuild the temple and the walls. This would be surely at the cost of promoting the vested interest of the Empire. Jon Berquist is of the opinion that the leaders and especially Darius must have visited Yehud and might have taken notice of Yehud and might have sought for provincial loyalty because of its strategic location. The rebuilding project by Zerrubbabel could not be a rebellion as many scholars think because this was the time when Yehud might have witnessed such a great army under the leadership of Darius and that might have caused fear to all who saw. The economy and the military are often intertwined, as both seem to have occurred in the Persian Empire. Yehud’s taxes may not have been sent to the imperial core; the taxes may have been paid for the armies stationed in the Mediterranean seaboard.

The empire operates at such a large scale and controls many of the modes of transportation (such as roads and ports in the ancient world), the empire can manipulate the flow of wealth and resources from one part of the empire into another. Usually, this means that resources flow from the peripheries to the core, but it can also include boon for regions that favour the empire and disadvantages for areas that are less amendable to imperial control. When the empire desires, it can impoverish certain areas to punish the inhabitants. Empires work by removing a certain amount of the free-floating resources within the dominated culture and putting those resources to work in service of the larger imperial goals. The Persian Empire spent lots of economic resources to curb the Egyptian power. Yehud was for a great extent used to support this cause by sharing the responsibility of providing the food supply and economic resources to the standing army of the imperial army of Persia. This might have also led to the construction of barns for the

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190 A. T. Olmstead, History of the Persian Empire, 133.
storage of edible food grains.

Establishing a temple-state in Jerusalem was a means of generating increased production as an expanded base for taxes as well as a way of securing imperial control with the presence of a Persian governor and military detachment. The centrality of the Temple of Jerusalem and its function are attested, among other things, by several Yehud coins bearing names of priests, such as the well-known coin of Yohanan the priest and that of Jadoa, and others. These coins attest that at least some of them were struck by the priesthood for the benefit of the Temple and it can be assumed that Jerusalem and its Temple fulfilled a decisive role not only in the religious life of the country but also in its economy.

The peasantry of Yehud worked under a double demand for “surplus” produce, supposedly above and beyond what was needed for subsistence, ... touted by its prophetic advocates as promising economic prosperity, contributed to the people’s economic difficulty for much of the Persian period. Persian imperial policy might have compensated this great gesture of the Yehud by supporting the Temple reconstruction. 'But the investment made by the Persians made them to expect more production out of the region, so that they could feed the imperial army. Investments such as these are imperial strategies designed to create loyalty while gaining long-term economic advantages for the empire as well as other benefits.' The Temple was a major landowner and enormously important economic institution.

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The main people who helped were the agrarian class but the benefits may not have reached to them, but to the temple leadership or Yehud’s elite, under the Persian control. The wealthy and powerful took advantage of their power in ways that ultimately weakened the whole system. Nehemiah found the peasantry seriously in debt from heavy taxation and exploitation by the wealthy, with the corresponding disintegration of family structure and village community (5:1-19). He took measures supposedly to alleviate their desperate situation by pressuring their wealthy creditors to ease their demands. But his memoirs mention nothing about alleviating the demand for either imperial revenues or tithes and offerings for the Temple.

The prophets emphasized that the well-being of the people’s life depended on their rendering of the produce to the Temple (Haggai 1:2-11; 2:15-19; Zechariah 8: 9-13; Malachi 3:8-12). The people were expected to render the best to the Temple and its priesthood. Malachi includes a rhetorical comparison: “Try presenting that to your governors!” Malachi.1:6-8. This comparison has two clear implications with regard to the temple-state in Yehud. One is that the products of the finest quality that the people were obligated to offer up for service at “YHWH’s table” were also used to support the priests. This is explicitly laid out in extended passages of Leviticus and Numbers, which were probably produced in the Persian period to lay out the priestly prerogatives. “[YHWH] spoke to Aaron: I have given you charge of the offerings made to me. . . . Every offering of theirs that they render to me as a most holy thing, whether grain offering, sin offering, or guilt offering, shall belong to you and your sons” (Numbers 18:8-13, 21-23; Leviticus 7: 28-36). Material evidence from the Persian period, such as inscriptions on jar handles, storage pits, and archaeological surveys, now supplements information from Judean texts for how the temple-state worked as a religiously based political-economic system.

The other implication of Malachi’s sarcastic comment is that the people were expected to render quality produce to the governor and his staff as well as to supply

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201 No evidence exists for the reimbursement of the individuals who fed the armies. The general populace seems to be facing economic hardship, according to Haggai. The scenario would have been totally different if the common masses had been benefited, but on the contrary, the Persian financing was to favor the temple reconstruction which ultimately benefited their smooth run.


economic support to the Temple and priesthood. The Persian regime apparently delegated certain administrative functions such as collection of the tribute to the priestly officials heading the Temple. They were expected to collect the tribute and a land tax for the emperor (Ezra 4:13, 20; 6:8; 7:24; Nehemiah 5:4), as well as to collect the first fruits, tithes, and other contributions into the Temple storehouses (Nehemiah 10:36-40). As indicated in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, taxes and tribute as well as tithes and offerings were collected in kind, not coinage.


Supplementing the central storerooms in the Temple were public grain storage facilities, some of which have been discovered in Neo-Babylonian and/or Persian sites; Charles Carter, The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic study, 252-253; Richard A. Horsely, Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea, 20.

The invention of coinage did not replace in-kind payments of taxes and tribute. It is unlikely that the local economy in the West Asia was ever monetized until quite recently. Even Ottoman taxation records from Syria-Palestine indicate that in-kind payments in barley, wheat, and other agricultural products were the primary means of extracting surplus from the peasantry. See further Charles Carter, The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic study, 271-72. Coins were used in Persian trade and by the Persian military (281); Richard A. Horsely, Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea, 21.
The Rebuilding of the Temple did not commence till the time Darius ordered the Jerusalemites.\textsuperscript{208} The natives in Jerusalem were complacent in continuing their sacrifices and worship upon the ruins of the temple.\textsuperscript{209} Although we know little of life in Judah in this period, it is possible that one of the traditional sacred centers for service of Yahweh, the God of Israel, such as Mizpah or Bethel, may have become the center of administration after the destruction of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{210} This motivation could have been the threat of force and hence, the rebuilding of the temple,\textsuperscript{211} served the purpose of the Persians as the army required a stable administration to have a safe passage and thus the Persians initiated the whole act of rebuilding the Temple. This lays it very clear that the rebuilding was more closely to Persian imperial policies than to Yehudite internal debates. As a centre for Persian administration, the temple would assure tranquillity and supplies for the Persian army as it passed nearby on the way to Egypt. The Persians funded the reconstruction program on humanitarian reasons\textsuperscript{212} and also it acted as a symbol of Yehudite-Persian unity and Persians favour towards the Yehud.\textsuperscript{213} Peter Bedford has rejected the historical reliability of Ezra 1:1-4:5 and, on the basis of the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra 5-6, argues that the rebuilding of the temple was a local initiative, but one undertaken with the permission of the imperial authorities. They were motivated by the hope that it would be the first step toward the re-establishment of an independent kingdom of

\textsuperscript{208} The project, possibly inaugurated by Cyrus himself, at the very beginning of Persian rule, was carried further under Darius I (522-486BCE), See the recent reconstruction of possible steps by Lisbeth S. Fried, \textit{Priest and Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire}, 157-177. Cf. Peter R. Bedford, \textit{Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah}, JSJSupp 65 (Leiden: Brill, 2001); and also Diana Edelman, \textit{The Origins of the “Second” Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem} (London / Oakville: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2005).


\textsuperscript{211} Y. Magen excavated in recent years the mountain of Gerizim, The beginning of this complex has been established now by hundreds of coins from the Persian period. The plan of this temple highly resembles that of the temple in Jerusalem as it is described by Ezekiel. Y. Magen, “Mount Gerizim and the Samaritans” in \textit{Early Christianity in Context: Monuments and Documents}, eds. F. Manns and E. Alliata, SBF 38 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1993): 91-148.

\textsuperscript{212} Jacob M. Meyers, \textit{The World of the Restoration} (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 50-51. The benefit that the ruling Yehudites received (power due to the increase of new resources) and the religious “freedoms” enjoyed by the people (ability to worship in a restored temple) were both incidental to the Persian goals for the temple construction.

Judah once again. The temple represented to the local Judeans the end of the divine wrath. It re-established them as a single people living in their homeland once again. This was well understood by the colonial power and took it as an instrument to get the people for Yehud to be at their disposal. For faithful Yahwists of Yehud, both for those who stayed back and to those who returned it held variety of meanings. This event was so important in social, economic, political and religious level that it maintained multifaceted meaning to all those who were involved.

The construction of the Temple allowed for a variety of functions to be met in a single building: imperial government, financial administration and renewed worship of the people’s deity. The strategic location of the new social resources would attract the types of power and influence, political, economic and religious that was to make a change in the society. Within this temple, both the governor and the priest attended the roles. Thus the rebuilding of the Temple was the outcome of the initiative by the Persians and the Yehudites but with various reasons.

The economic atrocity of the Persians created a wedge between different people group in the community and thus led to intra-community conflict and therefore the Qumran group mentions that many were not in favour of the second temple. During the Artaxerses I, it is pointed that both Ezra and Nehemiah, were involved in the social machinery of religious, economic and political strengthening. Yehud’s economy was turning down day by day as it was the case of Persian Empire. There was no funding for the Temple by the Persians as it was during the time of Darius. Thus, to supply the huge need of the priests, who until the time of Darius were assisted by the Persian Empire, they now had to depend on the common masses. ‘Darius is remembered more for his innovations in social and legal administration. The empire funded the temple in Jerusalem not only as religious site, but as a political administrative site to be used as a storehouse for goods to be delivered to the empire.’ The Yehud elite encouraged the common mass to provide generously in the functioning of the Temple in Yehud. This intensified the class separation in Yehud and the Persia continued to deplete the resources of their colonies for their own survival. Therefore, the common masses were again penalized as they had to provide for the Persian Empire’s.

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216 Jon L. Berquist “Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization,” 18.
The rebuilding of the city walls was Nehemiah’s prime task, and it facilitated the wedge between the rich and poor by creating a physical barrier between the urban elite and the people living in the periphery. In this context it is interesting to note that the wall construction was undertaken by the leaders. In fact, the priests conducted the organization of the project (Nehemiah 3). Those who lived within the walls of the restored city include the priests, the temple servants, merchants, goldsmiths, perfumers, and others, clearly the upper classes of Yehudite society. The rebuilt city existed only for the urban elite and their cohorts from Persia; the outlying, unprotected countryside remained for the poorer inhabitants of the land. Nehemiah recognized the problem and also took some measures to curb it and came to the assistance. (Nehemiah 5:1-12). The desperation of the people was very obvious during this era. They even sold their own children into slavery to keep their life going. Persia’s economic exploitation of the colonies produced a system whereby the colonial occupants could not produce enough to maintain their own requirement. The imperial system was axing its own root, because the selling of rural inhabitants to the Greek city state was reducing their own work force and also leading a major chunk of population immigrating to Greece i.e. Persia’s enemy.217

Economic reforms that were installed by the coming of the Temple or even the building of the walls were a well thought out project of the empire for the benefit of the empire and the elite. This work was attained through great people of God as intermediaries who were to some extent benefiting from the plans and agendas of the empire. Though this had a very nice framework of God’s intervention, in actuality this to a large extent was manipulated by the powerful at the cost of the poor and the people who were in the peripheries.

5.12. The Voice of Resistance for the Rebuilding of the Temple

Rebuilding of the Temple was a religious, political and economic requirement of the dominant and hence extraordinary decision to execute the rebuilding process of the temple was the top most priority.218 The decisive initiative lay in royal hands, in the

217 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social Historical Approach, 113-115.
hands of the vassal kings or governors who perhaps sought to strengthen their influence over Jerusalem. They were, of course, supported by the priests who had a lively interest in regaining the privileged position they had enjoyed during the time of the First Temple. All over the Ancient West Asia, kings acted as temple-builders and the building of a temple was a royal initiative. The Second Temple does not form an exception to this rule. Its foundations were laid by Zerubbabel, a prince of Davidic origin and a vassal king of the Persians. This is clearly stressed in the book of Zechariah (4:7). Nevertheless, the reconstruction of the temple also served the interests of the Persian overlords. In this context the above-mentioned socio-political function of a temple in the Persian period should not be overlooked. J. Blenkinsopp states: “Temples served as catalysts of economic exchange and promoters of social cohesion. The temple may also have been seen as a point of convergence for the symbolic structures of the region, an ‘emblem of collective identity’, thereby mitigating to some extent the inevitable resentment generated by subjection to a foreign power.”

The people were aware that the same problem that existed before will continue once the temple is reconstructed. The other problem people could foresee was that, one who had membership in the cult could have the right to the claim on land. Those excluded from the cult would also have been perceived as lacking landownership rights. The people left out of the cult would oppose the establishment of a Temple, because the establishment of a Temple would put a seal to their exclusion, particularly if the cult-temple had royal support for its claim. Hence,


222 Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament*, 76, 81, 85-87, 116. Miller and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 458, also perceived the return as a cause of conflict between the returnees and the occupants of the land; however, they understood the Israelites who had been left in the land by the Babylonians as the wealthy class. Jack Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine*, 13.
many had voices of resistance with regard to the rebuilding of the Temple which will be dealt elaborately in the next chapter when interpretation from Haggai will be dealt to see whether the text has something to say on that.

5.13. Summary

This chapter acts as a spring board to understand the succeeding chapter which will deal with the interpretations of various texts from the early part of the post exilic time in relation to the Rebuilding of the Temple. This chapter gives the dynamics of inter / intra community conflicts and tensions prevalent during the initial return that happened under the reign of Cyrus and the rebuilding process. The people who were left behind during exile were not very happy of the returnees and with much reservations, they welcomed. They had regarded the land as theirs (Ezekiel 33:24) the newcomers wanted their portion to ancestral holdings. The returning exiles considered themselves that they were the true Israel and tended to withdraw themselves from Samaritans and others whom they thought as unclean (cf. Haggai 2:10-14) created a greater wedge of tension. This internal bitterness might have led to violence and public safety was at stake (Zechariah 8:10). The early post-exilic community faced a grave danger of identity crisis.

Jeremiah 24:1-10 shows a clear demarcation by stating the exiled people as good figs and those who remained are bad figs This chapter clearly affirms that fact that God was behind the rebuilding but also wants to expose the Persian Empire and the elite group some hidden motives to facilitate the colonial power and the role played by the empire to portray and give support in the political, economic, socio-cultural and religious level so that both can be mutually benefitted. The twice mentioned word ‘relief’: “a little relief” in Ezra 9:8e, 9d: shows that there is no total destruction but the political servitude continues; a little relief in our servitude. As such a secondary state, Persia allowed Yehud to function on its own as long as it provided extensive support for the empire’s core in taxation and labour. This effort to extract and see the interplay between various components of the texts due to the sociological units present in the text. Postcolonial reading gives many insight which otherwise would not clarify many of the tensions prevalent in the texts, it enables the interpreter to go beyond words and themes and question the idea that gave rise to the text and its language affiliation, which are dealt in the next chapter. Hence, it gives the background study in detail and helps the reader to see the resistance voice of the exploited people in the periphery. These may not be long paragraphs but even one
word, whose voices could go unheard otherwise. Therefore, an attempt will be made
to explicate at various levels. The resistance voice makes it clear that not everything
is good and satisfactory in the policies and decisions which the dominant make.
Though the Babylonian exile was over, still the people were not completely free
because the empire exploited them for all reasons, especially the taxes that made the
situations more grim and deteriorating. One thing gets clear, that the dominant with
their own agendas will benefit the most and not the colonized or people who live in
the periphery. The dominants have their own share of benefits. The colonial power
will always be happy till the time their requirements are met. They will be helpful to
the local elites till the time the local elites are helpful to the colonial power.
CHAPTER 6
THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE
AND THE POSTEXILIC PROPHETIC
RESPONSE

6. 1. Introduction

This chapter will investigate the Biblical passages with regard to the edict issued by Cyrus and the rebuilding of the temple in the context of empire. An attempt will be made to see whether these texts could be seen as facilitating the colonial purposes and the role of the elite in the context of Persian Imperialism. Hence, in this chapter the details about the date of building the temple and its divergence in various post exilic books are not delved into. The limitation of the space permits to limit itself to the few passages which have relation to the rebuilding of the temple and role of the Persians being projected with great priority.

A large variety of sources which originated during the early Second-Temple and early Rabbinic period have been preserved. The sources for our knowledge of the history and society of the Jewish people during this period include Jewish literary and documentary sources, comments by people of other faiths on Jews, Judaism and Christian writings. They present a wide range of perspectives and provide information about different aspects of Jewish history, politics, society and religion. However, the use of these sources and archaeological evidence for the purpose of writing religious, social and political history is not an easy venture. The information about the structure and functioning of society and the description of historical events are at times deficient and biased. Only a small percentage of the original material has survived and its preservation has been according to chance.¹ With these limitations the researcher would like to delve in this chapter of interpreting the Biblical texts.

6.2. Isaiah 66:1-5

The prophecies of Third Isaiah confront those who would accommodate the Persian Empire.\(^2\) Also, there are various views among the scholars

\(^2\) Wes Haward-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll / New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 62. There are many who affirm to the fact that the book of Isaiah as a single unit. The multiple authorships for the book of Isaiah have the similar debate as JEDP for the origin of Pentateuch. The Proto-Isaiah (Chs 1-39) is said to be during Isaiah's life time (739-701BCE), The Deutero-Isaiah (Chs 40-55) is assigned during exile, Trito-Isaiah (Chs 56-66) restricted to 539-500BCE). J.C. Döderlein (1775) and J.G. Eichhorn (1780-83) were the proponents who saw the difference and assumed different authors. In 1895, Duhm observed the difference in chs 56-66 with those of chs 40-55.

Many commentaries since 1900 treat the divisions, but despite these broad agreements on literary grounds, there is no concrete evidence that any part of the book ever existed without other parts. To be sure this is argument from silence. Even when the book of Isaiah is traced to Qumran dating to first century BCE, chs 1-66 are seen as a single unit. C.C.Torrey was against Duhm by saying that he was mistaken and both divisions are within the limit of one author. (C.C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* (New York: Scribner's, 1928), 20, 21. Paul Hanson, in *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic* and Elizabeth Achtemeier in *The Community and Message of Isaiah 56-66: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 11-16, also affirms the division by referring 'Third Isaiah' but Achtemeier and Holladay agreed that no such individual existed. John Oswalt in his commentary strongly comment that the book of Isaiah was written by Isaiah, son of Amoz, Harrison also negates the division (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 770, 780). What we have in the book comes nearest to what would be called as anthology, a collection of sermons, sayings, thoughts and writings, all arranged according to theological themes. Hence not necessary to assume all are in chronological order in which they were delivered, refer to John N. Oswalt, *The book of Isaiah 1-39: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids / Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 4,17,18,24, 25, 26. O. T Allis criticizes and says that the fragmentation of the book is because of 19\(^{th}\) rationalism, which rejected out rightly the predicative prophecy, (O.T. Allis, *Unity of Isaiah*, Tyndale Press, 1951), refer to J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 25.

Having read the various views, Y. Radday makes more sense to the researcher. He did an impressive investigation. He did a computerized study of numerous linguistic features of the book of Isaiah and compared those to the various sections of the book. As a control he studied other pieces of literature, both biblical and extrabiblical which were reputed to have come from one author, to the amazement he found the linguistic variations were to severe that one author will have difficulty to produce the whole book, One cannot completely negate that during the collection of the materials into book form brief editorial or transitional materials were added, either by Isaiah himself or those working with him, (Y. Radday, *The Unity of Isaiah in the Light of Statistical Linguistics* (Hildesheim: H.A. Gerstenberg, 1993), 274-277). Refer to John N. Oswalt, *The book of Isaiah 1-39: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 26.
concerning the division of chapter 66. Duhm, Elliger Volz, and Westermann find a number of separate units. Kissane sees verses 1-16 as a unity, while Torrey regards the entire chapter as a single composition. Most scholars agree in seeing 66:17-24 as a separate oracle. The tendency is to divide this section into several small units. Hanson has shown however, that alternating words of salvation and judgment cannot be used as criteria for dividing post-exilic prophetic oracles, as it has usually been done. 66:1-17 can be seen as a single salvation-judgment oracle. To be sure, several different subjects are broached in Isaiah 66, and this gives the chapter a certain degree of complexity. But the solution to the dilemma may be that Isaiah 66 serves a dual purpose: it is both a summary of the message of Isaiah 56-66 and a conclusion to the book of Isaiah as a whole. Hence, this exegesis curtails to vv. 1-5, due to the limitation of the space. Dealing with the whole chapter or a larger passage is next to impossible.

6.2.1. Translation

66:1 Thus says Yahweh: The heavens are my throne and the land is my footstool. What is this? A house that you build for me? What is this? The place of my rest?


2 My own hand has made all these so that all these came into being! Oracle of Yahweh. I pay attention to this (one): to a humble and contrite spirit who trembles at my word

3 One who slaughters an ox (is just like) one who strikes down a person.

One who sacrifices a lamb (is just like) one who breaks a dog’s neck. One who presents a cereal offering (is just like) swine’s blood. One who makes a memorial with frankincense (is just like) one who blesses an idol. Even as these have fixed their choice on their own ways and their soul delights in their abominations,

4 So I have fixed my choice on their afflictions and bring their worst fears to reality for them. Because, when I called, no one answered. When I spoke, no one heard (me).

Thus they did (what was) evil in my sight, and they fixed their choice on that in which I took no delight.

5 Hear (pl.) the word of Yahweh, you (pl.) who tremble at his word!

Your brothers who hate you say, those who threw you out for my name’s sake, “Let Yahweh be glorified and that we may see your joy,” when (it is) they who will be shamed.

6.2.2. Textual Notes/ Form / Structure / Setting8

66:1 MT ויהיו, means “where is it? which is it?” LXX Ποιον “what?” and Vg quae “what?” correctly translate the meaning in context. This compound adverb occurs 12 other times in the Bible. ‘The ויהיו seems to intensify the question, the rhetorical sense is that such a house does not exist, and cannot.’9

2. ‘Targ. Supports MT (along with Theodotion, Symmachus and Aquila). Vulg. has “all these were made”; in Syr. it means “all these belong to me”10 MT reads וייו imperfect it means “and they came to be.” DSS וייו is perfect

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due perhaps to the preceding verb. LXX reads καὶ ἐστὶν ἐμὰ ἐστὶν it means “and they are mine.” Tg. reads מְכִיך which means “have they not come to be?” turns it into a negative question. Vg reads et facta sunt universa ista it means “and they are making that whole world.” MT is the least likely to have evolved from the context and should be kept.

2. MT reads וַנִּכְּחָה meaning “and contrite, stricken” occurs only here and 2 Sam 4:4, 9:3. DSS וַנִּכְּחַת, וַנִּכְּחַת all seem derived from וַנִּכְּחָה “stricken” cf. Proverbs 15:13; 17:22; 18:14), though Kutscher suggests the Scrolls’ readings derive from niph of הָבָה “disheartened” (BDB, 456; cf. BHS). He notes that this is the only place where נכה occurs with “spirit.” LXX renders it as ἡσυχιον which means “meek” omitting “spirit.” Tg. has מיכר which means “contrite,” Vg renders it as contritum “contrite.” Read MT supported by LXX Tg. Vg. The versions support “crushed” or “broken,” thus an original Nik’ēh (as per BHS) seems to provide the best explanation of all forms.

3. BHS suggest emending MT וְדָם דם “blood” to וּדָם “one enjoying” to parallel the other ptcps. This has no MS support.

5. MT renders it ובמל qal impf. of a stative verb meaning “be honored.” LXX Syr. Vg, are lacking an equivalent stative verb, they read a passive, as one must do in English for the same reason. It is not necessary to change MT. MT has “that we may see.” DSS has “he may see.” LXX καὶ ὁφθῇ which means “and he may see.” Tg. Vg. support MT. Read MT. The imperative εἴπατε created by vocalizing the MT וּרְמָה is part of a wide-ranging transformation of this verse.

Chapters 65-66 form a thematic unity. The verse cluster in 66:1-6 correspond to the usual verse divisions. They are two or three periods in

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12 E.Y. Kutscher, The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (IQISa), with an Obituary by H.B. Rosén, 265-266.
15 David A. Baer, When We All Go Home: Translation and Theology in LXX Isaiah 56-66, JSOTSupp 318 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 41.
16 There is wide variety of critical opinion concerning the authorship of Isaiah 65 and 66. Torrey holds these two chapters as part of Deutero-Isaiah. Guillaume, however, attributes 65 and 66 to Deutero-Isaiah, but 56-64 to Trito-Isaiah, A. Guillaume, “Isaiah (XL-LXVI)” in A New Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Including the Apocrypha, eds. Charles Gore et al. (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 458. Refer to
length and are arranged in a-b-c-c-b-a pattern. Many from Wellhausen to Hanson have seen in this oracle a stance of absolute opposition to the temple and its priesthood, dating it to some specific time when a temple was planned or was under construction. Such idea seems to be suggested by the imperfect of ‘build’ (תבנו).

There is not much consensus among the scholars with regard to the structure, largely because some verses like (5, 6, 15 and 16) are uncertain of the place." Isaiah 65:1-25 states that the failure of YHWH to act on his promises to restore Jerusalem is to be attributed to the cultic abuses of an anonymous ‘you,’

"It is true to the spirit of the Old Testament teaching of the priest, prophet and psalmist that God is independent of any house or resting-place that human construct; but such a house may well be a focal point for


17 Edwin C. Webster, “A Rhetorical Study of Isaiah 66,” 95.


human’s worship of God. It still remains true that temple or no temple, God looks first for genuine humility and reverence.”

**Episode A: Yahweh Deals with His Opponents (65:1-16).** His court is prominent. The adversaries are “on stage” and clearly visible as they are addressed. Yahweh’s servants are in the background and are not addressed. (Note that neither Persia nor any historical leaders appear. Whereas many parties were evident in the last scene, here there are only two groups in Jerusalem: Yahweh’s foes and Yahweh’s servants).

**Episode B: Yahweh Moves to Finish His New Jerusalem (65:17-66:5).** Yahweh’s court is at the centre of this part. The skyline of the new city is clear in the background, but the groups of persons who vie for control of the city fade into insignificance. It is a new world in which this new city comes to life. Yahweh’s ideals echo the thoughts of 11:6–9 and 35:1–10.

**Episode C: Yahweh Confirms His Servants in His New City (66:6–24).** The realities of the rebuilt city return to view. The radical departures from the past are stressed in the uproar that results from Yahweh’s dealing with his foes (vv 14d–16, 17, 24). But Zion gives birth (vv 7–14c) just as had been promised in chapter 54. And Yahweh gathers all nations to Jerusalem, chooses some of them as priests, to worship before him (vv 18–24) to fulfil the purpose he stated in 2:1–4. With this the Vision is complete. Yahweh Deals with His Opponents (65:1–16).

The initial verses that this exegesis is dealing with contain judgement oracle coming abruptly after the preceding hope passage after 65:17-25. But even the judgement passages, like this one, are cast in the setting of hope. The address is to the believing remnant to encourage them to believe that the promises of chaps. 60-62 will be realized, and that those who are opposing them will not triumph. It is a hard-hitting attack on those who would jeopardize Israel’s future by substituting their human agendas for God’s plan of universal

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salvation.’ The hope for Israel’s future is not in cultic manipulation, but in repentance and faith in the power of God to enable to live truly righteous lives.

Yahweh’s speech and courtier’s support: “Look at me creating new heavens and new earth” (65:17–23)

First formal edict: “Before they call I will answer” (65:24–25)

Second formal edict: “What sort of house will you build?” (66:1–2a)

Yahweh’s speech and courtier’s support: “I heed the humble” (66:2b–5)

The issue of the nature of worship in the new temple helps to place the passage historically. The nature of worship and the status of the priests were major concerns in the restoration of Jerusalem from 520 BCE through the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah in the latter 5th century BC. They were still burning issues at the end of that period. The Vision does not support the rising power of the priesthood that Ezra is installing with the intention of continuing the sacrifices of Leviticus.

The reference in 66:1 to “a house built for” Yahweh brings the passage back to an historical issue. The episode challenges plans for building the temple. It does not reject the practice of worship, as vv 2b makes plain. V 3 shows that the issue turns on the kind of house and the nature of that worship. This position is consonant with that of the Vision throughout, opposing sacrifice (1:11-14), urging commitment to justice (1:16-17) and supporting a view of religion as pilgrimage to experience God’s presence and hear his teaching that will lead to peace (2:1-4).

This view is apparently set against a doctrine of temple worship that is exclusive in the claim that God is only present there (not in the rest of the city) and that only certain priests may practice because they are the

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23 John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, 666, the researcher tries to see from dissent voice which will help the text to be more vibrant from the sociological and postcolonial perspective. Hanson’s interpretation will also add to see the dissent voice.

24 Kyu Sam Han, *Jerusalem and the Early Jesus Movement: The Qumran Community attitude towards the Temple* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 18, mentions that the chapter 3 provides a cross-cultural study of criticism directed towards temple. Throughout the Second Temple period, the Temple served as the heart of Jewish life, not only as the cultic and ritual centre, but also a political, social, judicial and cultural core.
only ones authorized to sacrifice. This tension is also well noted, when Mohol mentions about "Enfranchisement" meaning giving rights or privilege when he deals with the 66: 21. He takes Achtemeier, who argues of the Levites struggle to seek priesthood or equality in term of function. He cites McConville, who points that Deuteronomy does not bother to know the functional equality of Levites, since the author of Deuteronomy 18 was aware of Numbers 18 which maintains a functional distinction between Levites and priests. Deuteronomy is advocating equality in terms of status or brotherhood within the narrower Levite and larger Israelite community. Therefore the term is better translated as 'priests and Levites' meaning some as priests and some as Levites, which is suggestive of a functional distinction but unity in terms of status and brotherhood. Trito-Isaiah wanted to give the Gentiles equal rights of representation within the priesthood. Just as in his day some Israelites were Levites and some priests, so it would be in new Zion community.  

These issues are emphasized in Leviticus and portions of Numbers dealing with priestly privileges. Interpreters correctly find many of these issues present in Haggai and in Ezra’s description of the building of the temple under Zerubbabel and Joshua. Hanson agrees with the dating of (520-515 BCE) but identifies the adversaries more precisely as the prophetic party and the priestly party.  

66:1–2 speaks of a building project in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is called to rejoice. But the bitterness of continuing struggle overshadows the new creation. There is hatred between brothers. No hope

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25 E. Mohol, *Covenantal Rational For Membership In Zion Community Envisaged in Isaiah 56-66*, A Doctoral dissertation at All Nations Christian College, Hertforshire, Coventry University, 1998), 161. Achtemeier suggestion that the term 'to be Priests, to be Levites refer to one group of Levitical priests and therefore should be rendered as 'Levites, the Priests' without functional distinction between them. Thus the conception is drawn from Deuteronomy 18:1 where we find the term 'to the priests, the Levites', Elizabeth Achtemeier in *The Community and Message of Isaiah 56-66:A Theological Commentary*, 148,149.


of reconciliation remains, for one group is unalterably set against Yahweh and his plans. Anyone so set against God can only be shamed and destroyed. Yahweh presses on toward the completion of the new city. But opponents insist that the Temple must be built first, a Temple designed for sacrifice. Their stubborn insistence is so bitter that Yahweh seems to say: the city will be built, but no Temple and no sacrifice. They are not essential. Those things that are essential in the new city are clearly shown: Yahweh’s creative power, direction, and presence with humble worshipers who are hungry for Yahweh's word in the city open to all who want to come. In Yahweh’s new creation that is enough. Blenkinsopp also attests to the fact that many scholars see vv. 1, 2 as a radical rejection of temples as the loci of sacrificial cult, considered as the antithesis of “the true religion of heart and life”.

The setting for 66:1–3 is best understood in the complicated interactions of multiple parties in Jerusalem where Zadokite priests wielded authority over all sacrifice and the temple area. The Vision opposes both the view that the sacred area should be limited to the temple and the view that worship is primarily a matter of sacrifice. It equally disputes the claim that one priestly family should have exclusive priestly privileges in Jerusalem (see 66:21). The Vision is much more at home with the kind of worship described in Nehemiah 12:27-47 with broad participation in songs, prayers, and processions. It argues that the entire city, not just the temple, comprises Yahweh’s sacred mountain. This debate is understandable in the late 5th century.

The specific application of 66:1–3 may be even more clearly defined. Nehemiah was determined to concentrate first on the building of the city (its walls, etc.) rather than on repairs and extension of the temple (Nehemiah 2-6). This was opposed by people in Jerusalem as well as by their neighbours (Nehemiah 4 and 6). The policy from the time of Zerubbabel had been to concentrate only on the temple. The Vision supports Nehemiah but goes beyond him in seeing the entire city as

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sacred, a place for Jews and other worshipers of Yahweh to gather from all over the known world.\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{6.2.3. Explanation}

\textit{66:1, 2} Heavens are my throne and the land is my footstool. אֵי רֶץ וְהָאָי הֲדָ֖רַגְלָם מָקִּי יְהוָ֖ה יִשָּׁהְלֹ֥ם וְאֵי לְעָשֶׂ֥ה היא מָקִּי יְהוָ֖ה יִשָּׁהְלֹ֥ם. (‘Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool,\textsuperscript{31} where/what is the house that you can build/are building/will build for me and where/what is my resting place?’\textsuperscript{32}) Hanson has proposed that this represents ‘a direct repudiation of the temple building campaign of Haggai’ in 520 BCE and the theology that undergirds it.\textsuperscript{33}

Central to this argument is Hanson’s claim that Haggai’s theology\textsuperscript{34} is characterized by the attempt to manipulate YHWH by means of ‘cultic orthopraxy,’ that it is an \textit{ex opere operato} theology, one which operates with the simple equation: build the temple and YHWH will bless you. Haggai is representative of a ‘religious stance’ that is ‘centered on the formal worship of the temple.’ Over against this ‘religious stance,’ 66:1-2 supposedly posits an alternative ‘religious stance,’ one ‘based on an attitude of humility and fear before Yahweh.’\textsuperscript{35} The rebuilding is seen as a

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item This is the only place where the earth is so described. Elsewhere it is always the ‘ark’ that serves as God’s footstool. Brooks Schramm, \textit{The Opponents of Third Isaiah Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration}, 162.
\item MT points as an absolute rather than a construct, and thus in opposition to לָ֖שֶׂ. There is no need to emend. Brooks Schramm, \textit{The Opponents of Third Isaiah Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration}, 162.
\item P. D. Hanson, \textit{The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology}, 173-174.
\item See, Haggai 1:4-6. This is significantly different from Ezra, who argues that the reason for the delay in the building of the temple was opposition from the people of the land. According to Haggai, it was not opposition but rather apathy that brought about the delay.
\item Paul D. Hanson, \textit{Dawn of the Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology}. 170. Hanson sees these two religious stances as having been in tension with one another throughout the history of the monarchy, and he quotes all of the well-known passages: Amos 5: 21-24; Micah 3:12; Isaiah 1:10-11; Jeremiah 7; 11: 14-15. In justification for claiming that the visionary disciples of Second Isaiah were representative of the anti-cultic religious stance, he states, ‘In Second Isaiah, the temple plays virtually no part in the restoration hope’, 179. But this underestimates the importance of Isaiah 44: 28-45:1. So totally to negate the idea of rebuilding as per Hanson needs more thought but people had lots of apprehension what if the same elite take control and exploit as it happened before exile to which Amos and the early part of the book of Isaiah criticizes. Hence, not a complete no to the building plan but wanted to be careful and hence a low profile by the people in the
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
basic requirement for the restoration. This is a total refutation to the assumption of the Egyptian and Babylonian worship that temples were constructed to provide gods with housing, food and drink to satisfy their hunger and thirst. Israel’s God, in contrast requires no physical offerings. This understanding is not new to Isaiah. It is part and parcel of Israelite theology from the earliest considerations of the building of the temple. Building a temple always brings up basic questions like those put to David in 2 Samuel 7-14; 1 Kings. 8:27) and one asked to Zerubbabel in Haggai and in Ezra 4. Third Isaiah also shares the conviction that the temple is central. This is evidenced by the fact that the theme of the restoration of temple and city is well-nigh omnipresent in Third Isaiah. If we leave Isaiah 66.1-2 out of the discussion momentarily, it can be said that there is absolutely nothing in Third Isaiah that stands in contradiction with Haggai’s conception of the temple. In fact, Third Isaiah and Haggai speak of the temple in almost identical terms. Haggai 2:6-7 states, (‘Thus says YHWH of hosts, yet a little while longer and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land, I will shake all the nations, and their choicest things shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, says YHWH of hosts’). This is echoed in Isaiah 60:13: (‘The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the pine and the box, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will glorify the place of my feet’). If one interprets Isaiah 66:1-2 either as a rejection of temple building as such (which is the most common interpretation) or merely as a rejection of Haggai’s temple, then one must also claim that Isaiah 66:1-2 stands in contradiction with the rest of Third Isaiah!’ Though the researcher is not critical about the rebuilding of the temple within the plan of God and Trito-Isaiah is refuting it. The dealt passage is definitely dealing with the Levites and people who were in the peripheries and who knew the fate of how the temple of Solomon had contributed to the experience of Babylonian exile. Hence it’s

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37 Paul D. Hanson, Isaiah 40-66: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, 249.
39 Brooks Schramm, The Opponents of Third Isaiah Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration, 163.
40 Brooks Schramm, The Opponents of Third Isaiah Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration, 163, 164.
a powerful voice of dissidence. Rofé states, 'The rebuke of Trito-Isaiah is thus directed against the priests of his time....' At first glance Rofé’s proposal sounds like Hanson. Rofé, however, is quick to distance himself from such ideas. He argues that ‘the establishment of a renewed cult is for Trito-Isaiah an essential factor in the restoration of Israel,’ Isaiah 66:3-4 is attacking a certain group of priests, not ‘priestly theology.’

Yahweh expresses surprise: A house you will build for me? Will it be a building for sacrifice centered on a high altar? Will it be a place for priests to parade and officiate? Or will it be a place for singing and for worshipers to meditate? What kind of house should one build for the ruler of heaven and earth who himself builds worlds and establishes dynasties? Delitzsch rightly opines, “God will have no temple at all if men (human) think by temple-building itself to do him service.”

My rest in Psalms 95:11 refers to Canaan which was denied to the wilderness generation. This passage presents the same tension between a rebellious generation and God’s sovereign rule over heavens and earth (see vv. 3-4). Psalms 132:8 relates the term to Zion in order to stress the permanency of his presence there. But the total phrase here seems to be unique in linking Yahweh to a “place.” Yahweh’s objection lies precisely in that emphasis on a place which can claim exclusive rights to Yahweh’s presence, when he is the one who has made all things and presumably goes wherever he chooses.

In contrast to his objections to a house and a place, Yahweh affirms his attention to a particular kind of person: one who is humble and is a contrite spirit. “If cult is performed to curry favour God’s supposed needs and thereby get something for ourselves from him, we should shut the doors of the temple at once and abandon the whole thing. But if our attitude in worship is opposite of such arrogance as to think we can do something for God, instead the humble recognition that we can do nothing to either for or to Him (afflicted), the awareness that we deserve nothing...”

but destruction from him (broken in spirit), and the desire to do nothing other than what He commands (trembles at my word) with god, to satisfy. This phrase is familiar from 57:15 and Psalms 34:18 (see also Matthew 5:3 and Luke 18:13–14). Who trembles at my word is new here. It picks up an element from the original statement of the Vision’s goals, “the word of Yahweh will go out of Zion” (2:3). The word rather than the place or the sacrifice is significant (see Ezra 9:4; 10:3).

3, 4. A series of legitimate sacrifices, as far as the Torah is concerned, is then identified with some that are prohibited:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>slaughtering an ox (Lev 17:3–4)</td>
<td>striking a person (Lev 24:17–21; Deut 19:6; 27:24–25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sacrificing a lamb (Lev 14:10–24)</td>
<td>breaking a dog’s neck (Exod 34:20, of a donkey)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| presenting a cereal offering (Lev 2:1,13)      | swine’s blood (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8; Isa 65:4; a memorial with frankincense (Lev 2:2, 16; 6:8 [15]; blessing a vain thing.  

 נָא “a vain thing” appears frequently in the Vision (1:13; 10:1; 29:20; 31:2; 32:6; 41:29; 55:7; 58:9; 59:4, 6, 7). But these usually refer to deeds of vanity or words of vanity. The phrase used here, blessing a vanity, is unique. The word is used in other contexts for idols. But whether this means heaping blessings on an idol or a blessing using an idol’s name is not clear.

The emphasis in using these participles is on the one doing these things. Either the pairs express identification (the one doing this also does that) making these an accusation of syncretism (which is not really credible here) or the one doing legal sacrifices is portrayed as no more acceptable to God than one who is doing the illegal and abhorrent things. The latter seems most fitting: a heavy insult heaped on the practicing

44 Westermann notes the emphasis on “word” and suggests that the struggle is not between formal and spiritual worship, but between word-oriented and cult-oriented worship. But the other two occurrences of the phrase are in Ezra 9:4 and 10:3, where the fundamental contrast is between a rebellious spirit and an obedient one. Refer to John N. Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah 40-66: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, 667.

priests. And it is also a claim that the ancient sacrifices are no longer valid in the new age. The priests have fixed their choice on their own ways without seeking to know Yahweh's decisions for his own house. This is a familiar complaint (56:11; 57:10, 17, 18; 58:13; 59:7, 8). They delight in their abominations, i.e., their unacceptable pagan practices (57:8; 58:2, 13; 65:12). They continue practices from older times, pagan and legal, without regard to Yahweh's will for his new age. The charge may well apply to remnants of the old Zadokite priesthood who were fighting to maintain their grip on Zion's ritual. Such attacks are hardly unique to Isaiah. Amos 5: 21-25 is a classic example, with the prophet concluding that God had never wanted their offerings, even in the wilderness (cf. also Isaiah 43:23-24). Jeremiah 7: 21-22 says the same thing. Micah says God is not interested in sacrifices at all (6:6-8). Malachi tells people to stop their hypocritical worship (1:10). Jesus says that the righteous Pharisees are vile, unclean tombs (Matthew 23:27). People with unclean hearts will offer unclean offerings, no matter how rigorously they obey the Torah, and such offerings are an offense of God. Offered out of an unclean heart, an ox is no different from a man, a lamb is no more clean than a dog whose neck has been wrung (cf. Exodus 13:13; Deuteronomy 21:4), the first fruits of the grains are no more pleasing than the blood of a swine, and a memorial offering (Isaiah 1:13; Psalms 38: 1; Leviticus 24:7; Numbers 5:26) of incense might as well be given to an idol (literally it means "iniquity"; cf. Isaiah 41:29; 1 Samuel 15:23; Hosea 4:15). How to know the offerer's heart? The doing reflects not what God has chosen, but what they have chosen. This is forcefully expressed in the final bicolon of v. 3 and the first bicolon of v. 4. These two statements are closely parallel, each beginning with gam, inasmuch and so, respectively, and each detailing what has been chosen, the first by the people, the second by God.

As they have chosen, so Yahweh has fixed his choice. Since their choices were at variance with Yahweh's will, so he chooses affliction for them in place of the support they sought from him. He confirms their worst fears. Their crime lay in ignoring Yahweh's calling. That in itself was rebellion against God. But, beyond that they fixed their choice on things that meant nothing to God.

5. The speech is directed to the faithful and the characteristic and it clearly spells out by saying they hear the word and tremble at the word. The

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measure of piety, instead of being related to temple and sacrifice, is said to relate to God’s word and the response to that word. “Those who are earnestly and reverently obedient to God’s word will find great joy and comfort in that Word. The biblical accounts about the postexilic period found in Isaiah 56-66, Haggai, Ezekiel 40-48, Zechariah, Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah help us to identify two groups. This verse blends well with the last part of v. 2. The outcasts are those who wish to keep God’s covenant carefully from the heart and they are scorned. The persons in power, are the wealthy, the priests, and the nobles who are the ones who are scorning and casting out the diligent seekers. This is because the elite are concerned with their own aggrandizement. When people like these do build the temple, it will be as splendid as they can make for their own sake, not for God’s purpose. This chapter clearly portrays that God is not interested to have a temple as everything belongs to Him. Then the uncultured, earnestly religious folks will be told in no uncertain terms that their rustic, iconoclastic religious rigor is not welcome. Indeed, their zealotry becomes a source of humour. This is because the people in power try to do business of religion.”

In Hebrew text only last two words of v. 5 are given over to the announcement of judgment. But those two words are the last words and they bring complex situation to a sudden and devastating closure, like the slamming of the door, but they will be put to shame. The wealthy and powerful may have hated and mocked the cast out but are disgraced in the end, and it is the end that counts. The chapter clearly portrays that God was not in a urgent need and the resistance voice is very much aired by the prophet. R. P. Carroll, for example, suggests the fact that the dimensions of the ‘Second Temple’ are not given anywhere in the biblical traditions, indicates that it was of little importance. In his view, the ‘temple’ functioned and benefited economically and socially for a minority group,
one who wrote the literature about its construction in order to legitimate their perspective.51

6.2.4. Comments on Isaiah 66:1-5: Sociological reading showing the intra-community tension and the voice of Dissidence for the rebuilding of the Temple

The Persian Empire's attempt to regulate life and culture in the colonial region of Yehud, created the situation in which the Yehudite culture and religion developed and flourished. P. D. Hanson came to a conclusion that there was intra-community struggle for the control of the temple in Isaiah 56-66 and Zechariah 9-14.52 The present context of the anti-temple word is by no means ignorant of the clues of the historical situation. The most controversial clue is found in the internal structure of the controversial verses 1 and 2, where Yahweh declares his universal majesty, and then makes an inquiry which represents a harsh attack on those addressed, "What is this house you would build for me...?" That this attack actually involves a rejection of the cult of those being addressed is made clear by the juxtaposed word of acceptance directed towards another group: "But upon this one I will look, the humble, who is broken in spirit and trembles at my word." The structure is based upon the contrast between two religious stances, the other based on an attitude of humility and fear before Yahweh. In v.5, Your brothers, is a remarkably generous designation for those elsewhere called rebels. Brothers is used for fellow members of covenant in Deuteronomy 1:16; 2:4; 3:18; Jeremiah 7:15; 29:16. This shows how the division between servants and enemies cuts through the heart of the community, perhaps even through families. Who


52 Refer to Brooks Schramm, The Opponents of Third Isaiah Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration, 84. In his book, there is a critic to P. D. Hanson’s view to define the difference in group and the naming of the group; one thing is sure as Jon. L. Berquist rightly mentions that there are difficulties in the groups those who were benefitted by the empire and those who were sidelined, and hence these chapters (55-66) has resistive and accommodative voice, and the resistive voice is more audible in chapter 66:1-5. On the basis of comparison with other sources especially the books of Haggai and Zechariah, Isaiah 66 can be dated in the time of rebuilding of the temple. Paul D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of the Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology, 245, Zechariah tied the eschatological predictions to the specific details of Hierocratic program.
hate you accents the bitterness of the fraternal struggle which had occasioned their previous expulsion. E. Achtemeier\textsuperscript{53} thinks this refers to the Zadokites who expelled the Levites on the charge of idolatry (Ezekiel 44:10), heaped scorn on them (59:4; 58:9), segregated them (63:16; 65:5), and condemned them to death (57:1-2). This underlying dual structure is ubiquitous in chapters 58, 59, 65 and 56:9-57:13. For example: In 57: 11, 13 "Whom did you dread and fear when you were false to me, and did not remember me; But he who takes refuge in me shall possess that land"; 58:5-7, "Is this the fast that I choose, a day for a man to afflict himself, to bow down his head like a rush, lying down on sackcloth and ashes? Is not this the sort of fast that I choose, to lose the fetters of injustice... to share your bread with the hungry...?" Also in 65:2f, 10, there is distinction made between stubborn and rebellious people and people who seek God. In 65: 12, 24, there is clear projection of two groups, "for I called, but you would not answer; before they call, I will answer".

When a new elite class is fostered on the ruling front by the imperial intensification, other social segments are created with competing interests of different groups. For the internal struggle common to these several oracles belongs to a common origin, a common struggle between the hierocratic party and the visionary group for the control of the restoration cult. Naturally we not able to advance irrefutable proof that each of these oracles belongs to the same community struggle as it unfolded over a period of some thirty years. However, the cumulative study of the development of ideas all points to a common matrix recommends this idea from outside evidence and atomistic interpretation points to the intra-community matrix. Fortunately, the activities that facilitated the hierocratic group during the rebuilding of the Temple are better preserved. Consequently ample of material is available for the purposes of reconstructing the theology of the temple party than any other dissent voices.\textsuperscript{54} There were intra-community tensions because when the people returned they found that the land was already preoccupied by the descendants of the people who had been left behind few decades back.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} E. Achtemeier, \textit{The Community and Message of Isaiah 56-66}, 142.
\textsuperscript{54} Paul D. Hanson, \textit{The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of the Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology}, 172.
\textsuperscript{55} Biblical passages affirm this fact in 2 Kings 24:12-16; 2 kings 25.
6.2.5. Comments on Isaiah 66:1-5: Postcolonial reading of the voice of Dissidence for the rebuilding of the Temple

The empire might have intended the religious practice to support the imperial policy, but the religion of Yehud had resources to resist the imperialization. Imperialization is a strong and momentous force in human history, but it always breeds resistance. The interaction of imperial and local cultures urges some people to have a hard gripped hold to their traditional ways of life and thought, as well as to the previous pre-imperial autonomy. The elite set about trying to control and eventually to exploit those in the periphery by speeding up the rebuilding process which ultimately facilitated the colonial power. Even within the major religious expressions of the Temple and the law, the process of imperialization simultaneously generated the process of resistance which is well reflected in 66:1, 2. Therefore the two different religious stances provide the social setting of two different groups that underlie the structure of 66:1-2. In each case the prophetic spokesman announces Yahweh’s rejection of the normative cult, and then balances his attack with a word of Yahweh’s acceptance of the faithful minority. Westermann says that if 66:1-2 is independent of its immediate literary context and removed from any concrete polemic seems to be a reversal of sound methodology. He says, that this passage in its context offers very definite clues to the setting.

Hence accommodation and resistance occurred immediately. There is a mimic and approximation happening in all areas of the life. The early postexilic writings offer voices supporting the Temple as well as opposing the Temple. This is well attested in the initial part of the interpretation which gives a clear indication that Trito Isaiah was promoting the aspect of temple building but this passage indicates some sort of resistance. The long-simmering opposition to the entire imperial program bursts into the open in the text, known as Third Isaiah. Juxtaposing few key texts in Nehemiah, Haggai and Third Isaiah it shows how the unknown prophet’s

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56 Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*, 58.
words struck directly at the heart of the Zadokite accommodation. The texts in the Third Isaiah stood in direct opposition to the entire Zadokite program, seeing it simply a reiteration of the sins of Judah’s own imperial past. This is very well reflected in Isaiah 66:1-5. Isaiah 66 indirectly criticises the Zadokite priests who demonstrated not only an exclusive view of the nations but also were in full control of the temple institution from the time the Temple was rebuilt.61

The Persians seem to have allowed a considerable degree of social-cultural autonomy to subject people. The empire did not try to enforce a single imperial language, culture, legal system or religion. Instead, it allowed local groups to set their own cultural values and norms by local custom and institutions, such as the Jerusalem temple-state, that would manage both.62 Therefore, realizing this fate that is going to befall, though the chapters 55-66 are very much promoting the rebuilding of the Temple but the verses dealt also affirm to the fact that a group of people who were not very conducive to this grand project of the rebuilding of the Temple and hence a resistance to the accommodative voice is felt in this passage, where God Himself says that "what house the mortals can make as the heavens are His throne.

In the history of the Israelite cult there stands a continuous conflict between two contradictory concepts: The concept of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel and the concept of the Temple as the fixed dwelling place of God.63 It is clear that the chapters 56-66 come from a group of literate, engaged, and profoundly committed followers of Yahweh who see the dominant culture’s acceptance of accommodation to the Persian Empire as a terrible sell out of Israel’s tradition of “Yahweh alone.” Rather than relying on empire, this passage 66:1-3 also spells out clearly that no particular place can contain God, an imagery coming from traditional prophecy, divine warrior motifs, and perhaps even using Persia’s venerable Zoroastrian tradition against itself, urges Yehud to

61 Daniel Jones Muthunayagom, The Relationship between Election and Israel’s attitude towards the nations in the book of Isaiah, 360.
return to its reliance on Yahweh for its stability and strength.\textsuperscript{64} The belief that Mount Zion as Yahweh’s dwelling place, motivated to the building of the temple was part of the Canaanite heritage that was absorbed in Israel with the conquest of Jerusalem. If this be the case of seeing Mount Zion as God’s dwelling place, then it could no longer be maintained that it became Yahweh’s abode because the temple was built there. Instead, the reverse was the case and the temple was built there because Mount Zion had become Yahweh’s abode.\textsuperscript{65} The role of the empire was well read before itself along with the so called temple elite by the people whom the elite considered to be outcast and to whom the justice and righteousness was not given.

6.3. Haggai 1:1-15

6.3.1. Introduction

Haggai may reflect an earlier perspective among the Yehudite community than Zechariah chapters 1-8.\textsuperscript{66} These two prophetic units, Haggai 1-2 and Zechariah 1-8 on which the exegesis is dealt also share a prevailing interest on the restoration of postexilic Jerusalem and specifically on the project of temple-restoration. These two phenomena, one literary (the framework) and the other ideological (the temple-building interest), set this block of prophetic material apart from the preceding prophetic material-the pre-exilic and exilic prophetic collection that forms the early corpus of the Book of the Twelve-as well as from the concluding block of postexilic prophecy now found in Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi. These observations, coupled with the observation that Zechariah 9-14 lacks both of these characteristics, form the basis for the now common view that both Haggai 1-2 and Zechariah 1-8 once circulated together as an independent book, in a composite editorial unity.\textsuperscript{67} A long-standing approach to Haggai 1:1-15 maintains that the people’s opposition to the reconstruction of the temple was not due to laziness or indifference, as is affirmed in many

\textsuperscript{64} Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, \textit{Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now}, 62.

\textsuperscript{65} Menahem Haran, “The Divine Presence in the Israelite Cult and the Cultic Institutions,” 264.


commentaries on Haggai, but was rooted in ideological convictions. Several exegetical considerations present serious difficulties to understand the people’s opposition, as it is portrayed in the redactional study of Haggai, as stemming from pious theological concerns rather than simple self-interest. Hence, any prophetic book that focuses expressly on the temple, it is Haggai. So in the succeeding pages an attempt will be made to delve into the text to draw out some important insights about why people were reluctant of rebuilding project.

6.3.2. Translation

1. In the second year of Darius the King, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD (Yahweh) came through Haggai the

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73 Hereafter, Lord will be used.
prophet to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest as follows

2 Thus the LORD of hosts (Yahweh Sebaoth) says: This people says, ‘This is not the time to come, the time for the house of Lord (Yahweh) to be rebuilt’.

74 On the meaning of פחה cf. the discussion of the political status of Yehud in chapter 3. The LXX renders פחה here and in 1:12, 14; 2:21, 22 by ἐκ φυλῆς Ιουδα. Bianchi, following Sacchi sees the LXX as reflecting an original Hebrew reading such as "mination of yehūdā". Alternatively, Wolff suggests that the Greek translators assumed פחה to be synonymous with מֶשֶׁה. Amsler opines that the LXX messianizes here. The Targum reads zerrubbabel rabba’ debēt yehūdā (“Zerrubbabel the great one (cf. Ezra 4:10) of the house of Judah”. The Peshitta reads zrbbl rb’ dyhwdh. Bianchi further notes that the Vetus Latina, I Esdras 5:2 and Josephus (Antiquity 12.73) follow the LXX and see a reference here to Zerubbabel’s Davidic origins. The book of Haggai is the only place where the LXX renders פחה in this way. Refer to John Kessler, The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud, 103.

75 לָוֹן הַגָד lit. “the great priest” is usually translated “high priest” (cf. Leviticus 21:10; Numbers 26:25; 2 Kings 12:11; 22:4, 8; 23: 4). "head" or "chief priest" is used in 2 Kings 25:18. Refer to Ralph L. Smith, Micah-Malachi: WBC, vol. 32, 151. Meyers and Meyers as referred by John Kessler in his book John Kessler, The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud, 120, 121, writes that “high Priest” differs from the head or chief priest or the priest in terms of the functions and responsibilities fulfilled by the individual in question. This view is affirmed in his work. D. W. Rooke, Zadok’s Heir: the Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel, Oxford Theological Monograph (Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 130. This term could be more in terms for a person responsible for the collection and management of funds (for example, Hilkiah 2 Kings 22:4, 8 and Jehoiada, 2 Kings 12:11) and certain governmental activities than cultic in nature. Tollington takes an intermediate position, seeing the term as a continuation of its pre-exilic use with reference to “any senior priest who had special duties connected with the fabric of the temple and its upkeep. Refer to J. A. Tollington, Tradition and Innovation in Haggai and Zechariah 1-8, JSOTSupp 150 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 131.

76 Hereafter, Lord of hosts will be used.

77 The principal problem here concerns the repetition of ימ in the MT, a repetition which is not reflected in the versions. The LXX οὐχ ἥκει ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ οἰκοδομῆσαι τὸν οἶκον κυρίου reading, which is also reflected in the Vulgate and Syriac, The Targum adds ימ (now). The text-critical decision which yields this translation, as opposed to the alternative ‘The time has not come’, will be discussed in detail. This particular verse in the whole passage is of great interest and therefore, this part of the verse will be dealt in much detail. Scholars such as Wellhausen, Janssen, Hamerton-Kelly, Steck, Hanson, de Robert, and Tadmor view the people’s words, as cited in Haggai 1:2, as reflecting the opinion that the time for temple reconstruction had not yet come, and, consequently, no such endevour ought to be undertaken, for a summary of the opinions of these scholars regarding the various sectors of the population that held such views, cf. John Kessler, The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud, 123-125. Much weight is placed on understanding ימ.
Then the word of the LORD (Yahweh) came by the prophet Haggai, saying:

Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses\(^78\), while this house lies in ruins?

Now therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared.

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\(^4\) Thus in v. 4 the term \(\text{עת}\) carries the notion of a judgment relative to the appropriateness of a given activity. Using a good dose of irony, Haggai asks the people, ‘Is it an appropriateness time for you to live in paneled houses while the house is desolate?’ Consequently, both vv. 2a and 4 use \(\text{עת}\) in the sense of an appropriate time for a given activity. This is well rooted in sapiential literature as dealt in a later stage elaborately. John Kessler, “Building the Second Temple: Questions of Time, Text, and History in Haggai 1:1-15,” 244. The people’s understanding of \(\text{עת}\) is “a falling together or juncture of circumstances favorable or suitable to an end or purpose.” See John R. Wilch, *Time and Event: An Exegetical Study of the Use of ‘etth in the Old Testament in Comparison to Other Temporal Expression in Clarification of the Concept of Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 167. Wilch’s definition encapsulates the wide semantic range of this word, which includes uses for an appropriate activity, a proper occasion, and an appointed situation. Cf. “\(\text{עת}\)” BDB, 773-774; Frank Y. Patrick, “Time and Tradition in the Book of Haggai” in *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology*, eds. Mark Boda and Michael Floyd (London / New York: T and T Clark, 2008): 41.
6 You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes.

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared.

8 Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD.

9 You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while all of you hurry off to your own houses.

10 Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.

11 And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the soil produces, on human beings and animals, and on all their labors.

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of the prophet Haggai, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the LORD

13 Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, saying, I am with you, says the LORD.

14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

15 on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month of the second year of Darius.

6.3.3. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

In Haggai 1:2, text-critical and translational choices play a crucial role in determining the theme and logic of 1:1-15. The two chief translational options propose differing subjects for the verb בוא (‘to come’). The more frequently adopted translation construes זה as the subject of בוא and translates, ‘The time has not come...’79 The alternative translation, which

John Kessler\textsuperscript{80} affirms is taken into consideration for this translation. This views the people as the implied subject of בָּהּ (as is the case in v. 14) and translates, 'It is not the time to come.'\textsuperscript{81} There are two principal options for understanding the MT: (1) אֵ֛֖בֶ֑֛ב may be read as an infinitive absolute and predicate of יָ֣תֶ֖שׁ; as in the first translation; or (2) אֵ֛֖בֶ֑֛ב may be read as an infinitive construct used genitivally with יָ֣תֶ֖שׁ describing the \textit{kind} of time in question (i.e. a time for / of coming), as in the second translation that is mentioned. Four considerations make the latter solution the most likely. First, the people are the subject of בָּהּ in v. 14. There they come to Jerusalem to build the temple. In the thematic structure of 1:1-15, vv. 2 and 14 stand opposite each other. Because of Haggai’s words in 1:1-11, the people do in v. 14 that which they have refused to do in v. 2.\textsuperscript{83} It is thus likely that the people constitute the subject of בָּהּ in both verses. Second, vv. 2b and 4 both use יָ֣תֶ֖שׁ followed by a genitival infinitive construct. It is therefore entirely apposite to see the same construction in 1:2a. Third, Jerusalem appears to have been quite sparsely inhabited at the time\textsuperscript{84} and it would be necessary for some workers to come to Jerusalem from their own dwellings, located elsewhere.\textsuperscript{85} Fourth, the noun יָ֣תֶ֖שׁ followed by a


genitival infinitive construct (usually preceded by lamedh, but occasionally without, cf. Genesis 29:7) is frequently used in sapiential contexts and denotes the kind of time suitable for a given activity. Thus the translation 'It is not the time to come i.e. now isn't a good time to come' is more contextually appropriate than 'The time has not come'. The latter reading leaves greater room for the possibility that the people's motive is theological (although it by no means requires it). The former underlines the speakers' volitional choices at a given moment.\(^8^6\)

From a purely formal point of view Haggai 1: 1-15 may be divided into three sections 1:1-3; 4-11 and 12-15, corresponding to the more poetic language of the central section and the prose of the introduction and conclusion. 'Kessler sees the book's opening (vv. 1-2), consisting of a date formula, a Wortereignisformel (Word-Event Formula)'\(^8^7\). The use of date and Word-Event Formula, as well as Haggai's name and his designation as a prophet establishes the test's genre as a prophetic book and suggests to the readers / hearers that it be approached with a reading strategy appropriate to such texts.\(^8^8\) However, from a thematic and rhetorical point of view vv. 2-3 cannot be abstracted from vv.4-11 and thus vv. 2-11 must be considered as a unit.\(^8^9\) Verse 12 signals an important transition. The reader awaits the outcome of the conflict described in 1:11. The narration progresses by means of two identifiable units found in vv. 12-13, followed by a conclusion (v. 14). Each unit includes a description of the reaction of the principal dramatis personae to Yahweh, followed by a definition of the role and the identity of Haggai. Verses 12-14 frame the narrative epilogue 'Haggai 1: 12-14 provides the narrative of response and is concerned to relate the rebuilding of the


Temple to the changing fortunes of the people and in particular to the
dawning of a new age in which Zerubbabel of the Davidic house is to
occupy a primary position. Two passages in Zech. 1-8 are related to this.
An isolated fragment in 4: 6b-10a\(^{90}\) stresses the full part to be played by
Zerubbabel in the rebuilding; this is quite explicit, but its relationship to its
context and indeed to the remainder of these chapters of Zechariah
remains very uncertain.\(^{91}\) The dating formula in v.15, while unexpected,
fulfills two important functions. First, it frames the scene, and second, it
underlines the fact that the resumption of the work occurred quickly.\(^{92}\)

The form of Haggai 1: 2-11 has been variously categorized. Floyd
views it as a prophetic disputation.\(^{93}\) Bedford\(^{94}\) maintains that the
community had rejected a call to rebuild the Temple issued sometime
around the emergence of Darius I and the return of Zerubbabel. He affirms
that their motivation for doing so was not ‘moral turpitude’ but stemmed
from ‘excellent ideological reasons’.

6.3.4. Explanation

1, 2 It is noteworthy that the author of the book uses “Darius the King”
includes the title as “king” but excludes any qualification indicating his
nationality or kingdom.\(^{95}\) This stands in contrast to the references made to
introduce the foreign kings.\(^{96}\) The hearers / readers are virtually invited to
skip over the issue of foreign domination by a dominating Empire and
somehow see that situation analogous to earlier periods of the people’s
history.\(^{97}\) Hence the author very carefully presents the dominating Empire
to the people.

\(^{90}\) This text is dealt in the later part of this exegetical study, in the succeeding pages.
\(^{91}\) Peter Ackroyd, “The Jewish community in Palestine in the Persian period” in The
Cambridge History of Judaism, vol.1, Introduction; The Persian Period, eds. W. D.
\(^{92}\) John Kessler, The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud,
113-114.
\(^{93}\) M. H. Floyd, Minor Prophets. Part 2, FOTL 22 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000),
273.
\(^{94}\) P. R. Bedford, Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah, 170-177.
\(^{95}\) John Kessler, “Tradition, Continuity and Covenant in the Book of Haggai: An
Alternative Voice from Early Persian Yehud,” 11.
\(^{96}\) Cf. Cyrus the king of Persia (כֶּסֶרֶנָא הַמַּלְוֶה), 2 Chronicles 36: 23; Ezra 1:1);
Sennacherib, king of Assyria (סְנַכְּרֶבַּר הַמַּלְוֶה), 2 Kings 18:13); Nebuchadnezzar,
King of Babylon ( נְבוּכָדְנֶצָר), 2 Kings 5:8)
\(^{97}\) John Kessler, “Tradition, Continuity and Covenant in the Book of Haggai: An
Alternative Voice from Early Persian Yehud,” 11.

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The text continues to introduce Zerubbabel as a Davidide via the inclusion of his patronymic.\(^98\) There was no other messianic hope as blatant in postexilic portions of the Hebrew Bible as found here.\(^99\) The title ‘governor (פָּחָה)\(^100\) of Yehud’ is very carefully attributed to show once again the anomaly of Judah’s domination by a foreign power and Zerubbabel’s humble status\(^101\) and to avoid any confrontation with the Empire. “Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest was likely to be born in exile.”\(^102\) In Verse 2, Kessler\(^103\) quotes Wellhausen who suggested that two opposing theological conceptions were present in Haggai 1. On one hand, there were those who saw the rebuilding of the temple as an essential and preliminary step to the coming of the messianic era. Others, however, viewed the temple’s restoration as occurring subsequent to the arrival of the hoped-for age.

R. G. Hamerton-Kelly attempted to identify the two opposing theological and sociological factions.\(^104\) He identified the proponents of immediate rebuilding with the priestly group, who based its convictions upon the theological perspectives of Deuteronomy.\(^105\) Hanson took a


\(^100\) By incorporating the term פָּחָה it makes sense that this was to refer the domination of the empire as he is imperially appointed governor, John Kessler, “Tradition, Continuity and Covenant in the Book of Haggai: An Alternative Voice from Early Persian Yehud,” 12.


\(^102\) Seriah was put to death in 587BCE, His father, Jehozadak, was taken into exile, where Joshua was likely born. He was of a Zadokite stock (2 Kings 25:18, 1 Chronicles 5: 40-41, in conformity with the requirement of Ezekiel 44:15. Refer to John Kessler, The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud, 120.


similar approach, situating the theological opposition (in contrast to Hamerton-Kelly) between the priestly-Ezekielian coalition, on one hand, and an amalgam of the disciples of Deutero-Isaiah and disen-franchised Levites, on the other. The introduction of a legitimate priestly figure strengthens the hearers’ sense of continuity—Yahweh had preserved both the Davidic and Zadokite lines in exile, and both would be involved in the temple’s reconstruction. The symmetrical fashion wherein each member of the book’s principal characters is introduced by name and title thus creates the image of an ordered and structured society in which each member has an assigned role and a part to play.

3-11. The continuity motifs established in 1:1-2 are continued through 1:3-11 by two highly creative techniques: (1) the redactional slant placed upon the conflict with the people over the rebuilding of the temple; and (2) the use of Deuteronomistic and Zion traditions to express that conflict. His analysis suggests that the judgment is over and the “divinely appointed, propitious time to rebuild” has indeed arrived. The end of the time of


109 Peter Ross Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah*, 169-181. According to Bedford, the people of Yehud have legitimate ideological reasons for not rebuilding the temple. These ideological reasons are encapsulated by the people’s usage of שָׂרַד in 1:2. Although contested by Kessler and others, the theological understanding of the usage of שָׂרַד is supported by similar usages of שָׂרַד in Psalms 102:14; Ezekiel 30:3 and Isaiah 49: 8, as well as numerous parallels in other West Asian sources, refer to Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings*, 140-143. Although Kessler’s earlier work counters Bedford on this issue, his recent work reflects a greater awareness of the theological underpinnings of the people’s statement in 1:2: “It is quite likely that ideological objections to temple reconstruction, or at least significant questions with reference to the timing of such a project, did exist in the early Persian period” see, John Kessler, “Building the Second
the deity’s abandonment of the site could be discerned by means of “dreams, extispicy and planetary omens.”¹¹⁰ The Judean community, according to Bedford, would have known that it was time to rebuild the temple by means of “tangible signs, such as the repatriation of all the exiles, the blessing of Yahweh’s people and land, the destruction of enemies, the acknowledgement by the nations of Yahweh’s sovereignty, the re-establishment of the kingship of David, and the reunification of Judah and Israel.”¹¹¹

Most of the people in the peripheries felt that they were not convinced of such tangible signs and the Jerusalemite community staunchly refused for this great and laborious task. This could be also based on the calculation regarding the seventy year desolation of Jerusalem which is found in the book of Jeremiah.¹¹² The word יַעַט in verses 2, 4 does not mean a divinely designated moment, because Haggai’s response to the people’s conviction does not consist of any theological or exegetical arguments, though in certain cases יַעַט may refer to an epoch or a moment designated by Yahweh for a particular purpose. (Psalms 102:14; Jeremiah 46:21; 50:27, 31).¹¹³ The nuance is rather the well attested notion of “an appropriate or suitable time” for a given activity.¹¹⁴ The idea of an “appropriate” time is well rooted in sapiential literature (Ecclesiastes 8:5-6).¹¹⁵ Frequently the noun יַעַט is followed by an infinitive construct.

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¹¹² Hayim Tadmor, “‘The appointed time has not yet arrived’: The Historical Background of Haggai 1: 2,” cites Jeremiah 25:12-13; 29:10. Thus the termination of the building project was timed to coincide with the seventieth anniversary of the fall of Jerusalem. Refer to John Kessler, The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud, 124, 125.
indicating the activity which is appropriate or inappropriate in the time under consideration. As noted in the textual criticism, the implied subject is the people who say, “It is not the appropriate time to come...” This sapiential orientation is evident in several passages which contain the same construction. In Ecclesiastes 3:2-8, for example, it is followed by an infinitive construct that describes activities appropriate to certain periods of life. Thus there is a time to be born (דֶתָ֖ת לָלֶ, דֶתָ֖ת לָלֶ), to die (תָ֔וּת לָמַּעֶ֥), to plant (עַתָ֔רִית נָטֶ֥וֹת לַעֲקָ֖, עַתָ֔רִית נָטֶ֥וֹת לַעֲקָ֖), and to pluck up (תָ֔לַיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת לָטַּיְת L. כָּשֵׁן לָעֵל). The intent is clear that the given external circumstances, gathering in the flocks constitutes an inappropriate activity. In each of these instances the construction refers not to a divine judgment regarding whether or not an activity should be undertaken, but rather to a human evaluation in response to the question, “Would the activity under consideration be wise, prudent, appropriate or well situated in the existing circumstance?” What is more, such an evaluation can be called into question, by the prefixing of an interrogative he to עת as in Haggai 1:4. Thus 2 Kings 5:26, contains a virtually identical interrogative structure. There Elisha asks Gehazi, “Is it the time to receive (חַתָּלָלַה לָקַּל) silver, to receive (חַתָּלָלַה) garments, olive trees...?” Haggai, like Elisha, calls into question a course of action chosen by the people based on their view of the appropriateness of the circumstances, presumably the adversities mentioned in 1:4-6; 9-11. In other words, the people have said, “It is clear, given the external circumstances, that wisdom dictates that the rebuilding of the temple be put off until a more appropriate time”.

He addresses the people in 1:3-11 using “traditional” forms of questions (cf. Hosea 6:4; Amos 3:3-8; Jonah 4:11; Micah 3:1-3; 6:3; Zechariah 1:5-6; 7:5-7; 8:6) and disputations, as well as a promise of salvation (v. 8). The author has used creatively the Deuteronomistic and

\[116\] Refer to John Kessler, The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud, 126.


\[120\] The author links Yehud’s economic woes to the ancient Deuteronomic curses (Haggai 1: 6-11; cf. Deuteronomy 28: 22-24, 38-40), assuring his audience that the...
Zion traditions in 1:3-11, it has long been noted that Haggai uses the treaty or futility-curse form in his disputation with the people.\textsuperscript{121} Such usage was highly significant in the Deuteronomistic tradition (Deuteronomy 28; Judge 2:11-14), especially in several of the prophetic books (Hosea 2:2-9; Amos 4:6-11; 5:11; Micah: 13-16). Indeed, it has frequently been pointed out, there are numerous verbal and thematic parallels between Haggai 1:3-11 and Deuteronomy 28; Leviticus 26, and Micah 6:13-16.\textsuperscript{122}

Haggai’s innovative use of the Deuteronomistic tradition could be seen. The people are being reprimanded for failing to rebuild the temple despite the fact that temple building, as Petersen puts it, “is markedly absent from other covenant stipulations preserved in the Hebrew Bible.”\textsuperscript{123} However, that which is most significant for the present discussion is how Haggai subtly introduces in his presentation with regard to the duty of temple reconstruction. From the beginning, the Jerusalem temple was seen as something of an innovation, needing divine approbation (2 Samuel 7; 1 Kings 8), a place where the worship of Yahweh was corrupted by the worship of foreign deities (Ezekiel 8) or a locus of misplaced faith—a false assurance has been given that Jerusalem would never be overthrown no matter what the conduct of its inhabitants may have been (Jeremiah 7).

In the Ancient West Asia, it was the customary practice of awaiting instructions from the deity before such an undertaking of reconstruction, as well as its form and cultic personnel. Haggai gives no room for any discussion on this matter. The rebuilding of the temple is a covenantal duty, whereas no explanation is offered as to how, when, or why it came to be one!\textsuperscript{124} The book overlooks the failures of the past, and focuses on the curse will be removed if the temple is rebuilt. Wes Haward-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, \textit{Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now}, 62.


\textsuperscript{123} David L. Petersen, \textit{Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary}, 190-191.

\textsuperscript{124} The authorization for rebuilding may be understood from the decree of Cyrus, (2 Chronicles 26:33 and Ezra 1:2-4. One thing to notice is Haggai nowhere mentions about the decree, Chronicles and Ezra were likely produced much later, thus the knowledge of the decree cannot be demonstrated within the text. But it is assumed that the people were informed of this permission as Petersen mentions in \textit{Haggai and}
critical nature of the present (v. 8). 1: 12-15, this portion of the epilogue describes the effects of the Haggai’s message.

This section has minimized the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile— the texts assumes both but mentions neither. Failure to rebuild the temple, and the consequences thereof, are portrayed as a blemish on an existing relationship, not the evidence of one which had formerly existed and had lapsed. Hence, in 1:12-15 the audience is invited to view Haggai’s words as a challenge and response within an alive relationship rather than a call to renew a failed one. The obvious and contrasting difference that is found between the response of the people during Jeremiah and Haggai is that Haggai’s audience have done the right thing (1:2-15), whereas, the generation during Jeremiah’s time have done the wrong thing. Haggai is to a great extent silent regarding the failures of the past and even lacks an explicit call for repentance. He simply enjoins his people to do what they ought to do. And when they do what is required, he guarantees that Yahweh is among them once again as He has been in the past at critical moments of the people of God. He lays less stress on the failures of the people to live as God expected them to live by stressing on the aspect of rebuilding of the Temple.

6.3.5. Comments on Haggai 1: 1-15: Sociological reading on the voice of Dissidence for the rebuilding of the Temple

For Hanson, Haggai became a puppet of the ruling Zadokite group. The turning point in the struggle of the contending groups came around the year 520 BCE. The book of Haggai suggests that the hierocratic group had become dispirited as the result of repeated setbacks in its attempts to rebuild the temple. Conditions in the land appeared to be good, with bitter strife tearing at the fabric of the community and with uncertainty within and also on the international scene. The hierocrats laid the blame for this curse in the social, economic, political upon the fact that their temple restoration plan was not brought into reality which left the land unsuitable for the return of Yahweh’s Glory. One of the major themes as many scholars have projected is to show the prophet Haggai’s success. His


P. D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology, 244ff.

John Kessler, Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud, 255-257, that one of the primary redactional themes in the book of Haggai is that of the prophet’s success.
enthusiasm for temple building seems totally out of place among the prophets. As Elizabeth Achtemeier expresses it; He crops in the midst of the goodly fellowship of the prophets like a misguided stranger from the wrong part of town. No cry for social justice escapes his lips, no assurance that God dwells with the humble and contrite. Instead, he reeks of something that smells very much like the external and superficial religion of which we would all like to rid. He is seen as one breaking through the resistance voice of the common people and through whom Yahweh is able to bring change. Haggai is portrayed as a scribe or interpreter of omens who is able to correct the miscalculations of the people. Rather, he is portrayed as a classical prophet whose words cut to the heart of a disobedient people. In this regard it is significant to note that in Haggai, ‘the people’ in 1:2 constitute a *dramatis persona* separate and distinct from the High Priest, Governor, and the prophet (1:1) as well as ‘the priests’ (2:11). ‘The people’ comprises of the majority of the population of early Persian Yehud was likely to have been involved in agricultural and economic pursuits. The people lived in a situation of hand to mouth because they bore the brunt of the burden of taxation within the Persian Empire. Yehud had a limited territory and reduced population base.


Wes Haward-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*, 62.


The dramatic conflict introduced in v. 2 turns on the conviction of the people that “it is not the time to come; the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.” For at least a half a century, scholars have suggested that the issue at hand was something of a pious reluctance on the part of the people. The community does not want to risk offending the deity by proceeding with the reconstruction without having first received clear authorization to do so. P. R. Bedford argues in a similar line of thought. He maintains that the cessation of divine displeasure, manifested by concrete signs, was seen to be a necessary prerequisite to temple (re)building both in Israel and in the ancient West Asia.

At times, the stark refutation of Haggai seems very ambitious, because the conception of  uptime is supported by the fact that the book of Haggai clearly anticipates a future “time” of restoration. In 2:6 Yahweh, will initiate his mighty activities “in a little while.” In 2:15 and 2:18 the prophet employs the notion of “time” to encourage the people to think about the great hope that lies before them. In 2:20-23 the prophet speaks of a future time, “on that day,” when Yahweh will act against the kingdoms. When the people are coming to a conclusion that it is not the “time” to rebuild the temple, they are articulating their observations about

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134 This is dealt in the Textual comments.
138 This phrase indicates the immediacy of this coming event, see, Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 161.
the current state of affairs to the expectation, the people had about the
coming time of restoration which is characterized by the unfolding of the
certain events.

In different prophetic traditions in the Bible,\textsuperscript{140} the initiative of the
restoration happens with the defeat and submission of foreign nations.\textsuperscript{141} But on the contrary, the reality of foreign rule that is mentioned in the
initial verses of the book of Haggai indicates that the hopes of political
independence had yet not materialized in Yehud.\textsuperscript{142} Haggai carefully uses
the terms as “the governor” 1:2; “my servant” and “like a signet ring” in
2:20-23,\textsuperscript{143} but never uses the term “king,”\textsuperscript{144} as he does not want to offend
the Empire and create a wedge in the minds of the Persian colonial power.
Haggai was exhorting the people to rebuild the temple. As Rex Mason,
concludes “..., when Yahweh begins his universal reign in the completed
temple, Zerubbabel will succeed to royal status.”\textsuperscript{145} Thus, this passage

\textsuperscript{140} Jeremiah 29:8; 51:33; Ezekiel 21: 29 (English); Haggai 2:7; 21-22. Thus the
people keenly observed the time, when the overthrow of foreign powers is the initial
step to grand restoration envisioned in the prophetic corpus. The renewal of Davidide
throne is also linked with restoration, Isaiah 11:10-16; Jeremiah 23:5-6; though,
neither of these passages is directly alluded to in the book of Haggai, but the tradition
is held high, particularly in 2:20-23. In these verses Zerubbabel is identified as “my
servant”, and is promised to be “like a signet ring”. See, Frank Y. Patrick, “Time and
Tradition in the Book of Haggai,” 44.

\textsuperscript{141} This idea is very important for the rebuilding of the temple that the king’s enemies
are defeated in West Asian context. Refer to Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, \textit{I Have Built
You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian
and North-West Semitic Writings}, 133-134.

\textsuperscript{142} The remarkable portrayal is the lack of the negative assessments about the reality
of foreign rule, see, David L. Peteren, “The Temple in Persian Period of Prophetic
Davies (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991): 125-144; Frank Y. Patrick, “Time and

\textsuperscript{143} Although Haggai 2: 20-23 anticipates Zerubbabel’s role as King under Yahweh’s
authority, he apparently never ascended the throne for reasons that must remain
unknown, see, Marvin A. Sweeney, “Targum Jonathan’s Reading of Zechariah 3; A
Gateway for the Palace” in Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah1-8 in the
Trajectory of Hebrew Theology, eds. Mark Boda and Michael Floyd (London / New

\textsuperscript{144} Paul L. Redditt, “The King in Haggai-Zechariah 1-8 and the book of the Twelve
in Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah1-8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew
Theology, eds. Mark Boda and Michael Floyd (London / New York: T and T Clark,
2008): 59; Paul L. Reddith, “Prophecy and the Monarchy in Haggai and Zechariah 1-
8,” 436-449.

\textsuperscript{145} Rex A. Mason, “The Messiah in the Postexilic Old Testament Literature” in \textit{King
and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old
Testament Seminar}, JSOTSupp 270, ed. John Day (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic
reflects that the coming of Davidic king would bring an end to the exile and bring restoration. But on the other hand, people could not think as the foreign colonial power was still ruling over them.

The prophetic expectations about the restoration looked for an economic boom. The book of Haggai is no exception as it looks for the same in 2:19, but a contrary thing is seen in 1:9. Hence the people had a high expectation in the form of abundant agricultural yield, which was not met and hence people had the feeling that it is not the ‘time.’ The people of Yehud were not clear about the return and their hopes were hung on the return of Yahweh. Thus, the “return of Yahweh to Jerusalem stands in the center” of the restoration process is well affirmed in 1:8; 1:13; 2:4. This return of Yahweh’s glory was an important component to the rebuilding of the temple. The people were not sure as the situations were very bleak, because the prophetic traditions always held the view that Yahweh's return would inaugurate a “new age” that would result in reversal of fortunes, including economic prosperity, agricultural blessing, judgment upon the nations, a return of shalom. As Ackroyd points out, Temple


This is mentioned in Jeremiah 31:12-14; Ezekiel 36:30; The postexilic influence of this “grand program” in Zechariah 8: 11-12, refer to Antonine De Guglielmo, “The Fertility of the Land in the Messianic Prophecies” in CBQ 19 (1957): 306-311.


was the most potent symbol of the presence of God... It is the outward sign of that manifestation of the divine presence and power which was an important ingredient for an established life of restoration.

Thus, these imaginations pervaded the thoughts of the people in the early postexilic times which made them to be unwilling in terms of “time”. There appeared no “completeness, success... a situation which is both prosperous and secure...a state of well-being which is a direct result of the beneficent Presence of God.” Instead of abundant crop yields, the people experienced terrible agricultural conditions in Yehud, this is dramatically pictured in Haggai 1:10. Yehud still face a daunting situation of foreign rule, difficult economic conditions and a meager population. Hence, the word קָנָה expresses “activity which is inappropriate in the time of consideration” as used in wisdom literature. The current state of affairs in early Achaemenid Yehud looked more like an extension of the exilic period and a time under the colonial empire and the political independence is still to be materialized. The book of Haggai and the book of Zechariah express a sense of a persistent exile. The texts throughout the postexilic period emphasize the imminent return of Yahweh. Hence

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154 The description of Yehud in 1:11, הַרְבּ echoes the image of exilic condition, see, Francis I. Anderson, “Who Built the Second Temple?” in *Australian Biblical Review* 6 (1958): 24-25, the depiction of the current postexilic situation as הַרְבּ is significant because this is the same word employed by Jeremiah 33:10 to describe the curse conditions of the exile. Frank Y. Patrick, “Time and Tradition in the Book of Haggai,” 50.
155 Zechariah 1:12, this is further confirmed by the prophet’s words in Zechariah 4:8-10. According to Zechariah 7, the people of the early postexilic period in Achaemenid Yehud were not clear about the restoration. The current difficulties in early postexilic Yehud suggested to the people that the expected time of restoration was still a distant hope, not a present reality. This confusion is reflected in the people’s waning commitment to the effort of rebuilding as the book of Haggai reflects. For example, Haggai 2:4 presents another call to work, portraying the dwindling effort of the people, see, Frank Y. Patrick, “Time and Tradition in the Book of Haggai,” 51, 52.
156 For example, Yahweh declares in Zechariah 2:10; 8:3; Haggai 1:8, Anderson opines: “The overriding theological issue for the early postexilic community is that of Yahweh’s presence.” See, Gary A. Anderson, *Sacrifices and Offerings in Ancient Israel: Studies in Their Social and Political Importance*, Harvard Semitic...
the people concluded with a voice of resistance, that the political, economic and religious environment does not match with the restoration expectations found in the Hebrew Bible and hence they thought it was not the “time.”

6.3.6. Comments on Haggai 1: 1-15: Postcolonial reading on the voice of Dissidence for the rebuilding of the Temple

The book of Haggai is very clear of its intention i.e. the rebuilding of the temple. In the light of the discussed evidences, the dissidence voice of the people who were colonized by the imperial power, made the colonized to give sapiential reasoning to justify that the “time” was inappropriate because the initial time at Yehud under the Persian domination did not facilitate the situations. There was a difference of opinion to whether the “propitious time” had in fact arrived. It was very true that the rebuilding had to take place but the terms used as discussed, made the people doubtful of the time. The book is very careful to present the two aristocratic strata of the returning exiles. Zerubbabel, the governor who was from David’s lineage and Joshua the high priest, who hailed from Zadokite priesthood are promoted. Throughout the Second Temple Period, the Temple served as the heart of Jewish life, not only as the cultic and ritual centre, but also as the political, social, judicial and cultural core.

The postexilic biblical literature talks about the intra-community tension, which the researcher has dealt and will deal from the Book of Ezekiel chapters 40-48 in the later part of this chapter. At the same time, Haggai is promoting the Persian colonial imperial rule by facilitating the rebuilding project. This indirectly promoted the Persian economic, political, religious, social and cultural agendas. He never uses the title “king” for Zerubbabel, though the book of Haggai was hoping for the restoration of the Davidic king.


157 Frank Y. Patrick, “Time and Tradition in the Book of Haggai,” 55, this portion of the exegesis has incorporated lot of ideas from this article.


The prophet confronts the voice of resistance which was raised by the people with proper reasons, as this was in line with the prophetic tradition. The situations were in contrasting sense; in the political scenario, the Persian domination was not yet over and Zerubbabel was seen as a governor. The economic, social and religious factors were far beyond the reach for the people to think that restoration had begun and the presence of the Lord had returned. The West Asian contexts also did not allow them to think for the rebuilding of the temple as they were not certain of the approval of the deity and the return of Yahweh's presence. All these factors made the people to be on the resistance mode but the prophet was energized to encourage the people to rebuild the temple. The rebuilding was also very much the plan of God but people did not know the "time." Some, who thought that they are not free and still under the empire, could not go with clarity about the rebuilding of the Temple.

The dominant voice in the prophetic book of Haggai "undergirds rhetorically his theological interpretation of the community's covenantal obligation to rebuild the temple through the language and forms of wisdom traditions. He makes more effort to add a eudemonistic dimension, common in wisdom, in which the basis of his appeal is, in part, choosing that which will bring the greatest ultimate personal happiness. To move his hearers to a point of decision, Haggai calls for two well-known sapiential responses: 1. Observation, 2. Reflection upon that which has been observed. (Haggai 1:6b, 9a, 11). Thus the use of religious traditions in Haggai 1:1-15 manifests 'creative reformulation, mixing, and re-application'\(^\text{161}\) of a variety of traditions and genres\(^\text{162}\) for giving voice to powerful on behalf of the voice of the unheard common in the periphery to cater to the need of the powerful Persian Empire.

\(^{161}\) The postexilic prophecy was constantly involved in this process of the 'authoritative' word, but this does not mean that the postexilic books have no originality but the prophetic books of this time shows considerable creativity in using the materials and traditions. R. A. Mason, "The Prophets of the Restoration," 141-142.

6.4. Haggai 2:1-9

6.4.1. Translation

1. In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of Yahweh came through Haggai as follows:

2. “Say to Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people.

3. Is there still anyone left among you who saw this house in its former splendor? And how does it look to you now? Does it not seem to be nothing at all in your eyes?

4. But now be strong Zerubbabel, oracle of Yahweh; and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and be strong, all you people of the land, oracle of Yahweh, and work, for I am with you, oracle of Yahweh Sebaoth.

5. The word which I cut with you when you came out of Egypt, my Spirit stands in your midst, do not fear.

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163 This exegesis does not deal elaborately with the time, textual, form and setting because the time and space do not permit. On the other hand, some areas have been dealt which to some extent will help the researcher to do justice to the method adopted. John Kessler, The Book of Haggai Prophecy and Society in the Early Persian Yehud, 159-161.

164 ביד in MT, is followed by the LXX, Syriac, Vulgate and Targum is to be retained. “The fragments from Murrabba ‘at have’ which seems to fit the context” as per Pieter A. Verhoef, The Books of Haggai and Malachi: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids / Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 91.

165 הבן הכהן הגדו lit. translation is “the great priest” is usually translated as “high priest” (cf. Leviticus 21:10; Number 35:25, 28; 2 Kings 12:11. Refer to Ralph L. Smith, Micah – Malachi: WBC, vol. 32, 151.

166 The LXX adds πάντας and is followed by the Syr. “LXX, Peshitta and Vetus Latina read ‘to all the remnant.’” Refer to Pieter A. Verhoef, The Books of Haggai and Malachi, 91. The Targum and Vulgate support the MT. The LXX made the addition perhaps through the influence of 1:12, 14a. Refer to John Kessler, The Book of Haggai Prophecy and Society in the Early Persian Yehud, 159.

167 Usually the expression is related to the “the covenant” רְשֵׁית ‘which I cut,’ because of the awkward construct, it is considered as a scribal gloss. Since this interprets the thought between the parallel expressions, “I am with you” (2:4) and “my spirit is your midst” (2:5). The LXX omits the first phrase. Refer to Ralph L. Smith, Micah-Malachi: WBC, vol. 32, 156. Barthélemy as Kessler cites, concludes, “whether or not the phrase is secondary, its omission would have to be made on literary critical ground rather than text-critical grounds.” Refer to John Kessler, The Book of Haggai Prophecy and Society in the Early Persian Yehud, 160.
6. For this is what Yahweh Seba’oth says, “one more time, and it will happen very soon, I will shake⁶⁸ the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.

7. And I will make all nations tremble, and the treasure of all the nations will come in, and I will fill this house with glory, oracle of Yahweh Seba’oth.

8. Mine is the silver! And mine is the gold!, oracle of Yahweh Seba’oth.

9. The future splendor of this house far exceeds its former state, oracle of Yahweh Seba’oth. And in this place, I will give peace, oracle of Yahweh Seba’oth.

6.4.2. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

This passage is structured in the similar way as 1:1-11. Following the introductory formula, the passage’s dramatic conflict is introduced in vv. 2-3. The prophet, at Yahweh’s request, addresses a series of three rhetorical questions to the people (2: 2-3). The first deals with the past: “who saw this house in its former splendor?” The second and the third relate to the present: “And how does it look to you now?” “Does it not seem to be anything at all in your eyes?” The response is not given but it is clearly meant to reveal widespread discouragement.⁶⁹ According to Mitchell as quoted by Pieter “this prophecy was designed to meet an emergency arising from the despondency that overtook the builders as soon as they realised the magnitude of their task and the slenderness of their resources.”⁷⁰

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⁶⁸ This word is a reminder to the leaders and the people especially the two classes of people who resemble the major group of people who are having no voice. The two strata of the elite class of the early returnees are mentioned. This is already dealt in the earlier exegesis. The verbal structure of vv. 6-7 frequently indicates successive actions. The participle יְשַׁמֵּר is indicating an imminent event hence the prophet affirms and facilitates the rebuilding of the temple. He affirms of God’s help to motivate the demoralized people.


⁷⁰ H. G. Mitchell et.al., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912). Baldwin rightly suggests two main and additional obstacles to the ongoing work. First, the preparatory work took too longer than expected. In clearing the site, redressing stone, organizing team, second, and the progress would have been delayed during the seventh month of major festivals on which no work would be allowed. Refer to Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 92.
The prophet gives a response in two subsequent sections: the first response, in 2:4-5, consists of an encouragement to persevere in the reconstruction ‘by using lot traditional idioms and formulae are drawn.’ The second, in vv. 6-9, is a promise regarding the temple’s glorious future. A series of eschatological motifs, an inclination towards Zion theology, are evoked to point to a better future. In both sections numerous continuity motifs are used to calm the people of the feeling of discontinuity. Even in the succeeding verses, in a text that many interpreters consider a crux, Haggai 2:10-14, a portion of the community of Judeans is condemned as ‘unclean’. There were conflicts within and outside, scholars have long interpreted this text as reflecting social and / or religious conflict, identifying the offending party along ethnic lines (Samaritans, an impure foreign element), religious distinctive (Synchretists vs. ‘Yahwehalonists’, or ‘Visionaries’ vs. ‘Pragmatists’) or class divisions (Aristocracy vs. Disenfranchized).

6.4.3. Explanation

The Second Temple was not just an edifice built by Judeans; it was also a mental artifact constructed by Haggai. Haggai constructs the temple as nothing but a treasure-house. It is a place where precious objects can be stored and displayed.

The date in the initial verse is also associated with the dedication of the first temple in 1 Kings 8:2, 65; 2 Chronicles 7: 8-10. The text makes no explicit mention of the significance of the date. Certainly it reminds of the tension created by the past, remembered as a time of great prosperity and the present with its disappointing results both in terms of economic success and temple reconstruction. Thus here stresses Haggai’s intermediary function. The prophet is addressing to specific individuals. As

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in 1:1 and 1:12, Zerubbabel heads the list and his official title is stated (it is omitted in 1:12). Similarly, as in 1:1 and 1:12, Joshua’s name and title are given.\textsuperscript{177}

In speaking of the temple, Haggai is posing a question “who has seen the house in its former glory” (v. 3). One important thing to note is that instead of the customary way of addressing to the “Second Temple,” the book of Haggai makes no distinction between the first and second temples. The author understands there is one temple, “this house.” Its glorious appearance and splendor goes through various stages. Haggai does not compare the various edifices, but these are the various states of the same temple. It was awe-inspiring in an earlier time and in the future day it will be even more, (v. 9). The Jerusalem temple was, is and will continue to be Yahweh’s house. In point of fact, for Haggai it was still his house even before the work of reconstruction was undertaken, when it was in an abandoned condition (1:4-11, esp. v.9).\textsuperscript{178}

Haggai uses classical Divine Encouragement Formula, repeated three times in v. 4. This formula is widely used in Deuteronomistic literature (Deuteronomy 31:6, 7, 23; Joshua 1:6, 7, 9; 2 Samuel 10:12; 13:28) as well as in 1 Chronicles 19:13; 22:13. Thus Zerubbabel, Joshua and “the people of the land”\textsuperscript{179} are seen standing in continuity with figures like Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:7; Joshua 1:6-7).\textsuperscript{180}

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\textsuperscript{178} There is a distinction being made about the departure of God’s presence from the temple as Ezekiel 8-11 show, while the text nowhere presents that the temple will be no longer His house. John Kessler, “Tradition, Continuity and Covenant in the Book of Haggai: An Alternative Voice from Early Persian Yehud,” 24, 25.

\textsuperscript{179} The literature on the identity of this group is voluminous. See Ernest W. Nicholson, “The meaning of the expression עם הארץ in the Old Testament” in \textit{JJS} 10 (1965): 59-66. This has been dealt extensively in the earlier chapter of this work. In the Pre-exilic period, the term frequently referred to landowners and the political elite. In Ezra 4:4, it refers to Yahwehistic inhabitants of Samaria, possibly of foreign stock, who offered their assistance in the rebuilding of the temple but were rebuffed by the returnees refer to H.W. Wolff, \textit{Haggai: A Commentary}, 78. North, suggests that the term refers to the non-exiled population, refer to John Kessler, \textit{The Book of Haggai Prophecy and Society in the Early Persian Yehud}, 168. He feels that Haggai took this in reference to the people who were left behind when the exile took place. They were not very happy when the elite returned and now they had a clear cut reason so that their services could be excluded. Hence they are exhorted to stand with the colonial elite especially Zerubbabel and Joshua to shoulder the responsibilities. John Kessler
\end{flushright}
In 2:5, Haggai sees the covenant as the foundational constitutive element of the community's relationship with Yahweh. He assures of the presence of the Spirit and hence exhorts not to fear. He relates well between the Exodus and the Yehudite community of the sixth century. When the author affirms the fact that the Spirit is viewed as standing עמדת among the people, a complete solidarity to the “pillar of cloud” which mediated between God and the community at Exodus is portrayed (Exodus 13:21). Thus, continuity with the past is affirmed.

In 2:6-9 the second issue is given to the why the people should not be discouraged. Haggai incorporates innumerable traditional motifs of Zion theology to describe the ultimate glorification of Zion: the gathering of the spoil, the exaltation of Zion, the pilgrimage of the nations, the time of world peace (cf. Micah 4:1-5, 11-13; Isaiah 60:1-22; Joel 3; Zechariah 14). Hope for a great reversal is expressed in Haggai 2:6-9, whereby a divine shaking of the four elements of the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land will cause the wealth of nations to be brought to the new temple. This sudden influx of treasure into the temple will reverse the judgment that it was inferior to the first temple. Haggai describes the new


temple as a potential storehouse. It is hardly a holy place for worship or the celebration of cultic rituals, but it is to be a place for the generating of great wealth. With its building the economic welfare of the community will be transformed (Haggai 2:15-19). In Haggai 2 the essence of the divine house is that of a bourse or centre of the generation of wealth. It looks more like an imperial taxation centre than a holy house.185

Haggai does not make it clear the origin of the wealth (is it the spoil of the war, or the offerings of the nation. Thus Haggai blurs the broader details of the traditional complex and picks up a single element within the tradition and elevates it to central importance.186 People can do nothing to define about the future other than waiting for it to unfold. But the prophet clearly describes the future events that will crown the builders’ efforts with stunning success.187

6.4.4. Comments on Haggai 2:1-9: Sociological reading on the exhortation for the rebuilding of the Temple

The Hierocratic temple program received prophetic legitimation. Haggai could be seen as the Persian cheer leader for the rebuilding of the temple.188 In 2:4, the prophet encourages "all the people of the land" to join in the rebuilding program, a position vastly more latitudinarian and conciliatory than that taken by the hierocratic party at an earlier period according to Ezra 4: 1-5. It would seem that such a liberal-minded attitude


186 John Kessler terms this distinctive hermeneutical / rhetorical technique as generalization / focalization. The term “generalization” refers to the attenuation or deliberate obscuring of certain details of a theme, so as to render it applicable to a specific situation, one which may be different from its original setting. “Focalization” refers to highlighting certain details of a theme or tradition. Refer to John Kessler, “Tradition, Continuity and Covenant in the Book of Haggai: An Alternative Voice from Early Persian Yehud,” 27; Refer to John Kessler, The Book of Haggai Prophecy and Society in the Early Persian Yehud, 163, 164.


188 Wes Haward-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now, 62.
could have become a part of the Hierocratic party only as the concerted effort to muster enough popular support to overpower the discouraging voices. In many places ‘people of the land’ are considered secondary or given a derogatory note (Ezra 9: 1); Haggai exhorted the ‘people of the land’ to take courage over the rebuilding. The report of the building of the city wall in Nehemiah 3 indicated, that work-gangs from Judean towns (not all of whom could have been returnees), as well as Jerusalemites, participated in the effort. Thus, it appears that ordinary Judeans as well as Jerusalemites contributed to the work of restoration. Many times the people who had no voice were utilized by the elite and for the agenda of the empire whenever they were needed and otherwise, discarded like the scrap. Whatsoever, directly or indirectly he facilitated the Persian project. He gave voice on behalf of the many silenced in the periphery and though people’s resistance could be seen by not showing the zeal and enthusiasm. Haggai used the traditions to motivate the slackness due to various reasons. Competitions for power and authority define current structures and systems, new structures and systems must confidently defeat older extant ones and all the apprehensions and uncertainties of the transition of culture, really allowed them to take over all situations very carefully.

6.4.5. Comments on Haggai 2:1-9: Postcolonial reading on the prophetic legitimation for the rebuilding of the Temple

Haggai’s goal was to cover over the accommodation of the empire involved in Temple building with the help of biblical tradition. This sudden influx of treasure into the temple will make the new temple as a potential storehouse or treasury of the empire (Haggai 2:6-9). The message is spoken directly to Joshua, who is a Zadokite priest in direct descent from the last Zadokite before the exile (1 Chronicles 6: 12-15; 2 Kings 25: 18-21), while Zerubbabel who descended from King David (1 Chronicles 3:
17) and was an appointee of the Persian Empire was to carry out their agenda (Haggai 2:4).\textsuperscript{193} Haggai to some extent is voicing the elitist agendas and also the Persian colonialist i.e. King Darius. “Zerubbabel name meant “seed of Babylon” and he served under the appointment and at the pleasure of King Cyrus. He represented the interest of Persia and one of his functions was to rebuild the temple.”\textsuperscript{194} His greatest agenda was to support the rebuilding of local temples which was one of the wider strategies of maintaining imperial control,\textsuperscript{195} hence Haggai’s message can be read as one of pure political accommodation to empire.\textsuperscript{196} In the specific situation where Egypt was a great threat to the Persian colonial power, the temple in Jerusalem provided a well-located base from where food and weapons could be distributed to the marching army south of Egypt in 519-517 BCE. The arrangement was simple and effective: the Zadokite elite made sure that the “people of the land” produced enough food for the troops, in exchange for which the colonial power would pay the Zadokites and their partners for the temple construction and support Zadokite authority within the rebuilt temple system.\textsuperscript{197} The odd shift at the end of Haggai from temple to the future world leader, Zerubbabel, completes the a green signal for the rebuilding of the temple as he hails from Davidic line on behalf of the Persian colonial power. There is also a possibility as Blenkinsopp mentions that Zerubbabel could have become the focus of a nationalistic movement for independence within Yehud. Refer to Joseph Blenkinsopp, \textit{Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary}, The Old Testament Library, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 114. The temple was not significant as all available archaeological and epigraphic data from the Iron Age II through the late Persian era support a thesis that Jerusalem did not yet enjoy widespread public status as “the” central location of Yahwism, and that Hebrew scrolls emanating from this centre had not yet circulated sufficiently to have exerted any widespread influence on people who identified themselves as Judean/Jewish, refer to K. L. Noll, “Did ‘Scripturalization’ Take Place in Second Temple Judaism?” in \textit{Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament, An International Journal of Nordic Theology} 25.2 (2011): 201-216.

\textsuperscript{193} Daniel L. Smith Christopher in his review in \textit{The Journal of Religion} 77.4 (Oct, 1997), 656-658, on the book written by Jon L. Berquist, \textit{Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), mentions a very important fact, that among the returning exile, there was Jewish elite who sought to maximize their political and economic interest in Yehud a sub province within the Persian Satrap “Across the River.” There interests were pursued by means of a carefully constructed compromise between Jewish religious values and virtually whole-hearted support of the Persian imperial authority.

\textsuperscript{194} Paul L. Redditt, “Prophecy and the Monarchy in Haggai and Zechariah,” 439.

\textsuperscript{195} Jon Berquist, \textit{Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach}, 51.

\textsuperscript{196} Wes Haward-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, \textit{Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now}, 62.

\textsuperscript{197} Jon Berquist, \textit{Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach}, 61-62.
suppression. Kent quotes Clines stating that, Haggai becomes a book that suppressed a social reality of deep conflict between people and leaders.198

Hence, there was a great wedge between the facilitators of the Persian colonial power and those in the receiving end or in the peripheries. The people of the land could see a double exploitation in the hands of the colonial power and the elite; therefore, they showed not much interest in the rebuilding of the Temple.

6.5. Zechariah 4: 6-10

The book of Zechariah is a perplexing one as the interpreters are left at bay. What has the reader to do with this bizarre book? Jerome called it “obscurissimus liber;” “the most obscure book”. Mark Cameron Love’s recent monograph despairs over making sense of Zechariah; his book’s title denotes “the evasive text” and “the frustrated reader,” and at last he comes to ask, “Why is Zechariah unreadable?.” In the Middle Ages, Abarbanel complained, “the prophecies of Zechariah are so obscure, that no expositors, however skilled, have ‘found their hands’ in their explanations”; Rabbi Jarchi concludes: “we shall never be able to discover their true interpretation until the teacher of righteousness arrives.”199 Therefore keeping all the difficulties mentioned above, an attempt is made to venture in to interpreting the text. Hence the details of all genre and other details are not dealt but the text is pondered.

6.5.1. Translation

6 And He answered and said to me saying, this is the word of the Yahweh to Zerubbabel saying, not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Yahweh of hosts.

7 Who are you, O great200 mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain; and he shall bring out the top stone to go up amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’

8 And the word of the Yahweh came to me, saying,


199 The difficulty of the book is succinctly quoted in Byron G. Curtis, Up the Steep and Stony Road: The Book of Zechariah in Social Location Trajectory Analysis, 115.

200 reading it, the ה prefixingגדול in MT is probably a ditigraphic addition from the word הגדיל, refer to David L. Petersen, Haggai and Zecahriah 1-8: A Commentary, 238; Mark J. Boda, Haggai, Zechariah, NIV Application Commentary: Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).
9 "The hands of Zerubbabel have founded this house and his hands shall also complete it and you shall know that the Yahweh of hosts has sent me to you.

10 For who has despised the day of small things. They shall rejoice and see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. “These seven fountains of Yahweh, they flood the whole world.”

6.5.2. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

It is possible to interpret the message contained in the books of Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 as complementing as well as completing each other. Haggai stressed the building of the temple, since, Zechariah 1-8 is concerned with the building of the YHWH community in Jerusalem. Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 envisioned religion and politics operating smoothly side by side. Both share a social location and historical context at the very centre of Jerusalemite institutions in the early years of Darius the Great, 522–486 B.C. It was their shared concern for temple restoration that provided the social catalyst for the achievement of the rebuilding project, a program embraced-according to the biblical texts-by both Joshua the high priest (3:1) and Zerubbabel the governor, as well as by the general populace. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah, the political leader Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua are entrusted with the new setup of the cultic centre (Ezra 3:5-6; Haggai 1:1-6; Zechariah 4:8-10).

The form of chapter 4 is that of a vision account (4: 1-5, 11-14) and oracles are addressed to Zerubbabel 4: 6-10. 'Some scholars have seen 4:6-

201 בעי can also mean “fountains” as in 3:9.
204 Paul L. Reddith, “Prophecy and the Monarchy in Haggai and Zechariah 1-8,” 444.
10a as an addition to the original text, interrupting the flow of the vision and its explanation. In 4:10b the angels explains the meaning of the עיני “eyes” or “fountain,” but refers to the seven lamps or the “openings” on the stone in 3:9. The angel simply says that the seven “eyes” of Yahweh rove throughout the whole earth or the seven “fountains” of Yahweh flood the whole earth. The two oracles addressed to Zerubbabel 4:6-10 may or may not be related to this vision of the lamp stand and the two olive trees. They do have essentially the same message, that is, Yahweh is with Zerubbabel and he will be able to finish the rebuilding of the temple. The first oracle (4:6-8) stresses the divine power which will remove all the hurdles that come against the rebuilding of the temple and the rejoicing will dominate after the completion. The second oracle (4:9-10) promises to Zerubbabel and give credibility to Zechariah.

The hurdles in relation to the rebuilding of the temple which caused depression is described as great mountain (4:7) and some are making fun (4:10). The scholarly debate regarding the Book of Zechariah’s relation to the prophetic books will help to relate the book with the whole process of life in the post exilic times. This exegesis also will not deal with the details of its genre and authorship as the space does not permit like any another exegesis of this research. Zechariah 1-8 is seen by the scholars

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209 Paul D. Hanson, sees a sharp literary break and an ideological contradiction between Zechariah 1-8 and 9-14 (1979). The prophet in the first half of the book uncritically endorsed a powerful and centralized priestly Zadokite party; the second half arose from a disenfranchised and marginalized apocalyptic protest group. Wellhausen wrote, “Passing from chapters 1-8 to chaps. 9 ff., the transition is into a
from three perspectives: first, it anticipates an imminent fulfillment of the
classical prophets; second it hopes to some future generation; third, it
demonstrates the emergence of (proto-) apocalyptic, as the hopes for
fulfillment are transferred into an eschatological realm.\textsuperscript{210}

Zechariah in particular is written with reference to the works of the
classical prophets, because it makes repeated allusion to the works of
classical prophets. This is specifically true with the study of Zechariah 9-14.\textsuperscript{211} Edgar Conrad offers a reading of Zechariah in the context of the
Twelve. Conrad subdivided the Book of the Twelve into Hosea-Zephaniah
(which he takes to be “the former prophets”) and Haggai-Malachi
(covering the Persian Period). He argues that, in the former era, God spoke
to his people through the message of prophets, but in the Persian period,
God deals directly with his people via messengers, and that shift from
prophets to messengers is evidenced in the book of Zechariah.\textsuperscript{212} The
Zechariah 1-8 offers a series of visions and exhortations to the exiles in
Babylon, with three passages being added somewhat later, two dealing
with Joshua the high priest (3:1-10; 6:11-13) and one with Zerubbabel
4:6b- 10a as the text now stands. Their purpose was to legitimate the
different world.” Soggin goes to the extent by saying that “chapters 9-14 have nothing
to do with chapters 1-8 of the book.” Gottwald seems to have been in such doubt over
its interpretation that he did not even devote a single section of his \textit{Socio-Literary
Introduction} to the discussion of Zechariah 9-14. This is dealt more in Byron G.
Curtis, \textit{Up the Steep and Stony Road: The Book of Zechariah in Social Location
Trajectory Analysis}, 115-118.
\textsuperscript{210} For first group scholars saw the continuity (and / or discontinuity) of the message
of Zechariah 1-8 with the classical prophetic tradition like Christian Jeremias, Susan
Niditch, Janet Tollington, Risto Nurme; the second group have tried to explain how
Zechariah 1-8 has taken up classical prophecy is to relate it to the emergence of
“apocalyptic.” It is argued that the dissonance between the promises of the classical
prophets and the hard facts of life in the early post-exilic period resulted in a shift
away from the expectation of an historical fulfilment and towards an eschatological
one, the scholars are Samuel Amsler, Hartmut Gese, Paul Hanson, Stephen Cook,
Eibert Tigchelaar; the third, Zechariah 1-8 as a Future Expression of the Prophetic
Hope, it is in some sense the counter-point of the second. Whereas apocalyptic
transposes the prophetic hope into a fulfilment beyond the realm of plain history, this
approach affirms to the fulfilment in history, but in future period. A key issue is the
messianic hope of Zechariah 1-8; the scholars are Anthony Petterson, Walter Rose,
Thomas Pola. For more clarity, refer to Michael R. Stead, \textit{The Intertextuality of
\textsuperscript{211} Michael R. Stead, \textit{The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8}, 2.
\textsuperscript{212} Edgar W. Conrad, \textit{Zechariah, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary} (Sheffield:
Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). Refer to Michael R. Stead, \textit{The Intertextuality of
Zechariah 1-8}, 10.
status of the Zadokite priest Joshua as the new high priest in Jerusalem and Zerubbabel as the new king. They both symbolize the community blessing. The two are considered in their own ways, representatives who usher in the new postexilic age. A special place in these eschatological events is reserved for Zerubbabel and Joshua. Zerubbabel, who began the construction of the Temple and who, it is promised, will also complete the work, is symbolically designated the messianic ruler with Joshua at his side as priestly representative. In the prophecy of Zechariah, therefore, we encounter for the first time the notion of the two Messiahs, the priestly and the secular Messiah, which will later recur in Qumran. Zechariah holds a high view of Zerubbabel and sees a significant role for him in the restoration community, especially as a builder of the temple, but there is no suggestion to this point that he will be the one who will re-establish the monarchy in Jerusalem.

6.5.3. Explanation

The work of the high priest and the governor is not a matter of human power. Trust in such power is disavowed, perhaps denounced, by the motto-like declaration of Zechariah 4:6b, "not by might, and not by power, but surely by my Spirit!"—says Yahweh of the heavenly armies.” The work of restoration is not one of synergistic force, but of mono-energetic power. There is, nonetheless, a "symbiosis" depicted in the divine-human relationship.

Zechariah 4:7 then gives a description of a “great mountain” which shall be “like a plain” This word occurs in Isaiah

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213 To have more information, see Paul L. Redditt, “Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the Night Visions of Zechariah,” 249-259.
217 David L. Petersen, Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary, 234; Byron G. Curtis, Up the Steep and Stony Road: The Book of Zechariah in Social Location Trajectory Analysis, 137.
218 Perhaps an exaggerated reference to the rubble-covered top of Mt. Zion, which shall become the platform for the new temple—or a metaphorical description of the seemingly insurmountable problems posed by the project, Edgar W. Conrad,
The vocabulary in Zechariah 4, describes Zerrubbabel’s actions in building the temple, it recalls the restoration and return promised in Isaiah 40.\textsuperscript{219} Verse 10 speaks instead of “seven…eyes,” which can also be translated as “seven … fountains.” In 3:9 the “seven facets” can be translated “seven fountains” or “seven eyes”. Eyes as flowing in tears provide the background for the sense of “fountains.”

The result of Zerrubbabel’s temple is that it will “flood\textsuperscript{221} the whole world” If one keeps the RSV translation of “eyes,” then from the temple of the Lord will plan and care for the earth; if one prefers the translation “fountains,” then the fresh water, flowing from the Lord’s presence in the temple, will spread fertility across the earth.\textsuperscript{222} This gives more meaning as the people were looking for such a tremendous change in the socio-economic level of the people. This will make the people feel that this is the time for rebuilding the temple. The closest intertextual parallel to מָגֵן מַעַל in Zechariah 4:7 is Psalm 118:22, that describes a rejected “stone” נָבָטָה becoming “head of the corner” נָבֶטֶה פְּנֵיה. The stone in Psalm 118: 22 is not a “foundation stone” but a “capstone.” This is a very crucial stone at the completion of the temple and therefore suits well in the context of Zechariah 4:7. This is because verse 9 is looking forward for Zerrubbabel’s completion of the temple. Therefore to look this stone as the capstone is no problem at this crucial point of the text.\textsuperscript{223}

Zerubbabel will lead into triumph and the usage of the word is חַנָּה חַנָּה (grace, grace to it”). This is a very unusual terminology used at this context but this could mean an imprecation that Yahweh would bless this

\textsuperscript{220} Michael R. Stead, \textit{The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8}, 176-177.
\textsuperscript{222} Carroll Stuhlmueller C.P., \textit{Haggai and Zechariah: Rebuilding with Hope}, 84.
\textsuperscript{223} Michael R. Stead, \textit{The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8}, 179.
stone with special honor. Verse 9 promises that the completion of the temple will happen by the hands of Zerubbabel. The word for “complete” (ֶבֶךְ) in Zechariah 4:9 seems very unusual. In a literal sense it indicates that the hands of Zerubbabel will “finish-off” the temple.

6.5.4. Comments on Zechariah 4: 6-10: Sociological reading for the rebuilding of the Temple

Moreover, in 4:6b–10a the temple is still incomplete; its composition must come from the same time period as the vision reports and the work of temple reconstruction, 519–515 BCE. In the oracles, first, Zerubbabel is addressed with the motto about power. Both Haggai and Zechariah Chapters 1-8 are internally organized to reflect the temple-building process.

One finds very scant and scattered notes in the Hebrew writings (and their Aramaic pericopes) about Israel’s return from the exile and the new beginning in their home country under Persian management. This usage is also seen in Psalm 84:12 and a parallelism between grace and honor. Refer to Michael R. Stead, The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8, 179.

The verb ֶבֶךְ occurs 16 times, with a sense of “cut off” or “finish off”. However, in Isaiah 10:12 the word has a more neutral sense of “finish” though in that place it is more to do with the Yahweh “finishing” his judgment. Michael R. Stead, The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8, 179.

This word has a negative connotation, but perhaps here it is meant to show ironical reversal of Lamentation 2:17. Yahweh has done what he intended; He has finished His word. When this is compared to the wider context of Zechariah 1-8, Yahweh has announced not a message of judgement but a new word of restoration and this will see the completion of the temple by the usage of the word “finish”. This will authenticate the word given through the prophet Zechariah. Michael R. Stead, The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8, 179, 180.


is because domination of some sort will be exerted over a nation or a person when the conquerors become owners of the people, who are in the receiving end. There is no liberation possible without letting the colonized being free in their land.\textsuperscript{230} The authors were not merely mechanical copyists or redactors who updated the older text, but were independent and theologically creative authors. Even more so, each scribe may have had his own approach and principles or agendas so they were potential editor, redactor, interpreter and author.\textsuperscript{231} 4: 6, 7, is greatly exhorting the people of what God is going to do with and through Zerubbabel. As discussed earlier, the usage of the word הָנָּן הָנָּן is a very unusual terminology used at this context. This passage could be a later interpolation with a purpose to legitimate the status of the Zadokite priest Joshua as the new high priest in Jerusalem and Zerubbabel as the new king and also this rebuilding in the latter stage will help the elite. Berquist mentions that Darius sent Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah to serve the interests of the Persian Empire by encouraging temple construction and loyalty to the empire and by urging the surplus production of foodstuffs to feed the approaching army.\textsuperscript{232} This was the prime intention because temples in the Ancient West Asia were looked with greater benefits from the empire’s point of view. A great deal of information has been available for some time and is constantly being augmented on the social and economic impact of temples on the regions in which they functioned. Many of the larger temples throughout the Achaemenid empire were wealthy institutions with their own land holdings and work force, their own capital in species and produce from which they advanced loans, and served more or less the same function as banks and credit unions today.\textsuperscript{233}


\textsuperscript{232} Jon L. Berquist, \textit{Judaism in the Persian Shadow: A Social and Historical approach}, 57, 58.

Temples served as stimulation of the regional economies, as storage and redistribution centres, to the evident advantage of the imperial exchequer. They helped to explain why they were supported by successive Achaemenid rulers.\textsuperscript{234} In the book of Haggai, as already mentioned in the interpretation, the people were hesitant to inaugurate the whole project of the rebuilding of the Temple. The book portrays that Yahweh and the Persian Empire desired as it would solidify the colony both politically and religiously. The residents understood that the temple will benefit others, such as the Persian Empire and the elite group appointed by Darius, especially the Zadokite priesthood, more than it would be advantageous to the workers.\textsuperscript{235} The priesthood serving these temples were under the supervision of imperial officers (in Mesopotamia \textit{paqdu}) whose chief function was to ensure payment of tribute and in some cases, the service of temple slaves.\textsuperscript{236} So the urgency of the rebuilding of the temple was to promote the vested interest of the elite. The researcher does not negate the importance of the temple which it had for God’s people. But the time was not as appropriate as they were still in servitude. The urgency by the elite to rebuild the temple is something that leads to the researcher’s curiosity for the intention and motives behind the rebuilding process.

\textbf{6.5.5. Comments on Zechariah 4: 6-10: Postcolonial reading for the rebuilding of the Temple}

The dealt passage 4: 6-10 as mentioned earlier in the interpretation was one of the three later interpolations. The priesthood and the elites who

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{berquist} Jon L. Berquist, \textit{Judaism in the Persian Shadow: A Social and Historical approach}, 70; Roland Boer, “The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel” in \textit{Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament}, An International Journal of Nordic Theology 21.1 (2007): 34, explains, it means a system in which the economy operates and is understood in terms of the sacred rather than the political. One can understand that it was the conglomeration of both political and sacred economics.
\bibitem{blenkinsopp} Refer to Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Temple and Society in Achaemenid Judah,” 23.
\end{thebibliography}
were involved in writing, served as custodians of the legal traditions in the various regions; and it is well attested that the central government promoted the codification and implementation of local traditional law as an instrument of the *pax Persica* throughout the empire.\(^{237}\) In the absence of an imperial cult of the type of the Assyrian Ashur, the Achaemenids tolerated and even cultivated local deities as imperial patrons, a situation reflected, with understandable exaggeration, in the biblical sources.\(^{238}\) So, some of the additions made in the book is with precise intentions and to a great extent something that would facilitate the agenda of the empire and the elite.

From the interpretation of the book of Zechariah one learns that the elite among the Yehud community has a hybridity of the culture, who had returned to Jerusalem.\(^{239}\) In the process of creating the dawn of the kingdom of God, the restoration of the temple, and the appointment of the “two anointed ones” (*Zechariah* 1:7-6:15).\(^{240}\) The book of Zechariah gives importance to the great elite legendary leaders i.e. Joshua and Zerubbabel. This passage affirms the extravagant importance to Zerubbabel (4:6-10). The stories of Joshua and Zerubbabel were at one point, one of the “foundation legends” of Jerusalem after the exile.\(^{241}\) Zechariah recognizes both Joshua and Zerubbabel as anointed (*Zechariah* 4). Both Joshua and Zerubbabel are crowned and enthroned on the thrones.\(^{242}\) Both of them

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\(^{238}\) The only exception may have been Xerxes, one of whose inscriptions speaks of the eradication of the daevas, perhaps referring to the destruction of Babylonian temples, including the great *esagila* shrine, after the revolt in that city. For the text see R. G. Kent, *Old Persian* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1953), 150-152.

\(^{239}\) Those deported by the Babylonians were primarily the rulers, officials, priests, military and artisans from Jerusalem. Those who returned later were thus descendants of the Jerusalem elite, they apparently resumed, or attempted to resume, their positions, in this case subordinate to the Persian imperium. In fact, initially, there seems to have been a virtual diarchy in Jerusalem, with a Davidide and a high priest, the former emphasized in Zechariah as the builder of the temple. The Zadokite lineage, however, quickly took the place once occupied by the Davidide house and exercised the same role. Richard A. Horsley, “Empire, Temple and Community—but no Bourgeoisie!,” 170.


come from the elite background, which is well known to the reader of that time and even to the Persian Empire. The socio-economic, political and religious scenario of that time clearly portrays that the huge rebuilding project could not be given the new outlook if the common people did not contribute. But the text fails to mention any details. On the other hand, the text projected the accomplishments of the Zerubbabel at different levels and different times (4: 7ff). Postcolonial studies “brings such marginal elements to the front and, in the process, subverts the traditional meaning. It engages in archival exegesis as a way of rememorializing the narratives and voices which have been subjected to institutional and exegetical forgetting.” Postcolonial criticism recognizes that interpreters have to

243 Joshua was a Zadokite priest and a true descendant of Aaron, and that he was the legitimate heir to the senior priestly office within the Israelite cultic system. Joshua’s hereditary background and his religious significance must have been known by the Persian hierarchy who authorized his departure from Babylon in, or sometime after, 538 BCE (Ezra 2:2). In their eyes Joshua must have been acceptable as a figurehead for the religious community in Jerusalem and someone who was unlikely to cause political problems for the empire. For more clarity refer to Deirdre N. Fulton, “Jeshua’s High Priestly Lineage,” 94-115; Janet A. Tollington, Tradition and Innovation in Haggai and Zechariah 1-8, 126, Refer to Charles E. Carter, The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study, 51. Zerubbabel as Stern argued that the province enjoyed a significant level of autonomy under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, but the Persian Empire would have suspected a rebellion against the Persian throne. This is because Zerubbabel had such messianic fervour associated with rebuilding the temple. Because of this view, Zerubbabel was deposed by Darius I as retribution for the alleged plot and the rule of the province was transferred to Samaria until the mid-fifth century. Therefore, even Zerubbabel was spotted by the Persian for his elite backing. (E. Stern, “The Persian Empire and the Political and Social History of Palestine in the Persian Period” in The Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. 1, eds. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984):70-72).

be freed from traditional interpretative powers so that the voice of the voiceless may be heard. Such freedom will manifest in how Fanon coined the term “fighting literature,” “a revolutionary literature,” which is the authentic expression of people who are tired of the exasperating attempts to assimilate and mimic the hegemonic Orientalist modes of interpretation. It will revalorize the hidden or occluded accounts and the numerous groups of people who are unheard of, such as e.g. women, minorities, the disadvantaged and the displaced.

Though most theological development took place during this period of exile and return, Rainer Albertz already claims "No era in Israel’s history contributed more to theology." But most of the theological deliberations were at the expense of silencing the protest voice.

Hence, the dominant voice or the voice that gives voice to the voiceless needs to be blurred and the sociological factors have to be taken seriously so that the planetary space for all could be formed. Mary Louise Pratt has come with another term “contact zone.” She explains that contact zone as "space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict." Therefore, the text of the prophets like Haggai and Zechariah which are already delved, clearly portrays that much space should be given to these elite group among the returnees, ‘In both the books there is a renewed hope for the Davidic king under Zerubbabel’ whereas the people in the margin are not heard. Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 envisioned religion and politics operating smoothly side by side. Thus blurring of the spaces is very important to understand the Word of God in a more clear form.

shows lots of writings were facilitated by the Persian Empire and could have used to facilitate their stand.

completion of the Temple took place at the time of Darius.\textsuperscript{251} Darius’ strategy of rebuilding the temples throughout the empire helped him to gain the good will of various temple administrations throughout the imperial provinces. He sought recognition by local temples as the manifestation of the local deity as the one on whom the divine approval for religious and political leadership is affirmed.\textsuperscript{252}

\textbf{6.6. Ezekiel 40-48.}

From a form-critical perspective, the traditional view holds that it was written by one author.\textsuperscript{253} One of the most exceptional features of Ezekiel’s prophecy is the prominence extended narrative accounts of various kinds: historical (chapter 20), allegorical (chapters 16; 23) and visionary (chapters 1; 8-11; 40-48).\textsuperscript{254}

Studies of Ezekiel 40-48 cover the spectrum from the stratifying\textsuperscript{255} to the holistic. Corrine saw the author as a priest, (Elite Zadokite priest).\textsuperscript{256}

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Prophet Ezekiel\textsuperscript{257} is identified as a visionary prophet.\textsuperscript{258} Gese saw chapters 40-48, as a confusing structure, with many layers of redaction. The “house style” of Ezekiel is so homogeneous that it makes difficult to distinguish between primary and secondary material\textsuperscript{259} but there are cases where redactional expansion seems likely (e.g. in the more polemical pro-Zadokite verses, 44:15-31; 48:11 and others).\textsuperscript{260} A great many features of the book of Ezekiel are dependent upon the world view and practices of Zadokite priesthood.\textsuperscript{261}

Cook concentrates on texts that derive from central-priestly circles and identifies Ezekiel 38-39 as reflecting the language and perspective of the central Zadokite priesthood who held power in the (exilic / post-exilic) situation rather than being a marginalized or deprived group.\textsuperscript{262} Cook clearly talks about the important position the Zadokites held and makes obvious the role they could have played in chapters 40-48. Hence, it becomes easy to see their assertive power they have made on the Levites.

Haran\textsuperscript{263} examines chapters 40-48 as a whole. ‘Haran’s argument for the priestly work preceding Ezekiel 40-48’\textsuperscript{264} found three parts, of which

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{260} Paul M. Joyce, \textit{Ezekiel: A Commentary}, 219.
\item \textsuperscript{261} Marvin A. Sweeney, “Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile,” 731.
\item \textsuperscript{264} M. Haran, \textit{Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 147; It is also believed that a small number of texts
\end{itemize}
the first comprises 40:1-44:3 and concerns the form of the temple, while the second in 44:4-46:24 deals with temple procedures. Much in Ezekiel 40-48 exemplifies the concerns and style of the priests. The expression "priest' occurs only three times in Ezekiel 1-39, (1:3; 7:26 and 22:26, but in the Verfassungsentwurf ("Constitution Project") 22 times. Statistical results show that the priests play hardly any role in the prophet's announcement of disaster, while they play a significant part in the utopian outline of the future shrine and new city called "YHWH is here" (48:35). In Ezekiel 40-42 the prophet is transported to the area of Jerusalem and taken by a supernatural guide on a tour of a restored, holy temple. 'The legislation found in Ezekiel 40-48 distinguishes Ezekiel from the other prophets who spoke of Judah's restoration—especially Second Isaiah. Ezekiel provides specific direction to Judah on what must happen to transform his vision into reality.' There appear on large scale legal regulations which recall the legal style of many sections of the Pentateuch. This could be the


268 It is difficult to speak of these final chapters of the book of Ezekiel as forming a literary unity. Whatever unity they appear to have, is purely artificial. Combining visions and legislation cannot be smooth. The tone and purpose of these two literary forms are very different. The visionary passages (e.g., 40: 3-37; 40: 47- 41:4) were the original core of these chapters. Examples of later materials are the liturgical ordinances in 44:3- 46:24. These chapters function to bring the book to its conclusion: the restoration of Israel in its land. The contents of these final chapters are a mixture of prophetic vision of the future with some suggestion of how Israel can arrive at that future. There is a blend of Idealism and realism here. Since, Ezekiel was a priest, it is not surprising that this vision centered on the temple. These visions had no effect on the actual rebuilding of the temple and the reordering of the liturgical life of Judah after the return from exile. Nonetheless, they show how deeply the prophet felt about the responsibility to his people at a desperate moment in their life. Moshe Greenberg, “The Design and Themes of Ezekiel’s Program of Restoration” in Interpretation 38 (1984): 208; Bruce Vawter and Leslie J. Hoppe, Ezekiel: A New Heart (Grand Rapids / Edinburgh: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., The Handsel Press Ltd, 1991), 186, 187.

269 Bruce Vawter and Leslie J. Hoppe, Ezekiel: A New Heart, 185.
reason why chapters 40-48 have been called, for short, “draft constitution.” The altar is dedicated as the hub of atonement and worship (43:13–27). Now the clock of temple ritual can start ticking again so as to reflect and to maintain the holiness of Israel’s God. The flow of the visionary narrative is then diverted to a series of divine revelations as to the running of the temple (44:5–46:18). First, temple personnel are described, in a two-tier system of priests and Levites (44:6–16). The text concentrates upon the priests as prime representatives of the divine holiness, and outlines their holy lifestyle (44:17–31).

Hence, taking the scholarly debate into consideration, the usage of the terms and the shift in perspective discussed above on chapters 40-48 could be placed well during the postexilic time. The researcher after taking the views of the scholars into consideration is motivated to see that a latter Zadokite author or authors could have contributed to these chapters. It would be dealt more elaborately from the selected texts from this division to see whether the role of the Zadokites was given more validity and credibility.

6.6. Ezekiel 40:45-46a

6.6.1. Translation

He told me, “This room that faces south is meant for the priests responsible for the temple area, while the room that faces north is for the priests responsible for the altar. The latter are the Zadokites, those descendants of Levi who may approach Yahweh to serve him.”

6.6.2. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

This long visionary account of the new temple complex is uneven in content, style and perspective. Basically it appears to fall into five sections: (i) 40:1–5, introduction and description of the perimeter wall; (ii) 40: 6–37, the gate structures of the outer and inner courts; ‘One must now look at the omitted intervening section, 40:38-46, and examine it with regard to its form and its connection with the context. The content of these verses

271 Joseph Blenkinsopp, Ezekiel, 205: Michael A. Lyons, From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel’s use of the Holiness Code, 156
makes it clear at once that there are two sections, vv. 38-43 and 44-46, quite independent as to content.

The absence of the element of guidance and measurement is also characteristic of the second section, vv. 44-46, which describes two cells at the inner north and south gates. There are no further details in the description of the chambers in v. 44, only the direction of the gates is given. Instead, in vv 45f there follows an element which at first might recall the visionary guidance scene. The tense stillness which leads up to that final statement is prematurely destroyed if vv. 44-46 were original in the context. Linguistically the different hand is admittedly revealed by the יָ֑רָאָלָ and LXX καὶ εἶπεν πρός με (“and he said to me”) in contrast to the יִ֑אמֶר אֵלַ and LXX καὶ εἶπεν τοῦτο (“and he said to me”) of 41:4.’

6.6.3. Explanation

But in the light of information supplied in later chapters the temple personnel align with the Levites responsible for slaughtering the animals (44:11) and assigned to general temple duties (44:11, 14; 46:24). V. 46b identifies the second group with the Zadokite priests who are differentiated from the Levites in 44:15–16 and perform the actual sacrifices. In the present representation, however, both groups are described as priests. One lies beside the north gate and faces south; the other lies beside the south (MT erroneously has “east”). The chamber facing the south was for the priests who guard the Temple; and the

274 From the content point of view vv. 44-46 are differentiated from the guidance vision also by the fact that here the first explicit mention by name of a group of people who serve in the temple. Both form and content of the verses advise that these two verses did not originally stand in their present context. Walter Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel chapters 25-48, 366.


chamber facing north is for the priests who guard the altar.278 Millard says the author belonged to this second group.279 This is the first time that a differentiation between priests, if such it be, has appeared in the book of Ezekiel cf. 44:15-31.280

6.6.4. Comments on Ezekiel 40:45-46a: Sociological reading about domination of the Elite Priesthood

Chapters 40-42 are a celebration. ‘On the other hand, the addition in vv. 44-46, which, for the first time, introduces the people who will perform the service in the temple, indicates differences in the service. Both priestly groups have their vestries, in the inner court.’281 The conflict is becoming more obvious. They harness the wagon of contemporary reality to a star of hope. The prophet and his constituency are stuck fast in exile.282 The prominence is well established in the difference between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint even, “In the book of Ezekiel in particular, differences between the Septuagint (LXX) and Masoretic Text (MT) are persistent and occasionally striking. Moreover, such differences furnish evidence for the continued redaction of the book of Ezekiel during the period when the Jewish Scriptures were being translated into Greek.283

Even the Zadokite influence is seen by the inclusion of the word Zadokite. An interesting window into the redaction-history of Ezekiel results through comparing this gloss in LXX Ezekiel 42:13 to Ezekiel 40:46b. Both the MT and LXX readings of Ezekiel 40:46b specify that the priests who keep the requirements of the altar are the Zadokites (צדוקת בני מה). For many years, redaction-critical scholars have identified Ezekiel 40:46b as a gloss made in order to highlight the pre-eminence of the

278 Milgrom has argued that the idiom somre mismeret is a military term referring to guard duty. The priests are the Temple guards, defending it from pollution and illicit access, J. Milgro, Studies in Levitical Terminology, vol. I: The Encroacher and the Levite: The Term ‘Aboda (Berkeley: University of California press, 1970), 8-11.
282 Ezekiel 44 combines two opinions with each other: 1) the cults at the country shrines were illegitimate (strange) cults; 2) the Zadokidic cult was integral all the time. These opinions were developed in exilic times, because they are dependent on the presupposition of a cultic reason for the catastrophe of 597 / 587 BCE. Friedrich Fechter, “Priesthood in Exile According to the book of Ezekiel,” 694.
283 Refer to Daniel M. O’Hare, “Have You Seen, Son Of Man? “A Study in the Translation and Vorlange of LXX Ezekiel 40–48, 2.
Zadokites. If these redaction critics are correct, what can be seen in LXX Vorlage Ezekiel 42:13 is simply the continuation of a redaction-critical trend toward elevating the Zadokites. Ezekiel 42:13 was glossed in the LXX Vorlage in the same way that scholars suspect Ezekiel 40:46b was glossed, due to the need to press the unique claims of the Zadokites.

LXX Ezekiel 42:13a MT Ezekiel 42:13a
καὶ εἶπε πρὸς με
Αἱ ἐξέδραι αἱ πρὸς βορρᾶν
καὶ αἱ ἐξέδραι αἱ πρὸς νότον
αἱ σύσαι κατὰ πρόσωπον τῶν διαστημάτων,
αὕται εἰσιν αἱ ἐξέδραι τοῦ ἅγιου,
ἐν αἷς φάγονται οἱ ἱερεῖς
ἐν αἷς φάγονται ἐκεῖ οἱ ἱερεῖς
οἱ υἱοὶ Σαδδουκ
οἱ ἐγγίζοντες πρὸς κύριον
τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἅγιων.

This clearly indicates that the verses seen in Chapter 40: 46b and in chapter 42: 13a exerts the prominent role, the Zadokites were affirming

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284 Refer to Daniel M. O’Hare, “Have You Seen, Son Of Man?” A Study in the Translation and Vorlage of LXX Ezekiel 40–48, 78-80. Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Another Contribution to the Succession Narrative Debate (2 Samuel 11–20; 1 Kings 1–2)” in JSOT 38.1 (2013): 46, the tension could be visible from the time of Solomon. Gese’s model saw the Ṣadoqidenschicht as the last major component of Ezekiel 40–48 to be formed, sometime before Zerubbabel (Verfassungsentwurf). Ezekiel 40:46b was a gloss intended to clarify the relationship between 40:45–46a and 44:6ff and to justify calling the priests in 40:45 כהנים. The observation that 40:46b was a gloss was made before Gese and continued after him. Refer for more clarity to Robert Hayward, “Priesthood, Temple (S), And Sacrifice” in The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies (Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 332.

285 That there is no analogous gloss in any version of 45:4 is explained by the fact that the distinction between Zadokites and Levites has already been drawn with sharp lines in Ezekiel 44:6–31. Refer to Daniel M. O’Hare, “Have You Seen, Son Of Man?” A Study in the Translation and Vorlage of LXX Ezekiel 40–48, 78-80; Risa Levitt Kohn, A New Heart and a New Soul Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah, JSOTSupp 358 (England: Sheffield Press, 2002), 78-80.

286 Refer to Daniel M. O’Hare, “Have You Seen, Son Of Man?” A Study in the Translation and Vorlage of LXX Ezekiel 40–48, 78-80; Risa Levitt Kohn, A New Heart and a New Soul Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah, 51, 52.
for themselves. The Prophetic voice affirms the fact that even if it is a latter intrusion that the intra-communal tension was to some extent given credibility by the empire.

6.6.5. Comments on Ezekiel 40:45-46a: Postcolonial reading about domination of the Elite Priesthood

6.6.5.1. The palpable intra-cultural gulf within the exilic community: The Zadokite hegemony with a prophetic attestation.

The passage from this book clearly portray the deep wedge between the Levites and the Priests. The Levites in Ezekiel 44: 45-46a were assigned menial job, who the prophet attests as having been labeled for their idolatrous practices and are degraded from the priesthood. In earlier times “priest” and “Levite” were practically interchangeable terms. Deuteronomy 18:6ff directs that Levites, whose functions at the local sanctuaries disappear when the central sanctuary is recognized, shall be allowed to minister at the Temple, but 2 Kings 23:9 shows that the Jerusalem priests succeeded in excluding them from this privilege. Priestly functions in the restored Temple are to be restricted to the Zadokite priests as it was even when Abiathar was removed from his priestly office (cf. 1 Kings 2:35-4:4). This is linguistically proved as it is dealt in the earlier part that the usage also differ and hence the powerful used the all their skills to portray their supremacy. The usage of וַיְדַבֵּר אֵלָו and LXX καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με ("and he said to me") in contrast to the יָמֵר אֵלֶּה and LXX καὶ εἶπεν τοῦτο ("and he said to me") of 41:4. The priest had considerable prestige and had a comfortable lifestyle along with the ruling class. Hence, these distinctions were to have double privilege over the Levites. Quite possibly, priest and monarchy were somewhat codependent. Many times the Babylonians and the Persian Empire at the latter stage could have favored the priestly elite class. The opportunities of the Priests to acquire wealth and status were tied to possessing the favor of those with political power, and those with political power required religious support to give their regimes or reigns legitimacy. Hence, the Zadokites really wanted to have the lines drawn so that they could enjoy maximum benefits. The empire needed them because the elite had the power of knowledge and as mentioned the gloss made was in order to highlight the pre-eminence of the Zadokites. The

elite priest had the support of the empire and the knowledge that they had was translated to give credit to their assumed status and privileges. Therefore, the empire and the elite gave each other, credibility to their actions. The voiceless were pushed more to the corner because the prophet also belonged to the same group.

6.7. Ezekiel 44:10-16

6.7.1. Translation

Rather, the Levites will do so, who absconded from me when Israel went astray from me in pursuit of their idols. They will suffer punishment for their iniquity:

They will function in my sanctuary, carrying out security service at the temple gates and other services in the temple area. They are the ones who will slaughter the holocausts and sacrifices for the people, and they are the ones who will be in attendance on them to serve them.

Because they used to serve them in the presence of their idols and caused the community of Israel to fall into iniquity, for that reason I swear with uplifted hand an oath against them, runs the Lord Yahweh’s oracle, that they will suffer punishment for their own iniquity.

They will have no access to me by acting as my priests or by having access to anything I hold sacred or most sacred. They are to suffer the shame they deserve and the consequences of the shocking practices they have perpetrated.

I will make them responsible for duties that pertain to all the labor of the temple area and to all the work that has to be done in it.

The Levitical priests of Zadokite lineage, however, who discharged the duties of my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to be the ones who have access to me in serving me. They will be in attendance on me, offering me the fat and the blood, runs the Lord Yahweh’s oracle.

They are the ones who will enter my sanctuary, and they are the ones who will carry out duties on my personal behalf.

6.7.2. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

10. a. The force of the previous verb carries over.


10. b. MT adds וֹּאֶשֶּׁר תָעַל "who went astray," can be related to the Levites or to Israel. In the latter case, this expression must be regarded as an explanatory phrase, in the former case it must be regarded as an aggravating gloss not represented in LXX * Syr. It seems to have been intended as a variant of אָשֶׁר רָחָה "who went far away," assimilating to 48:11, 'which once again emphatically refers the sin to the Levites'.

10. c. Duke's interpretation in terms of the technical phrase of Num 18:1, etc fails to take into account the accusatory usage of עָן "iniquity" in v 12a.


12. a. Duke subordinates v. 12a to v 11. But vv. 12–14 appears to elaborate vv. 10–11, a double movement from accusation to punishment so suggests. The repetition of vocabulary points in this direction: שְׁרָה "serve," functioning as a hinge in vv. 11b, 12a, "their idols" (vv. 10a, 12a), ושָ֖א "and they will bear their iniquity" (vv. 10b, 12b) and הבית "the temple area" (vv. 11a, 14a).

12. b. Imperfect and following perfect consecutive should be understood in a frequentative manner and must not be changed for that reason.

12. c. As in 36:7, the perfect is performative.

12. d. The lack of representation of v. 12b in LXX * is probably for non-repetitive conciseness. The stylistic scheme observed above supports its presence. The unusual construction with waw is dictated by a rhetorical motive, to repeat the clause of v 10b.

44:6-31 is shown by its continuous theme to be a homogeneous section. It is concerned with the persons who have to serve in the temple in accordance with their two classes: Levites and Priests. The style of the personal address in the second person plural is, however, also abandoned

in the bipartite continuation in vv. 10-16. There suddenly appears, in a
new association, the punishment element which was missed in v. 9. V. 10a
describes in a relative clause the sin of the Levites and introduces the
announcement of punishment in 10b, 11 with the expression סינא אִ
ועָו ("to bear the guilt"), well known from 14:10 and characteristic of punishment
formulae in sacral law.\footnote{298}

6.7.3. Explanation

44:6-16 constitutes the first half of the first main section concerning
temple personnel. Introduced by a commission to address the exiled
community and a messenger formula, in form it is reminiscent of the
complex oracles of judgment / salvation that occurred earlier in 34:2-16,
17-22. It is strongly influenced by the style of priestly ordinance: only the
accusation of vv 6b-8 employs direct address (to Israel).

V. 10a introduces the complication of a fresh accusation relating to a
particular group, the Levites, whose new subordinate role is punitively laid
down in the regulations of vv. 10b–11. Accusation and punishment of the
Levites are emphatically reasserted in vv. 12–14. After an oath formula
qualified by a divine saying formula (v. 12b) the same legal terminology as
in v10b introduces the punishment, עונם ונאשא "and they will bear their
punishment" (v 12b; cf. 14:10).\footnote{299}

Despite the complexity of the piece, it is bound together with strong
structural ties. A framework is provided by the threefold use of the phrase
שמר משמרת "carry out ( cultic) duties" in vv. 8, 14 and 16 in relation to the
three groups of Israel, the Levites and the Priests. Levitical and priestly
roles are polarized in the respective service of Israel and Yahweh (vv. 11,
15), the contrasting right or denial of special access (vv. 13, 15) and the
matching והם דםה "they ... and they" (vv. 11, 16). A negative wordplay
pervades the piece, the combination in "abominations" and the stem
"go astray," in vv. 6, 7, 10, 13, 15.\footnote{300}

10–14 They were to be as temple guards and it was to be taken by the
Levites,\footnote{301} who feature here as a non-priestly group of temple attendants,

\footnote{298} Walter Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel
chapters 25-48, 452.
\footnote{299} Walter Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel
\footnote{300} Leslie C. Allen, Ezekiel 20-48: WBC, vol. 29, 251.
\footnote{301} The most natural reading remains that the Levites are seriously criticized and
indeed in some sense demoted. It could well be that, whereas the distinction between
Zadokites and other priests goes back to Ezekiel himself (40:46; 43:18-27), the more
and to be generally responsible for the outer area (cf. 40:45; 45:5; 46:24 and also Ezra 8:17). Zimmerli\textsuperscript{302} quotes and considers valid to ponder Wellhausen, who begins his \textit{Prolegomena}, with the chapter, within the “History of the Cult,” and it deals in particular with the “The Priest and the Levites.” The brilliant presentation about the history of the priesthood has achieved a wide acceptance. According to this, ancient Israel still knows no difference between the Priests and Levites. The tribe of Levi is the real priestly tribe. A separation begins to appear only in the wake of Josiah’s reform. In this reform all local sanctuaries are abolished. Jerusalem acquires the privilege of being sole sanctuary. Admittedly Deuteronomy 18:6f legislates that “if a Levite comes from any of the your town,” i.e. if a priest of a local sanctuary comes to the place of the sanctuary chosen by Yahweh, he can serve before Yahweh if he desires “like all his fellow-Levites who stand to minister there before Yahweh.” 2 Kings 23:9 shows, however, how the Jerusalem priests, whose privileges were threatened by this far-reaching regulation, were able to make it inoperative. The country priests (כֹּהֲנֵי הַבָּמֹת “priests of the high places”) certainly shared in the emoluments of the Jerusalem priests but received no full priestly rights. In this state of affairs, Ezekiel, “a thorough Jerusalemite,” with his programmatic schema for the latter period “drapes the logic of facts with a mantle of morality” and decrees that the “Levites,” i.e. the descendents of the country priests who became unemployed in 622 BCE, have to perform menial tasks because of their sin, while the Jerusalem Zadokites, who were considered safe by the sin of the pre-reform period, could perform the full service.

Vv.10-14 fall into two parts, vv. 10-11 and the parallel but more elaborate vv. 12-14. Much of the terminology of accusation and punishment seems to be derived from 14:1–11 concerning the idolatrous exilic elders, but here it is overlaid by the concept of different degrees of cultic holiness, which prescribed separate roles for people, Levites and priests (vv 11, 13, 14). In the new order of the cultic relationship between Israel and Yahweh, the Levites were to represent the interests of the former, while the priests represented those of the latter (v 11, cf. v 15).

Zimmerli supports the standpoint of the Levites and its noteworthy use is made, after all, of a piece of genuine recollection of an evil time of apostasy in the past,\textsuperscript{303} which in the words of Ezekiel had found particularly trenchant expression. The reservation of the harsh judgment for an individual social class and the corresponding exoneration of another class do not, on the other hand, correspond in any way to Ezekiel’s preaching about sin, which is directed in 22: 23ff equally against all classes and found in chapter 8 its most trenchant expression with regard to the temple and those who served in it. Those who sigh and mourn at the destruction of the temple will be found, according to 9:4, outside in the city. Nothing justifies us in regarding them as the Zadokites who remained righteous.\textsuperscript{304}

15–16 The role of the priests is duly spelled out. They are strikingly demarcated as “levitical” and “Zadokite,\textsuperscript{305}” that is, members of the same tribe as the Levites but descended only from Zadok. The Levites’ role is tinged with a vehement expression of disgrace that of the priests is antithetically expressed in terms of honor. Hence, the Exile was clearly an event causing much upheaval, self-searching, and trauma.\textsuperscript{306} The trauma, caused because of the inter-cultural and intra-cultural tensions. The dominant always wanted to exert their pressure and dominance. This is another example of the dominant (the Zadokites) trying to show dominance over the Levites. The Zadokites were to be the privileged or the central task of altar duty and who had the access into the inner court, to which, together with the temple, the term “sanctuary” now refers, over against the “temple area” of v 14.\textsuperscript{307}

\textsuperscript{303} One cannot harmonize that reproach with the actual activities of the Levites, hence there is chance to conclude that the author must be a member of the Zadokides. He uses linguistic and tradition-historical elements of Ezekiel’s own texts and is, therefore, a member of Ezekiel’s circle. This circle must be strongly composed of Levite-Zadokite priests. Even, Ezekiel himself was a priest. Friedrich Fechter, “Priesthood in Exile according to the Book of Ezekiel,” 688.

\textsuperscript{304} Walter Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel chapters 25-48, 459.

\textsuperscript{305} Only Levites who are “sons of Zadok” (the high priest in the days of Solomon) are permitted to minister (40:46; 44: 15, 16). Johanna Stiebert, The Exile and the Prophet’s Wife, 76.

\textsuperscript{306} Johanna Stiebert, The Exile and the Prophet’s Wife, xiii.

6.7.4. Comments on Ezekiel 44:10-16: Sociological reading about domination of the influential Priesthood and the tensions between the Priest and the Levites

The text from the book of Ezekiel clearly indicates the rift and tension among the Priestly class which gave birth to constant conflict and power play manifested in the religious, social, cultural spectrum of the society. This text basically throws light on the domination of the influential priestly group namely the Zadokites. Evidence of redactional development appears in connection with what Gese called a Zadokite stratum (Verfassungsentwurf), but which Gunneweg more justly defined as a Zadokite section in 44:6–16 and “metastases” or corresponding sporadic amplifications in 40:46b; 43:19 and 48:11ab.

A quadruple series may be discerned. First, in 40:45–46a are mentioned two types of priest, those with duties in the temple area and those with altar duties. The former are clearly subordinate to the latter, in a sacerdotal hierarchy. The latter are qualified as Levitical Zadokites in 40:46b, while no corresponding qualification is added to the former. This lopsidedness suggests redactional supplementation from 44:15. Duke has urged that the qualification applies to both types, since הֶרֶב in v. 45 means not “temple area” but “temple building.” This interpretation would create unnecessary tension within chapters 40-48, in which only the inner circle who serve at the altar or in the sanctuary (cf. Numbers 18:5) are called Zadokites and are differentiated from other cultic staff responsible for the temple area (see 44:14; 45:5; 46:24). It has generally been overlooked that the subordinate priests are assigned to a room next to the inner north gate, where according to v. 41 slaughtering took place. A similar phenomenon occurs in 43:19, where originally only priests were mentioned and again the reference to Levitical priests of Zadokite descent appears in 44:15, to which a divine saying formula has been added by way of emphasis.308

A second category of texts is represented in 46:19-20, 24, where “priests” and “those who serve in the temple area” are polarized, but the latter group is not expressly identified with the Levites. Gese309 found here the influence of 44:11 (cf. 45:5), where the latter terminology is used of the Levites, but more probably an older formula has been used there, as the similar language of 40:45 suggests. In this passage “the priests who have access to Yahweh” (cf. 45:4) or “the priests” are mentioned. It is clear that they are a privileged, exclusive group, which implies an unnamed

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subordinate group. One cannot deduce with Gunneweg\textsuperscript{310} that mention of two sets of rooms in the west building involves two groups of priests who are defined in the same way.\textsuperscript{311}

A third category distinguishes explicitly between priests and Levites. It appears in the basic text of 48:8-26, where the most holy territory of the priests is differentiated from that of the Levites in the holy reservation. It is evidently this basic text that is reflected in 45:4–5, which lacks a reference to Zadokite ancestry and simply distinguishes between “the priests who serve in the sanctuary and have access to serve Yahweh” and “the Levites who serve in the temple area.”

The fourth category explicitly refers to Zadokite priests. It receives fullest expression in 44:15–16, over against reference to Levites with duties in the temple area, including responsibility for slaughtering, gate security and menial tasks (vv. 11–14). There was quite thorough endeavour to incorporate this final development elsewhere, into 48:11, as the aberrant first person reference to Yahweh suggests in 40:46 and 43:19.\textsuperscript{312}


\textsuperscript{311} Refer to Walter Zimmerli, \textit{Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel chapters 25-48}, 450.

\textsuperscript{312} Leslie C. Allen, \textit{Ezekiel 20-48: WBC}, vol. 29, 254. The Zadokite reference which in 1 Samuel reflects the priesthood of the Jerusalem temple is certainly perpetuated in the last stage of the literary sequence. It is usually attributed to the postexilic period (e.g., P. D. Hanson, \textit{The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology}, 238-240. Gese, following Procksch, assigned it to the earliest period, prior to Zerubbabel’s governorship, and Zimmerli has followed him. Should it be pushed back earlier? Fishbane, developing work done by Milgrom has shown that 44:6–16 is an “exegetical” oracle that closely follows the terminology of Numbers 18:1–7, 22–23. Although he too assigns the oracle to a post-exilic date, the phenomenon is comparable with the verbal echoing of Leviticus 26:4–13 in Ezekiel 34 and 37. Both later passages were credited to a late redactional stage, but they are evidently exilic, inasmuch as they look forward to a return from exile. Perhaps the echoing of Numbers 18 has the same setting. Certainly the relative closeness between Ezekiel 40:45–46a and the Zadokite overlay, which was noted earlier, suggest that a long period of development is not necessary; Levenson envisages an exilic dating for 44:6–16. It is noteworthy that the redacted text claims full prophetic authority (44:6) and refuses to distinguish between the authorial “authentic” and the “inauthentic.” The fact that the oracle is given pride of place as the keynote passage of the first main section is significant. It is a pointer to the redactional shaping that underlies the present text of chapters 43–46. Refer to Leslie C. Allen, \textit{Ezekiel 20-48: WBC}, vol. 29, 255, 256.
There are thus a series of texts that reflect development in the conception of temple personnel, although they are not necessarily to be assigned to four separate historical stages. The series begins with a hierarchy of two priestly classes, the lower of which already has the task of slaughtering. It progresses to separate classes of Priests and Levites. It is hierarchically ordered and reaches an extreme form in the categorization of the priests as Zadokite in descent, together with an


315 The term “sons of Zadok” thus appears to indicate a subgroup of Levitical priests in Jerusalem. However, this picture of the Zadokites as part of the ancient Israelite priestly tribe of Levi is not substantiated by the earliest material about Zadok himself. Zadok appears without preamble in a list of officials in 2 Samuel 8:17, where his father is said to be Ahitub, a priest descended from the Levitical line of Eli at Shiloh (1 Samuel 14:3). Zimmerli points out that in the framework of his policy of conciliation between Canaan and Israel, Zadok took over as a member of the old Jebusite royal house. Melchizedek tradition thus also penetrated into the Israelite-Jerusalem priestly tradition, Walter Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel chapters 25-48*, 457. Yet 2 Samuel 8:17, ‘Zadok functioned as a negotiator between the citizens of Jerusalem and David in the rebellion of Absalom (2 Samuel 15: 24-29)’, is widely considered to be garbled version of information given previously in 2 Samuel 22:20, and to contradict the surrounding narrative and a subsequent list of officials in 2 Samuel 20:25. This means that although Zadok’s priestly colleague Abiathar (1 Samuel 22:20-23; 2 Samuel 15:24-29, 35-36; 17:15; 19:11; 20: 25) is shown as being of Levitical descent, Zadok himself is not. Furthermore, in 1 Kings 2:26-27, Solomon retains Zadok but expels Abiathar from being priest in Jerusalem because Abiathar supported Solomon’s elder brother Adonijah as the heir to the throne instead of Solomon. They subsequently, (The Lineage of Zadok is presented by Friedrich Fechter, “Priesthood in Exile According to the book of Ezekiel,” 695, integrated themselves completely with the Israelite tradition and in the wake of the Deuteronomic reform programme designated themselves Levitical priests, and therefore undoubtedly in Ezekiel 44 the Jerusalem priesthood. Walter Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel chapters 25-48*, 457. The Zadokite priesthood is thus shown as supplanting the Levitical priesthood in Jerusalem in accordance with the divine will (see 1 Samuel 2: 27-35, which makes Ezekiel’s description of the Zadokites as Levites problematic. Either the term “Levite” must be understood as functional rather than genealogical, or Ezekiel is attempting to justify the inclusion of an outside faction in the priesthood by claiming Israelite priestly ancestry for them. Zadokites in the later Biblical Material, is often been assumed that the chief priests of the First Temple, and subsequently the high priests of the Second Temple, were lineal descendents of Zadok. Although there is no evidence to this effect for the First temple, J. R. Bartlett 1968, “Zadok and His Successors at Jerusalem” in *JTS* 19 (1968): 1-18, there is slightly more indication that the high priests in the Second Temple may have been regarded as Zadokites. The main evidence comes from the book of Chronicles (1 Chronicles 6:1-15; 49-53);
insistence that the Levites have no priestly role (44:13). Such development must run counter to a unitary approach to the text.316

The Levites are to be permitted to serve in the temple (vv. 11, 14), but it is the descendants of Zadok, who alone could enter the sanctuary and approach the table, since they have been faithful.317 Within the hierarchy of status, the book clearly depicts the priests as belonging to the top rung of the ladder.

6.7.5. Comments on Ezekiel 44:10-16: Postcolonial reading about domination of the influential Priesthood by remembering the past and thrusting on the sidelined, for the profit of their present

Priests control the access to the temple precinct, and they alone have access to the area around the altar. In the final vision, hierarchy is projected, portrayed and maintained by questions of access and approach.318 Vv. 15-16 provide the legal equivalent of a promise of salvation: a further group, the Zadokite priests, as a reward for their loyalty (v. 15a), are assigned an exclusive, prime role (vv. 15a-16). The there, in a retrospective rewriting of First Temple history, Zadok is firmly incorporated into the tribe of Levi as one of the sons of Aaron, who are a subgroup of the tribe of Levi and in the eyes of the Chronicler the only legitimate holders of priestly office. In 1 Chronicles 24: 1-3 Zadok appears as a direct descendant of Aaron’s eldest son Eleazar. Zadok is therefore depicted as a high priest, with the implication that all subsequent holders of the same office were his direct descendants. However, the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 6:1-15 appears to be largely schematic rather than an accurate record of chief priests in the First Temple, because there are repeated groups of names, and very few of the names that are given coincide with the names of chief priests in the subsequent narrative. Additionally, in the subsequent narrative only one of the chief priests is actually specified as being from the house of Zadok. Azariah in 2 Chronicles 31:10), which is quite surprising if there was indeed both a concern for the purity of descents and an awareness of the priests’ Zadokite lineage during the First Temple period. The genealogies therefore suggest that by the time Chronicles was written, sometime in the early to mid-Second Temple period the claim of descent from Zadok had become important for the Jerusalem high priests. Even so, none of the high priests from the Second Temple period who are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible are specifically associated with Zadok, with the possible exception of Seraiah in Nehemiah 11:11; nor is there any mention outside Ezekiel of the sons of Zadok as a group. Deborah W. Rooke, “Zadokites” in The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism, eds. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids / Michigan / Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 2010): 1357.

317 Paul M. Joyce, Ezekiel: A Commentary, 232; Risa Levitt Kohn, A New Heart and a New Soul Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah, 51, 52.
Levites are introduced with a new factor of accusation: they had been abettors of Israel in its worship of idols. As mentioned earlier, MT adds יִֽשְׁרָאֵל "who went astray," is regarded as an aggravating gloss. Nothing justifies us in regarding them as the Zadokites who remained righteous. The punishment of Israel becomes overshadowed by that of the Levites. Christopher argues that Ezekiel restricts the priesthood to the Zadokite clan. "This can only mean that they had been permitted to do a priestly service in former times."\(^{319}\) The historical justification he gives (that the Levites had acquiesced in a period of apostasy in Israel, while the Zadokites had remained faithful). This is also historically obscure, since it is not clear to what event or period he is referring. However, this is probably an exaggeration of Ezekiel’s intention.\(^{320}\) Cook’s proposal that chapter 44 does not refer to a historical development but is an interpretation of Korah’s rebellion in Numbers 16-18.\(^{321}\) Michael

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\(^{321}\) Another example of the use of biblical sources in the book of Ezekiel is the re-use of Numbers 18:1-7, 22-23 in Ezekiel 44:9-16. This source was probably selected because of the similarity of issues involved in the two passages. Both texts are concerned with a proper establishment of a priestly and Levitical hierarchy and both are written in response to a crisis. Numbers 18 was written in response to the Korahite rebellion, while Ezekiel 44 responds to the permission that had been granted to foreigners to enter the Temple. In addition to this similarity in motive, many terminological connections link these two passages together. The key verbs of Numbers 18 all recur in Ezekiel 44 as furthermore, the Ezekiel passage (v. 6) is introduced with similar phrases which function as key elements in the introduction and conclusion of the Korahite incident Numbers 16:3, 7; 17:25 (MT). It is therefore possible that the author of the Ezekiel has used passages intentionally. The author selected these expressions which operate as the outer frame to the Korahite rebellion to introduce his reworking of the passage in his own day. These three examples of the use of sources in the book of Ezekiel are illustrations of the ways the author incorporated his source material. The implications of this for our study are threefold. First, it confirms the opinion of numerous scholars who maintain that the book of Ezekiel made wide use of earlier biblical material. Secondly, with regard to the diachronic study of Biblical Hebrew, we note that since Ezekiel stands chronologically later than his source material the possibility exists that any variations in his language may be due to changes that have taken place in the Hebrew Language. Thirdly, any material which the book of Ezekiel has directly borrowed from another source without adjustment is not the intrinsic language of the book. Thus, not all the language of the book of Ezekiel should be viewed as characteristic of the exilic period, since to some extent the book preserves earlier source language. Mark F. Rooker, Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel, JSOTSupp 90 (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 63-64. Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Clarendon Press / Oxford University Press, 1985), has shown in a comprehensive fashion that literary dependency is a
Hundley’s contribution begins with an overview of “the preoccupation with the past in the Ancient West Asia,” which emphasizes that “one did not often simply remember the past for its own sake; rather, one remembered it so that it could be applied profitably to the present.” This appears very true when certain allegations are thrusted on one group by remembering the past because they are powerful and have the knowledge. The reinforcing divine saying formula in v. 15b corresponds to the one in v. 12. Wellhausen regarded this chapter as a key turning point in the history of the priesthood, establishing the special status of the Zadokites, with a priestly work dated later.

The review of the material relating to temple personnel undertaken above seems to show that 44:6–16 stands at the end of a process of development. Its starting point, in the pre-redacted texts of 40:38–46 and 43:18–27, with their references to subordinate priests, interestingly accords with 2 Samuel 2:35–36 (cf. 2 Kings 2:27). There the house of Eli seems to represent those who claimed priestly authority outside Jerusalem and its rejection points to their reduction to a minor priestly role. The development to the perspective of 44:6–16 was not radical as is often thought. Even the Deuteronomists had Zadokites in view as the main priestly authority, while even the earliest texts in Ezekiel 40 and 43 envisage the subordinate cultic personnel as slaughterers. Hence, it’s obvious that the Zadokite priestly class is portrayed as the dominant by presenting the Levites as people responsible for deviance v. 10. The mental domain is hijacked as the author hails from Zadokite group. The display of knowledge was within the Zadokites jurisdiction and was backed by the widespread phenomenon in biblical literature. Refer to Mark F. Rooker, Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel, 59; Stephen L. Cook, “Innerbiblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44 and the History of Israel’s Priesthood” in JBL 114 (1995): 193-208. Others dissenting from Wellhausen include, R. Abba, “Priests and Levites in Ezekiel” in VT 28 (1978): 1-9; J.G. McConville, “Priests and Levites in Ezekiel: A Crux in the Interpretation of Israel’s History” in Tyndale Bulletin 34 (1983): 3-31; R. K. Duke, “Punishment or Restoration? Another Look at the Levites of Ezekiel 44:6-16,” 61-81; Paul M. Joyce, Ezekiel: A Commentary, 232.

Refer to Ehud Ben Zvi, "Introduction" in Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah (Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 7.


Empire. Nothing justifies that the Zadokites remained faithful. The presentation of the history is very bleak and does not do any justice to the submissive position of the Levites. Socially, there appears to be a lot of conflict within the priestly class. The historical facts do not clearly affirm the tag, the Levites had received.

6.8. Ezekiel 48:11

6.8.1. Translation

11 the consecrated priests, descendants of Zadok, who discharged their duties for me, are refraining from going astray when the Israelites did unlike the Levites!\(^{325}\)

6.8.2. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

11.a, b.MT "the consecrated (place) from the sons" is generally redivided as מְקֻדָּשׁ בְּנֵי מַסְכַּן "consecrated, sons," supported by LXX and partially by Syr. Tg.: cf. 44:15; 2 Chronicles 26:18.\(^{326}\)

The final redactional unit of the series of temple-related visionary descriptions and legislative prescriptions chapters 40-48 are found in these last two chapters. It falls into two unequal parts, a short visionary account of the stream that flows from the temple in 47:1-12, and a long description of the boundaries and tribal divisions of the land in 47:13-48:35. The allocation of the land begins in 48:1. In this connection we should recall the presentation in the book of Joshua 13:1ff. In Ezekiel 48 there is no reference to any actual use of lot. Everything here is determined in advance by command of Yahweh. After a superscription which would simply lead one to expect a list of tribes in a specific sequence, the allocation to the same tribes are mentioned in Joshua. Admittedly a great difference between both the accounts springs up. The section of the twelve tribes and their portions in vv. 1-7, 23-28 is split in two by vv. 8-22, the disproportionately expansive description of the thirteenth portion of the land; this portion of land is primarily a tribute to Yahweh.'\(^{327}\)

6.8.3. Explanation

Thus v. 11, entirely in accord with the ideology of 44:6ff expands the statements about the priests, who are particularly set apart as

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“consecrated or holy” by the reference to their obedience. This aspect is dealt elaborately in 44:10-16, so it is not dealt in detail. This shows that there is a clear demarcation and distinction between the two groups within the priesthood.

6.8.4. Comments on Ezekiel 48:11: Sociological reading about the Zadokite priesthood

Ezekiel seems to be very harsh on the Priest in Ezekiel 7: 26; 22:26 and reprimands them for not doing their jobs and thus has led the destruction of Jerusalem but their position is upgraded over the Levites, as they had not misled the people. By doing so, he will have his own share in leadership as he belongs to the faithful priestly class i.e. Zadokite lineage. Very little is said about the Priest in earlier chapters, the situation completely changes in the last nine chapters. Priests and Levites play a central role, especially in Ezekiel 43: 18-27 etc. The Intra communal tension and conflict is very much obvious. This makes the book focus on the restoration of temple property at the end of the book even more understandable. The author’s own access to wealth would have been through the temple and its income. Again the stress on the restoration of the sacrificial system would then be a restoration of the author’s own economic status. The author represents the concern for the restoration of the privileged group. It may, at the first glance appear that author’s portrayal may have little to do with political hierarchy. He is never addressed as the high priest nor has been promised this office in the restoration. Publicly the author appears to be nobody, but by the book’s end he has usurped the power and status of almost every other leadership position. In the Ancient West Asia, the ones responsible for temple building were the kings. Ezekiel is portrayed as usurping this royal role. The final vision also has Ezekiel receiving a set of laws, in the Ancient West Asia the law would have been given to a royal figure, not to a prophet. At the end, the book of Ezekiel is usurping someone’s power, either that of an ancient figure, such as Moses, or that of a king who can declare a law code as authentic. So by mentioning the Zadokite as faithful he is making himself eligible for all the status once the temple is rebuilt. All studies agree that the priest holds an elevated position, one that is often

subordinated, however to political powers. Now as the kings were not there, this was the time, when the priest thought they could exert their supreme authority. Thus the designation of Zadokite is lifted (48:11). The priestly office is part of a larger program of social maintenance associated with the temple. Priesthood is literally a pivotal role. The temple becomes the domain of the priests. Priesthood was the centre of economic, religious, social and political zenith hence the priest knew that this would facilitate their power. The author appears to be more pro-Zadokite and also show intra community conflicts which are very much seen from a sociological point of view of the West Asian setup. This upgradation is thrusted because they had a good support of the Empire.

6.8.5. Comments on Ezekiel 48:11: Postcolonial reading about the Zadokite priesthood

The author is seen inclined to the priestly office, because the author does many of the priestly activities related to the community. The author bears for the punishment of the people, a function of the priest (4:4-8), the author is commanded to write down items for future instruction (24:2; 37:16; 37:20; 43:11-12), also raises several laments, a job in Mesopotamia often associated with priests (2:10; 19:1; 32:18).’ The characterization of the author as priest achieves several ideological ends. First the status of the author asserts the importance of the priest over any other social group. Second, the author’s moral rectitude maintains the possibility of a righteous remnant among the old Jerusalem priesthood, without which the restoration to their prior social status is impossible. More important that either of these, however, is the way in which the portrait asserts the priesthood over prophecy. The book plays with irony in its exploration of the absurd conditions of the exile. The author though he cannot sacrifice, but ends up in the place of high

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332 Corrine Patton, “Priest, Prophet and Exile: Ezekiel as a Literary Construct,” 720,723.
333 Margaret S. Odell, Ezekiel, 506.
334 The priests are condemned in the book for not carrying out their duty of instruction (7:26).
priest. The author’s word reflects priestly ideology and the terminology similar to the book of Exodus and Leviticus. Mein rightly points that the social location of the biblical writings as a whole was within the upper strata of society and that “the level of literacy required to create literature of this kind makes it unlikely that any of the lower orders were involved in its production.” As he goes on to explain, the bulk of biblical literature reflects ruling-class ideology: This is very clear in the royal psalms (e.g., Psalm 72) and in the historical accounts of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, which focus on the actions of political and religious leaders. Therefore, the passages that are dealt from the book of Ezekiel, support the ideas of its provenance in privileged circle. Ezekiel is a product of the “Yahweh alone party” and even, Ezra and Nehemiah might be regarded as its ideological successors. Hence, the elitist ideology has received its prominence by elevating the position of the Zadokites. Ezekiel 48: 12-13, points out that the whole special portion of land assigned to the Zadokites is described as “a most holy place”imsqodäšîm, without an article. V. 13, also clearly mentions about the land that has been allotted to the Levites.

Indeed, a close examination of the features demonstrates that the author did not give up his priestly identity for a prophetic role; instead his prophetic role is an extension of his priestly identity. On the contrary, Jeremiah repeatedly mentions that the prophet should never control priestly activity. But the author gives more priority to the priestly office as it fetched more lucrative returns. Hence it becomes more obvious from the texts that are dealt from Ezekiel which shows superiority given to the priest’s office thus emphasizing the oppression of the elite group for their

Mein refers to Ezra 1:4-6 and points out that “the priests also managed to remain together in groups. The return of a powerful priestly class at the restoration implies that, despite the destruction of the temple and their distance from Jerusalem, the priestly families maintained a continuity of tradition and office over the fifty years of exile” see his Ezekiel and Ethics of Exile, 35.
Johanna Stiebert, The Exile and the Prophet’s Wife, 70.
Margaret Odell argues that the portrayal of Ezekiel’s commission as a prophet in Ezekiel 1-5 is modeled on the priestly ordination ceremonies presented in Leviticus 8-9, Margaret S. Odell. “You are What You Eat; Ezekiel and the Scroll,” 229-248.
personal domination within the community of which the author was also a part.

6.9. Summary

This chapter deals with the biblical texts and some interpretations that deal with the rebuilding process of the temple during the early Persian Empire. The economic, political, social and religious context of the times portrays that there were lot of identity issues within and outside Yehud. As the chapter proceeds, the texts illuminate the role of the prophets during the early Persian period who promoted the rebuilding process. The empire also had its own agendas of economic, political, religious and social gain. Hence the people of the land had a resistance voice for the whole project saying ‘this is not the time’ (Haggai 1:2). Many times, few voices of the elite represented the whole group of people. Many a time the voices of the people in periphery go unheard, and hence the sociological and postcolonial studies help us to incline our ears to the voices hidden behind the more audible voices in the context of intra communal conflicts and also when the empire has its own agendas and certain elites are highlighted and given prominence by later interpolations as seen from the book of Ezekiel 44:45-46a and Zechariah 4:6-10. Some linguistic studies also portrays that some terms are added latter, as mentioned earlier, MT adds "who went astray," is regarded as an aggravating gloss. Some of the usage makes no sense as it was painted on certain group of people to degrade them and promote the elite group.

Quite often the interpretations mention the names of the elites or group mentioned and given prominence like the Zadokites, which are highlighted, whereas the people who were in the periphery are left alone. Hence, these deliberations do help us to focus our attention, so that the space may not turn from center to periphery or from periphery to center but it will help to blur the spaces. The texts which remain silent for few could be highlighted so the all people will get their dignity as God desires. The social times of the rebuilding of the Temple contributed to the colonial domination, because the people of God were still under the reign of Persian Empire. So the Empire always used the knowledge and the skills of the elite to facilitate what was best for the empire in economic, religious, social, cultural and political level.
CHAPTER 7
THE PERSPECTIVE OF POSTEXILIC ELITE TOWARDS THE WORSHIP AND REBUILDING PROCESS

7.1. Introduction

This chapter throws more light on the contributions of Ezra and Nehemiah in the context of the Empire. This chapter basically focuses on their assistance from the sociological and Postcolonial point of view, though they were people who immensely contributed to the reform and the rebuilding process. They are looked very high from Jewish and Christian point of view. Due to the limitation of the space, this study does not deal with the time of their work.

The Hebrew books of Ezra and Nehemiah attempt to suppress two historical facts: first, that the “people of the land” were not foreigners but were by and large the descendants of those Jews left behind in the deportations in the early sixth century. These were the people to whom the returnees must have seemed like interlopers and colonists, attempting unwarranted interference with their property rights, religious practices, and lives in general. Secondly, that a clear effort has been made to minimize or cut out some individuals important to the story. A prime example of the latter is, Sheshbazzar in Ezra 1 who has a brief mission to bring back temple vessels and then disappears; yet a quoted document indicates that he was actually the first governor of the new province of Yehud and even ascribes to him the laying of the foundations of a new temple (Ezra 5:14-16). Nothing of this is found in the edited text of Ezra 1-6 in an elaborated form, showing some sort of subjectivity and incompleteness in its version of the early years of Yehud.

1 For more details refer to Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in the Persian Shadow: A Social and Historical approach, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 110.
portraying the reforms and the rebuilding of the walls which will help to see the impact these leaders made.

7.2. Ezra 3:8-13

7.2.1. Translation

8 In the second year after their arrival at the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their people, (the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem) from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to have the oversight of the work on the house of the LORD.

9 And Jeshua with his sons and his kin, and Kadmiel and his sons, Binnui and Hodaviah along with (the sons of Henadad, the Levites), their sons and kin, together took charge of the workers in the house of God.

10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the LORD with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel;

11 and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel. And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy,

13 so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.3

7.2.2. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

The book of Ezra is not all of a piece, however. In fact it is pretty much a hodgepodge. The first six chapters tell the story of the return to Judah and Jerusalem and of the rebuilding of the temple there, but they also tell of a squabble between the returnees and a second group of people, perhaps Samaritans (Ezra 4). Having been excluded from participating in the building of the temple, this second group writes a complaint to the Persian king Artaxerxes about the returnees. That king then puts a stop to the building process, which

3 RSV.
lasts until the reign of Darius. These first six chapters of the book of Ezra have led to much confusion. There are five Persian kings named Artaxerxes and three kings named Darius (refer to appendix 2). Most people think that the Darius under whom the temple was completed and dedicated was Darius I (522–486 BCE), but no king named Artaxerxes ruled before him. Only Cyrus and his son, Cambyses, ruled before Darius. This has caused some researchers to contend that the temple was not completed until Darius II (424–405), who ruled after Artaxerxes I, but this seems too late a date for the second temple’s dedication, and it leads to other difficulties. Those who contend that the temple was dedicated in the time of Darius I, however, have to explain the apparent intrusion into the temple-building story of a letter to a later king. Ezra himself does not appear until 7:1 of the book named after him; the story of the return ends before the story of Ezra begins. Hence, with all these difficulties, the earlier date seems more accepted and this background will help to substantiate the interpretation that follow after this as both fall under chapters 1-6.

H. G. M. Williamson comments in his commentary saying, vv. 8, 9, the bracketed section cannot have stood here originally since it lacks any connection with the foregoing. Either it is misplaced from the earlier in the verse or, more probably, it represents a later expansion on the basis of Nehemiah 3: 18, 24; 10:10.

v. 10 a. The indefinite 3 person plural may be construed by a passive, “the priests were set forward.” The absence of את before הֲנָהָלִים “the priests” and הֲנָהָלִים “and the levites” is unexpected, however, in view of its same verb in v. 8. There are all chances that this could be a latter intrusion and clearly demarcates the different roles and the assertive roles of the priests.

7 Lisbeth S. Fried, Ezra and the Law in History and Tradition, 1, 2.
7.2.3. Explanation

One of the most important problems of this passage is to harmonize it with what is written in Haggai. In Haggai 2:15-18 the laying of foundations is mentioned, but the exegesis of this pericope is full of problems. Is the laying of the foundation mentioned in Haggai is for the first time in 537 BCE or to the laying of it during Darius’ time? The harmonizing of Haggai 1:14; 2:3 and 2:18 are indeed difficult. Scholars are of the opinion that Ezra 3 is to be regarded as the fiction of the Chronicler. This would solve the problem to some extent in Haggai. Frensham, quotes F. I. Andersen, and if his view is considered that מָצָא has a wide meaning and that it refers not to a point of time, but to a period in time, many problems created by Haggai disappear. It is possible that the foundation had been laid in 537 BCE and that in the time of Haggai work resumed on the foundation again by removing the rubble and strengthening the patch works in the foundation laid in 537 BCE. This is a possible solution.9

8, 9 Solomon also began his building project of the temple in the second month (1 Kings 6:1). This was the month after the Passover, or April- May in our calendar, the beginning of the dry season. Therefore it was the ideal time to start building. However, little more than repairing the foundation was done until the time of Haggai and Zechariah, 520-516 BCE.10

In the above verses Zerrubbabel11 and Jeshua (spelled “Joshua” in Haggai and Zechariah) are given the credit for the laying of the temple foundations. In Ezra 5: 16, however, it is said that Sheshbazzar12 (cf. also 1, 8, 11) “laid the

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11 He also possesses a Babylonian name (“seed of Babylon”). He has a Davidic descent. He is often mentioned with (Jeshua / Joshua) in Ezra 2:2; 3:2; Nehemiah (7:7; 12:1); 1Chronicles 3:19 and Zechariah 4:6, 7, 9. His relation with Sheshbazzar is not clear, because a complicating bit of information occurs in Haggai 1:13-15 and 2:18 which will be dealt in the succeeding exegesis. These passages date Zerubbabel’s work on the foundations of the temple in the time of Darius rather than the period of Cyrus (i.e. after 520 BCE). For more details refer to Fredrick Carlson Holmgren, Ezra and Nehemiah: Israel Alive Again (Grand Rapids / Edinburgh: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company / The Handsel Press Ltd, 1987), 22 ff.
12 Sheshbazzar, who possesses a Babylonian name, is identified as “the prince of Judah” (Ezra 1:8) and as a “governor” appointed by Cyrus (Ezra 5:14). Sheshbazzar led the first group of exiles back to the land and was in charge of the Temple vessels (1:8, 11; 5:14-15). He was appointed governor, a title held also by Zerubbabel (Haggai 1:1) and Tettenai (Ezra 5:3), indicates that the Persians looked upon him as a significant person.
foundations of the house of God which is in Jerusalem.” The accomplishments of these three leaders and their relationship to each other are difficult to define. The author seems to have written a selective history of the restored community, and, for reasons best known to him, he chose not to give the readers much information concerning these three men. One can draw assumptions about their relationships to each other and some of their accomplishments.\textsuperscript{13}

10, 11 In these verses the celebrations are described after the foundation had been laid. The leading role was played by the priests and then the Levites. The priests were clad in their typical vestments (cf. Exodus 28; 2 Chronicles 5:12; 20:21) and they blew the trumpets. The Levites played on the cymbals (cf. Psalm 150:5) which consisted of two metal plates (cf. 1 Chronicles 15:16).\textsuperscript{14}

12, 13 These verses show the emotional climax. There were people of all age groups—children, youths, adults and those in old age. There was mixed response as the perspectives, thought patterns and their emotions varied with regard to the Temple. The older priests and Levites and family heads who had the memory of the Solomon’s temple wept because this temple would be much simpler when they compared to than the former one.\textsuperscript{15}

7.2.4. Comments on Ezra 3: 8-13: Sociological reading behind the sending of the people for the rebuilding of the Temple

Zafrira Ben-Barak, mentions in the article “Meribaal and the System of Land Grants in Ancient Israel”\textsuperscript{16} that king would grant lands as rewards for the services to the king in Ancient West Asia and that led to the rise of the status. In return, the recipients were obliged to pay certain taxes and render certain services, so keeping this in mind one can get an idea that all the benefits given and shown by the Persian Empire could be seen as a loyalty grant to the elite leaders that were sent with a mission to add to their colonial interest. “There is an interesting study


\textsuperscript{14} F. Charles Fensham, \textit{The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah: NICOT}, vol. 12, 64.


that has come up about the “land-reclamation” hypothesis in Leviticus 25, which talks about the land rights or to prevent latifundialism or the accumulation of large estates by the wealthy. On the contrary, the jubilee legislation is seen as production of exilic and post-exilic priests, with the intention to the repossessing of the land lost in exile.’

Hence, the initiative of the Persian Empire to send to the land and rebuild the temple was well accepted and received by the elite Zadokite priest and other officials mentioned in this pericope, because it benefitted them and they facilitated the agendas of the Persian Colonialist. The sending of God’s people for the rebuilding was a blessing in disguise but the intentions of the empire over the colonized were very clear (Ezra 3:8). Cyrus developed strong local control over Persian colonies, which helped to protect Persia from its greatest threats, first Egypt and later Greece. Thus, it was in Cyrus’ own political interests to send people back to their homeland. This interest was materialized by sending the exiled elite who had proven to be the most skilled in Persian administration and those who were most supportive of a foreign regime.

Sheshbazzar was at this time already known by the title of prince of Judah (Ezra 1: 8) and Zerubbabel had also apparently been appointed a governor. These two descendants of the Davidic dynasty served as governors of the state. There seems to have been an attempt at the time of the first return in the days of Cyrus to re-establish the state of Judah under the royal family. The enumeration of all the groups which began the work shows that Zerrubbabel, who was from the Davidic lineage played the important role along with his companions, priests (Jeshua and his companion), and Levites are clearly distinguished.

Two important groups of the exiles were made to return to their land under Cyrus’ plan: the priests who had led the Israelites in worship during their Babylon exile and the scribes and the other royal elites who had served in the

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18 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach, 23.
19 Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now, 58.
government during exile (cf. Ezra 2). Vv. 10, 11, in these verses the celebrations are described after the foundation had been laid. The leading role was played by the priests and then the Levites.

7.2.5. Comments on Ezra 3: 8-13: Postcolonial reading behind the sending of the people for the rebuilding of the Temple

Though the book of Ezra and Nehemiah purport to be historical reports, scholars see them as a very strong pro-Persian propaganda promulgated by Persian representatives in the Yehud government. These passages lead the researcher to ask: firstly, who are the groups that are returning from exile, the most audible and their relation to the Persian or the colonial powers? Secondly, what will the rebuilt Temple mean to them? Sheshbazzar is mentioned in Ezra 1: 8, but his name escapes the attention in the mentioned text, vv. 8, 9. Hanson saw post exilic Yehud as dominated by what he called the “hierophants,” that is, the priestly elite claiming ancestry from Zadok, one of king David’s priests, whose descendants became the key leadership in Solomon’s temple and in Ezekiel’s vision of the restored temple. These elite priestly class of Zadokites were sent back and hence the passage especially vv. 10, 11, dealt, also talks of the distinction between priest and the Levites and their roles. The Hierophants, in Hanson’s view, were initially opposed by a rival group of priests who sought to reconstruct Israel along the lines of the vision of Second Isaiah. The Zadokites focused on the rebuilding of the Temple and the “visionaries,” as Hanson referred, ignored the issue of the temple in favour of a renewed sense of Yahweh’s presence in the cosmos itself.

This tension is clearly mentioned in the dealt text. The elite got the colonial sanction to promote the priestly–temple apparatus. The role of the Temple to sanction many practices that were pre-exilic came to be streamlined. Hence, the discrimination of people at various levels did not cease and the low profile of the so called “people of the land” and the Levites made them to resist the establishment of the old ruling families and the rebuilding of the Temple, which is

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23 Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*, 59.

24 Stephen L. Cook has done a critique of Hanson’s reconstruction about the apocalyptic text in his book *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). This is citied in Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*, 61.

visible in the book of Ezra. (Vv.12, 13) shows the emotional climax, where people had a mixed response, thought patterns and their emotions varied with regard to the Temple. The older priests and Levites and family heads who had the memory of the Solomon’s temple wept because this temple would be much simpler when they compared to than the former one, these people could be the one who were in the periphery, and moreover, this was another way of having a protest voice, similar to Haggai 1:4, where people thought it is not the right time, which is interpreted in detail. This could also be one way of protest, knowing this rebuilding process could have been better if the elites and the Zadokite priests would not have rushed for it. Horsley presents that Jewish literature originated within the landscape of imperial domination and control. The popular protest movements drew heavily upon traditional religious practices which refused to compromise with imperial demands. Since the elite priesthood was the creature of empire, the incumbent Judean rulers were beholden to their imperial overlords and generally collaborative. Scribal circles, however, along with ordinary priests, whose very role was to guide the people in maintenance of the sacred traditions and traditional ways of life, were always caught in the middle. While they were dependent politically and economically on the priestly aristocracy, they were prepared to lead resistance if their elite priestly patrons collaborated too closely with imperial officials or policy.\(^{26}\)

7.3. Ezra 6:3-5

7.3.1. Texts

3. In the first year of king Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree: Let the house be rebuilt on the place where they used to offer sacrifices\(^3\) and let its foundations be retained\(^b\). It is to be ninety feet high and ninety feet wide, 4. With three courses of dressed stone and one course of timber. The cost will be paid from the Royal treasury.

5. Furthermore, the gold and silver vessels belonging to the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar removed from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon are to be restored\(^c\); each one is to be put\(^b\) in its own place in the temple in Jerusalem, and you shall deposit them in the house of God.\(^{27}\)

7.3.2. Textual notes / Form / Structure / Setting

3a. The common translation goes “as a place where sacrifices are offered”. However, elsewhere in similar contexts the emphasis is always on the rebuilding


\(^{27}\) H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah: WBC*, vol. 16, 68, 69
of the altar or the temple “on its original site” (2:68; 3:3; 5:15; and 6:7. The ptcp יְדַבַּֽח could have a present reference, but the stress on the continuity with the site of the first temple favors a reference to continuous and habitual past action.\(^{28}\) This could be to show that what is promoted by the empire is in continuity with the Davidic lineage.

3b. The root \textit{sbl} (Akk. \textit{Zabalu}) means “to carry,” from which comes also the idea “to support, to maintain.” Against the proposed derivation from Akkadian \textit{Abalu},\(^{29}\) It is thus difficult to justify the traditional rendering, “let its foundation be laid.” So this translation affirms the fact that the empire was keen on supporting which would support their agendas. 5a. imperfect plural

5b literal, “and let it go...,” a distributive singular, as the singular suffix on יֵ֨בַיְתָא shows. It does not, therefore, seem necessary to restore כלה.\(^{30}\)

\textbf{7.3.3. Explanation}

It is possible that the author of these verses gives a summary of the decree of Cyrus. Ezra 1:2ff emphasizes certain aspects of the return of the Jews and not so much the building of the temple. The pericope here emphasizes the aspects of the building activities.

About the temple of God in Jerusalem, scholars agree that these words are a superscription, covering what follows. Galling opines, this superscription quite probably indicates that the decree of Cyrus covered different sanctuaries in various countries of which the temple in Jerusalem was just one.\(^{31}\)

\textit{Its heights must be sixty cubits, its width also sixty cubits.} This expression is full of problems, because according the 1 Kings 6: 2 the measurements of the temple of Solomon were sixty by twenty by thirty cubits. It is clear from various pronouncements in Ezra that Cyrus commanded that the rebuilding should take place in the very spot where the temple of Solomon stood, i.e., it must be built on the place where the foundation of the previous temple existed. According to the text it was not so, as the possibility of some error, and the other problem that gives way is that if the new temple was of the same measurement as the one of Solomon, or even a larger building, why should older people cry in disappointment (Ezra 3:12-13), though, nowhere it is mentioned that they cried


because it was smaller in measurements. Something is surely missing or went wrong, and this could be also the effort of the author as he was representing the empire, to blow the trumpet in an extravagant proportion.

This rebuilding of the temple had religious gain which, was also in the agendas of the Persian colonist cf. v. 10. Every detail was taken into account because in the ancient West Asian context correct procedure had to be followed in order that no specific god is angered. The use of bulls, rams, and so forth is in accordance with prescribed Israelite practices (cf. Exodus 29:38ff, Numbers 28:1ff; Leviticus 2:1). He was well informed because of the priestly class that was facilitating his actions. This all was done for specific benefits i.e. the continuation of the empire. This can be seen in Jeremiah 29:7. Cyrus requested prayers. This is attested by Elephantine Papyri.

7.3.4. Comments on Ezra 6:3-5: Sociological Reading on the Rebuilding of the Temple by the empire

The sociological reading will help to understand the rebuilding of the Temple in the context of West Asian parallels and how the empire contributed and why it contributed to the society, from religious, social and cultural milieu. Therefore, the similarities and dissimilarities with the other temple accounts will help in getting more clarity.

7.3.4.1. Similarities and Dissimilarities with the Temple account in other Biblical books and with the West Asian Nations

The first 6 chapters of Ezra are primarily an account of the rebuilding of the Temple in the early Persian era. It will be more apt to have a glance of the similarities and the dissimilarities when compared to other Biblical texts and the ancient West Asian series with regard to the rebuilding of the Second Temple. The interpretations from various texts already dealt from Haggai, Zechariah 1-8 and Ezra helps to see the social setting of the temple construction. This perspective helps us to derive some truth of how the empire had fixed criteria which is evident in the biblical account too. Here are some of the important things to note:

(1) the circumstances of the project and the decision to build can either be the initiative of a deity or of a kin. In the latter case, divine approval must be sought for confirmation. In Sumerian and Neo-Babylonian accounts, the god frequently reveals the plan of the temple. (2) Preparations, for getting the material and the workmen are detailed out. (3) A building description is given. (4) Dedication

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33 Cf. *ANET*, 316.
rights and festivities, which incorporates the entry of the god into his or her new home, sacrifices, purification, music and feasting, the establishment of the temple personnel in their posts, and the establishment of justice are described. (5) Blessing of the king by the god(s), with long life, promise of prosperity, and a stable dynasty is related, or a prayer by the king to the deity for these blessings. (6) Blessings are pronounced on those in the future who will renew the temple and curses on those who profane it.  

Element 1 is found immediately, in Cyrus’ decree authorizing the return of Jews to Yehud to become the workforce that will rebuild the temple (1:2-4). It names Yahweh as the initiator of the project, who has charged the world king, his earthly vice-regent, with carrying out the task. Background information about the history of the site is given much later, in 5:11-13, in the context of Tattenai’s letter to Darius repeating the explanation he had been given about why the temple was being rebuilt. It occurs briefly also in 1:7. Thus, while present, it is not in its more usual place within the account, at the beginning.

Element 2 is partially interwoven with element 1 in Cyrus’ decree, since it authorizes Jews to Return to Yehud to rebuild the temple and also to gather freewill offerings from others for the Temple. Cyrus also contributes to the materials by restoring the former temple vessels (1:7-11). The list of returnees in 2:1-67 details the workforce that will undertake the restoration. In addition to turning over the freewill offerings they had brought from neighbours to the treasury to help pay for the construction costs, some of those who returned also make personal contributions (2:68-69). Considering the contributions to have been gathered from Egyptians rather than Jews, B. Halpern links the free-will offerings with the motif of the flow of materials from the ends of the earth, freely given by foreign nations for the project. But to give whole credit to the Egyptian is difficult, but the inflow could have been there. The altar of burnt offerings is rebuilt in its former location as part of the preparations for work on the temple building proper (3:1-3). The money given to the treasury is then used to hire masons and carpenters for the

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Finally, the Levites are appointed to oversee the work (3:8-9). In the record of Cyrus’ decree found in Ecbatana that Cyrus not only returned the temple vessels but also provided funds for the rebuilding from the royal treasury. Darius then upholds the terms of Cyrus’ original decree and instructs Tattenai to give money for the temple project to the Jews from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province of Across-the-River (3.8). He even surpasses it by ordering Tattenai to give them in addition whatever is needed for the daily ritual (3: 9-10).

Element 3, a description of the building, is found primarily in the citation of Cyrus’ supposed edict in 6: 4, and then in the brief report of the ongoing work and completion of the project in 6:14-15. The beginning of the project is recorded in 3:8, however, and the laying of the foundation with its accompanying dedication ceremony, is related in 3:10-13:2. As already noted, the account of the building of the altar is deliberately set prior to the commencement of building work, as part of element 2. It would have been more logical for the report of the building of the altar to have been part of element 3.

Element 4, the dedication ceremonies at the completion of the structure, is briefly but explicitly mentioned in 6:16-18. The festivities included the offering of sacrifices and joyous celebration and confirmation of the priests and Levites for the now-established temple service.39

Element 5 is missing, but element 6 is present in Darius’ decree to Tattenai not to interfere in the rebuilding of the temple in 6:11-12. The account of the building of the Persian-era temple in Ezra 1-6 is more complete than the one created by the combination of Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 into a single literary unit, or either one individually. On the other hand, however, the present account lacks element 5, the bestowal of blessings, which was present, albeit in a democratized form, in the other three accounts. Finally, it should be noted that the present account explicitly states that the golah community remaining in Babylonia, together with some of the returnees, provided money to pay for the rebuilding, alongside the Persian king, who authorized the use of tribute funds from the province of Across-the-River, to pay for the work. Specifically, elements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 occur sequentially in chapters1–6.

7.3.5. Comments on Ezra 6:3-5: Postcolonial Reading on the Rebuilding of the Temple by the empire

It is often stated that ‘it was Persian policy to support religion.’ The alleged support of cults is often exaggerated in modern literature because of the propaganda of the Persian kings. The cost must be paid from royal treasury (v.4), though it was announced with so much of enthusiasm by the colonial empire as if the empire is going to be the main proponent. One important thing to be kept in mind is that the cost must come from taxation in the particular province in which the temple was to be rebuilt (cf. v.8), but must be paid into the king’s treasury, which was also his private treasury and then paid over for the specific task. This clearly affirms the fact that the Persian colonist though offered to go back and rebuild the temple, was a favour that was shown to most of the nations and not just a specific favour for Yehud. This favour was bestowed not at their cost and not even based on the elite who came back and wrote something in an extravagant literary style like the increase of the measurement but this was all done to a great extent at the cost of the people who were at the periphery or the ones who were at the receiving end to meet the economic requirements of the elite and the also the empire.

Overall Persian policy was rather to reduce the income of temples. Temples were regulated and taxed, both in goods and services. The economic

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importance of the Jerusalem Temple—or any temple—is beyond dispute. Valuable goods flow in and personnel consume these goods or use them to trade for others.\textsuperscript{46} So Temple in Yehud or any other place was of great importance for the empire for the free flow of the wealth.

The Empire had its own agendas; the over exaggeration about the size and the older people’s wailing is a contradiction in itself. The people in the periphery were burdened with cost and workforce, but their contributions were overlooked because the author was to some extent preoccupied with the extravagance of the empire. Vv. 4, 5, affirms about what the empire was contributing but in reality it was the people who were contributing through the taxes, which is not spelt out clearly. Hence the succeeding pages highlight the tension created within the community by the role played by the elite group.

### 7.4. The response of Elite leaders in relation to the Colonial Empire

Though the interpretation dealt earlier does not deal with what is been elaborated in this paragraph. It would be unfair on the part of the researcher if some light is not thrown on the religious reforms contrary to the usual reading and which to some extent Ezra and Nehemiah, facilitated the Colonial power. This will help the reader to have a wider perspective of this particular time. The Persian emperors worked for greater social cohesion in Yehud and for increased loyalty and usefulness from their subjects. Towards these ends, Ezra reformed and refinanced the religion, and Nehemiah fortified the city.\textsuperscript{47} Nehemiah can be seen as a local representative of the imperial government, who took measures to control the economic resources of the Jerusalem temple (Nehemiah 13:13).\textsuperscript{48} A more moderate position may be found in the works of K. Hoglund, who attempted

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\textsuperscript{46} Peter Altmann, “Tithes for the Clergy and Taxes for the King: State and Temple contributions in Nehemiah” in \textit{CBQ} 76.2 (April, 2014): 224.


to combine literary sophistication with an archaeological perspective. Hoglund approaches the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah from the perspective of the larger Persian imperial system. For Hoglund, the social setting and historical events of the mid-fifth century BCE in Syria-Palestine must be viewed in light of the nature of empires and the social forces that sustain them. Both Ezra and Nehemiah functioned as governors of Yehud. Nehemiah 8: 9 draws a distinction between Nehemiah as governor and Ezra as priest and scribe. However, the Persian imperial bureaucracy appointed them both for similar reasons focusing on the political area; they were both politicians with responsibility of promoting the Empire’s interest.

They had political, religious, social and economic responsibilities to safeguard and facilitate the agenda of the dominant. Another change during Darius’ reign was that the empire funded each province in order to codify the existing law, so that the powerful can tighten their grip religiously and yank the people from revolting against the Empire. Ezra enforced Artaxerxes I’s idea of enforcing the law of the Persian Kings and provided the helpful service to the


Berquist emphasizes religious reforms as important tendency. On the other hand, Hoglund, identifies four tendencies in imperial policy that affected the fortunes of Yehud in the Persian period; ruralization, commercialization, militarization, and ethnic collectivization. Each is reflected in the archaeological record, the textual traditions from the period.

Ezra’s concerns are directed towards the religious reforms. The narrator refers to Ezra as a scribe (Ezra 7:6), that has religious connotation. The book starts with the Edict of Cyrus which has been dealt in the interpretation of this chapter. Ezra appears in the narrative only in the sixth chapter after the details of the rebuilding of the temple. Artaxerxes sent a letter with Ezra with reference to the donation for the worship service (Ezra 7:16-20), hence reversing the Xerxes’ policies. The value should be very substantial (Ezra 8:24-30). In finances and emotional commitment, religion in Yehud declined under Xerxes and Artaxerxes I attempted through Ezra to strengthen the people’s religion, along with other reforms. In all these Artaxerxes I desired much stronger presence for the Persian Empire in this frontier colony, and religion proved to be one means toward this end for the emperor. The investment of the Persian Empire in Yehud’s religious reforms has political reasons, as the priests were the dominant people in the religious system that will indirectly help in social cohesion and thus providing loyalty. Ezra served at the pleasure of the emperor. Thus he participated in dual allegiance to God and the emperor (Ezra 7:26). Artaxerxes I expresses Ezra’s role as enforcing God’s law and the king’s law; imperial policy assumes no discrepancies between the two. He was expected to maintain social and economic order as well as religious sensibilities. The Persian Empire craved for peaceful borders hence Artaxerxes intensified enforcement of imperial law and the religious code through Ezra. His enhanced religious temple worship strengthened the taxation policies and thus increased the larger imperial system by increasing the income of the wealthier and also their loyalty to the empire. This also

52 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in the Persian Shadow: A Social and Historical approach, 110.
53 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in the Persian Shadow: A Social and Historical approach, 111.
54 Refer to Charles E. Carter, The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study, 42.
55 Ezra is presented not only as scribe and bringer of the law but also as a powerful governor, even satrap, on whom a great authority is vested by the Persians. Lester L. Grabbe, An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel and Jesus (London / New York: T and T Clark, 2010), 4.
56 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in the Persian Shadow: A Social and Historical approach, 111.
increased the amount of correct worship which promoted revitalized set of social norms and commitment goods for the revolts to be avoided.57

The Economic frontiers were instigated by Darius’ energetic funding of the temple, which produced a class within Yehud that depended upon the imperial bureaucracy for its own power and wealth. These priests and the governmental officials became the upper class. Xerxes refused to support the local temples and the Yehudite elite encouraged the laity to contribute more money and resources to the functioning of the temple, hence these all contradict about how the empire is presented in Ezra 6:4. This maintained the income of the priests, while it eroded the wealth of the local populace, resulting in the wide gap between the rich and poor. Thus indirectly the Persian Empire depleted the resources of the people of Yehud as they were the colonial power.58 The people were burdened by various taxes מַדָּה for the king in Nehemiah 5:4; 14-18 and for the cultic personnel such as contributions, first fruits and tithes for the elite 13:10-13. Nehemiah 5:4 makes direct references to the ‘tax of the king,’ ”we have borrowed silver for the royal tax (on pledge of) our fields.” Vv.14-18 makes repeated mention of “the bread for the governors.” The taxes were primarily in metal.59

Throughout the empire, land and resources were alienable, subject to imperial needs. In most of its territories, the Persian crown pursued a policy of depopulation and / or urbanization. Within Yehud, however, a different pattern prevailed; one finds ‘a deliberate decentralization of population’ or what Hoglund calls a pattern of ruralization.60 The push toward commercialism is likewise to be found in the material culture of the Persian period. During this period, there is a

58 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in the Persian Shadow: A Social and Historical approach, 113.
60 In the traditional biblical territory of Judah, the number of settlements, most of which were unwalled villages, increased by over 25 per cent. Hoglund suggests that this difference from previous settlement patterns was not coincidental, but intentional, for two reasons: (1) the degree of discontinuity between the Iron II and Persian periods; and (2) this helps to date the settlements in Yehud which were established. He contends that a full 65 per cent of the Persian period sites in Yehud were not occupied in the Iron II period, and 24 per cent were occupied initially in the Persian period. Hoglund dates this settlement activity to the beginning of the period, a dating which seems somewhat arbitrary given the difficulty in establishing Persian period chronology. Refer to Charles E. Carter, The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study, 43.
marked increase in the area of collaboration between various segments of production, thus increasing the trade and commerce and consequently benefitting the Persian Empire. The presence of imported pottery points toward the increase of trade. The empire’s interests were served by this increased commercialization in several ways: the commerce produced substantial revenue with little investment through increased taxation and tribute; newer patterns of regional interdependence replaced older patterns of individualization and self-sufficiency; and the increase in trade likewise stimulated production. One of the effects of the increased commercialization may have been the increase of social differentiation among the exilic community, but this occurred as a new merchant class evolved rather than from the emergence of the monied economy envisioned by Stern and Kippenberg.

The impetus toward militarization and ethnic collectivization bears more directly on the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah, which Hoglund dates to the mid-fifth century and the suggestion that Yehud was granted autonomy in order to engender greater loyalty to imperial rule. Although the Book of Ezra mentions the construction of the wall a few times (Ezra 9:9), Ezra seems little interested with the fortification of the city of Jerusalem. The Egyptian revolt led by Inaros in the fifth century BCE and the ensuing Greek threat to Persian interests led to the increased militarization of Yehud. This development is reflected in the archaeological record in a series of fortresses, established in the mid-fifth century BCE within the province of Yehud. These are not border fortresses, as Stern has suggested, but instead had two purposes: protecting the trade routes necessary

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63 K. Hoglund, Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 69-86. He rejects Alt’s thesis on textual, archaeological and philological grounds. Though Hoglund rejects Alt’s hypothesis, but one thing is clear that the Empire had its intentions very clear that is to promote its own agendas.

64 K. Hoglund, Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah, 86-91.

65 Jon L. Berquist, Judaism in the Persian Shadow: A Social and Historical approach, 112.

for the increased commercial activity, and providing a first line of defence for the western territories of the empire against foreign invasion. ‘Hoglund as quoted by Charles, suggests that, rather than indicating borders, the fortresses represent an imperial concern to protect trade routes and communication lines necessary to maintain control of the empire.’

This policy of militarization, in turn, provides the best context for understanding the work of Nehemiah. The fortification of Jerusalem was part of the larger imperial policy, intended not only to protect Yehud, but also to shore up the empire’s defences. Nehemiah focused almost completely upon the fortifications. This was basically done when the empire wished to strengthen its position of asserting its power in the vast domain. Jon Berquist mentions that the rebuilding of the wall enhanced the separation of the rich and the poor by creating a physical barrier between the urban elite and the Yehud’s countryside dwellers. The intra community tension and divorce issues which created more wedge within the community is very much reflected in appendix 3.

So Ezra and Nehemiah played a vital role in the life of the people in Yehud and not only these two, but many of the elite priests. Hence, these elite with the help of the Empire decided to impose order that could be a beneficial thing to expected norms and sometimes, that will assert their power on the common people. But in the course of time, the voice of many voiceless seems very much blurred.

7.5. Summary

The Persian Empire had a well-planned and strategic move to have their dominion well established on the colonized world. The work and reforms of the elite who were appointed by the Persian colonial power kept the domination and the loyalty of the Empire intact and they fared well to their times, the empire is presented in golden letters about how they will contribute and is well presented in Ezra 6:4, though the work force and money was contributed by normal people or the people of the land in the form of various taxes, as dealt in the chapter. They shared their concerns of how the religious and social factors had direct

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repercussions on the political and economic life of Yehud. The Persian Empire to make a secure base in Yehud transacted human and economic resources for the rebuilding program so that they could get Yehud’s assured loyalty but they knew, they will reap more than what they sow looking at the west Asian context of the construction of the temple. Few names are highlighted whereas the main work force is never mentioned. The reason for people weeping loud is not understood as the size was similar or even bigger than the earlier one as the interpretation clarifies of Ezra 3:12, this indicates some were dissatisfied. The elite were used as intermediaries to promote the empire’s plan. The new imperial policies increased the social control through the appointed governors. It has to be understood that the governors who were appointed by the imperial powers on most occasions had the tendency to cater and facilitate to the agendas of the imperial plan though they may facilitate the good of the people. Even the benefits to some extent fostered the plans and agendas of the elite than the people in the periphery whose voices go unheard, Ezra 3:12. Hence, the voiceless should be heard, their efforts unnoticed should be brought in the limelight. Therefore, in this chapter an effort has been made to see the other side of the coin. The blurring of the differences between the powerful should happen. There are chances that the elite who had the power of knowledge at times manipulated as per the voice of the Empire. The aristocratic priestly families with the agenda of the empire had tried to codify the law that would suit the dominant to silence the voiceless. The Temple provided economic impetus to the province, along with political identity and cohesion, and therefore the urge to build the temple among the elite and the colonial power is seen on the rise. It was a symbol for the people, as well a promotion of the great grand the Persian rule has facilitated for an exiled community, which fetched a great goodwill. Hence, in the Biblical text taken for interpretation, an exaggeration in the size is put up in Ezra 6:2, 3. Although the exaggeration is done by the author, the people are wailing and mourning and their voice was superseded by the voice of the people who were rejoicing. The writer projects the empire as the one who was funding, but the truth is not affirmed that it was the poor or the marginalized that were paying to the treasury in the form of taxes. Moreover, the intra community tension between the Priest and the Levites are reflected in the interpretation of Ezra 3: 10ff.

Thus, the elite had good intentions which the researcher does not negate but the sociological reasons and the postcolonial reading gives the researcher a space to see how the governors and the influential priestly class could have facilitated the agendas of the empire to a great extent. It was the voice of the elite which is heard as representing the voiceless and those at the periphery. These readings help us to give voice to the voiceless and blur the space, so that all could be given equal worth.
CHAPTER 8
IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY TO THE CONTEMPORARY REALITIES OF INDIA

8.1. Introduction

The researcher after reading and interpreting the Biblical text and the context of the Persian colonial empire during which the rebuilding of the Temple took place, sees a great relevance in today's context. The time when this took place does not seem to separate us to the things happening in our times. The issues that the people confront today have a similar effect in the economic, political, social, and religious situations of our times, though the ramifications might vary. The scientific and technological sophistication that has made the human societies to develop over the years but the core principles that dictate societal life of the people seem to have remained more or less on the same level.

The objective of this study is to see how the Persian Empire influenced the rebuilding of the temple. The selection of the texts for interpretation and the methods incorporated facilitates in this regard. The text from Jeremiah 52: 13, 14, talks about the role of the Babylonian empire in destroying the magnificent temple and shattering the people by taking them as captives and making a sharp distinction between the elite and people of the land. Texts from Ezekiel 40:45-46a, 44:10-16, 48:11, these texts talks about intra-community tension. The interpolation of certain group and the importance given is affirmed in the interpretation of the text. The importance of the Persian Empire is affirmed by the titles used as mentioned in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1; Ezra 6: 3, where these titles were never used for any outsider king. The extravagant treatment of the Persian kings is the gift of the authors towards the Empire and this is dealt elaborately from the Empire's perspective and the elitist perspective. The research also deals with the text from Isaiah 66: 1, 2, where the author clearly portrays that God is not seeking a house as everything belongs to Him. Haggai 1:2, the people saying that "this is not the time", this statement is elaborately dealt and clarifies the voice of dissidence even some meaning could be derived from Ezra 3:12. In the
Book of Haggai 1:12; Zechariah 4: 6-10; Haggai 2:1,2, over emphasis of certain names whereas certain names are done and group of people are not heard at all though, they contributed a lot for the rebuilding process. This research tries to bring those person or groups who are unheard, because they do not belong to the main stream or the elite group. The rebuilding process was very much beneficial to the Empire and the elite group to regain their past glory. Hence, in this research is an attempt to bring the unheard people and group in the midst of people who are blown up with a mighty trumpet. The people having the access of power and knowledge are seen bringing some drastic changes by addition of some words and phrase. The main intention of the thesis is to highlight those overheard voices at the cost of unheard voices and blur the space and making the unheard to have their own importance in the grandiose plan of God. Therefore, it makes inevitable for the reading of the texts written during the Persian times.

The chapters of this thesis make the researcher to be very clear that Persian Empire could dominate through generous projection on the colonized, and a glimpse is found in Ezra 6:4. This domination was very different and distinct from the earlier empires in the biblical history as they did not force them to settle down in a different location, instead, they facilitated their home coming. The Persians did not exert their power directly through its military mechanism but the „bio-production“ of the „colonized bodies“ got economical, political, religious and cultural ramification.\(^1\) Xenophon’s writing especially Cyropaedia as quoted by Gabriel clearly affirmed the fact that Cyrus’s father made a great impact on Cyrus’ rule. Cyrus’ father offers his son a wealth of practical advice. He says to Cyrus to use any unfair method to take advantage of the enemy, just as it is done in hunting animals. Against animals they used nets, traps instead of facing them in fair fight.\(^2\) This teaching should be kept in mind to understand the agendas of the Persian Empire in rebuilding of the temple and also using the literature and elite class to tap the resources for the good of the empire. Subjugation, oppression and exploitation are common to all ages of colonialism\(^3\) and Persian colonialism was no exception, but the oppression was strategically geared and executed. It is very true with the Indian politics and the 2014 election is good example as Dexter


opines that it was not a sudden or spontaneous move but a systematic build-up. As the researcher hails from Uttarakhand a deliberate attempt is made to see if this study can have some implications for the so called Dev Bhoomi.

Hence, this chapter of the thesis is divided into various dimensions i.e. economic, political, religious, socio-cultural, missiological and hermeneutical perspective.

8.2. Economic dimension

The colonial powers are always interested in exploiting the colonized for economic gains and Persians were no exceptions. They also tightened their grip on the exilic community to exercise control on the economic gains. Power and Economics are very much intertwined. The powerful always want to assert and make sure that they control the economics, though the powerful always shed some economic benefits for the people in the peripheries but the dominant or the colonizers assert ultimate benefit.

The attestation and recognition given to the powerful and the dominant, in particular, the Persians were tremendous. The Persian military display in the heart of Yehud to attack the Egyptians was very huge. This made the colonized to understand the power of the Persians. This makes the colonized people to speak well of the powerful. This ideology of militarism is very much prevalent in this 21st century too; the developed countries dictate the terms and thus making the developing countries to speak well. It is well attested in the interpretation of Haggai that during the time of Cyrus, the press or the printed literature favored the empire and its expansionist motives. The press was all favorable to the powerful as they decided what was to be spoken. Even in today’s modern world, militarism continues to hold sway, driven by greed of unbridled Globalization. It ransacks the hidden corners of the world, which are blessed with rich natural resources and the exploitation has no end. Like any other developing country, India has opened its doors to the Global market; this has led to massive deprivation of the large majority of the rural poor. The postexilic books expose how the poor were exploited and deprived by the ruling elite and the colonial power, where the people of the land were made to work but they were never brought into limelight. Militarism drained and continues to drain the national economy, drastically eating into social expenditure for food, shelter, health and education, thus reducing more and more people to penury and the bottom line.

This curtailed the access to the nation’s resources including the access to food,

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which was true with the people of the land, who were exploited by the intermediaries for the benefit of the Persian Empire. Now the people who were non-elite and who were left behind during the Babylonian exile were again exploited. Those deported by the Babylonians were primarily the rulers, officials, priests, military and artisans from Jerusalem. Those who returned later were thus descendants of the Jerusalem elite. They apparently resumed or attempted to resume, their positions, in this case as subordinates to the Persian imperium.

The condition of India is not much different to the early Persian period when the rebuilding of the Temple took place. Indian ruling class also fail to realize that economic prosperity does not automatically eradicate poverty, enhance health and happiness or ensure life-security. It is baffling to see poverty existing amidst plenty (huge food stocks with government) in India. There is a great desire of the elite in India to model itself on the United States, which projects itself as the most prosperous nation on the whole planet. India’s preferred choice of walking in the paths of Global Capitalism and her geo-political interests to have access to natural resources from foreign countries to meet the ever increasing demands, has led to economic and political alliances. These alliances demand commendable increase in military spending to protect the interests of the national market forces that drive the high growth economy. In this venture of bargain, land tenure patterns, traditional land ownership, age old regulations concerning natural resources like forest, marine, mineral resources are depleted and modified to suit the corporate entities. An economy built on borrowed capital and export is not sustainable over a period of time. It will burden the land and the common masses in a debt trap, where the common people will be succumbed to the interest of the ruling elite. This will affect the people living in the margins. This could be reflected well in the mentioned in Haggai ‘This is not the time’. This was very true to the people who were living in margins during the Persian hegemony; they were made to provide food to the army of the Persians who were installed in the Palestinian region to fight against the Egyptians which was one of the most important agendas.

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Modern-day colonizers and their colonizing acts, make the colonized of various contexts, especially the women and children, minority races in the colonized centers, natives within the colonized as the most vulnerable. The powerful and the dominant in their greed to fulfill their agendas exploit the nature and therefore the poor and vulnerable suffer the most. The statistics shows how the nature is destroyed.

These issues need to be addressed in churches, which get a very limited space in the schedules. Many times the church is very quick to dichotomize materialism and spirituality: this worldly versus the otherworldly. On the other hand, when people of other faiths see, how would they weigh. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that, "The Fathers of the Church distinguish between theology (theologia) and economy (oikonomia). Latin American theology summons us to discern the divine economy not only in the eternal workings of the Trinity and the attributes of each divine Person but also in the actions of God ..., so that the social and political economy working in the world may return to being an administration of our common home at the service of the life for all.

Globalization seems creeping in the churches where the economic disparity is in the forefront, just like the Persians who promoted the rebuilding as sponsored from the royal treasury. On the contrary, the poor were forced to pay different taxes and the disparity was never pinpointed by the elite returnees who always favored the empire (Ezra 6:4-5). The economic barriers in our ekklesias affect the poor because they are left alone and the disparity between the rich and the poor still remain as a Goliath challenging us not to become the true people of

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10 Ignored by a greedy and complicit political establishment that has exploited a dangerous terrain for profit, a ticking time bomb has finally gone off, it has claimed many lives, displaced tens of thousands, and torn apart countless families, this is mentioned by Kaushik Deka and Kunal Pradhan, “Ground Zero” in India Today (July 8, 2013), 22. Official Forest Department Statistics from the Uttarakhand government peg illegal encroachments on forestland since 2000 at 10,000 acres. The decade from 2001 to 2010 saw 3,903.24 hectares of this land being mercilessly stripped and gouged.... In December 2012, an additional 1,608 hectares of forest was officially consigned to mining. And therefore the article has a wonderful title, “When Men Played God” in India Today (July 8, 2013), 36. This is considered as one of the important reasons for the devastation that was brought by the flash floods in the hills of Uttarakhand.

God. Simon Samuel opines about ‘Practicing Economic Spirituality.’ Christians are living in an economic environment where all are careful in ‘minding our own purse.’ People feel that the churches are good for our spiritual nourishment but for economic sustenance we need to strive for ourselves or the state. It’s so good to hear and say sermons and present papers about practicing economic koinonia and diakonia, but the need of the hour is to be better stewards. The economic uncertainties and worries made the priest and the leaders to make all attempts to be ensured that their future economic conditions are safe. The control over the land, temple helped them to have the final say on the economics. The Zadokite and the elites saw their future as very bleak and could be enhanced only when the temple, that is, the source of all economics could be regained with the support of the empire. In the heavy rain that shook the Dev Bhoomi, when the flash flood gushed and destroyed the temple at Badrinath, the priests were hurrying to resume the worship and even some flew in helicopter so that the money and resources could be tapped. The powerful always dominate because they can manipulate, the column of Letters written by J.S. Acharya, which project this fact, that Prison could not contain or proved to be insufficient to the power of the AIADMK supremo Jayalalithaa. Since all the accused in this case are rich; they will hire the top brass of lawyers as intermediaries. There are lakhs of under trials equally unhealthy who too should be granted bail on health grounds. The author continues to say by quoting, Oliver Goldsmith, “Laws grind the poor and rich men rule the law. Always the innocent are the first victims, so it has been for ages past, so it is now.” Hence the powerful always decide, manipulate and make others speak for them in favourable terms because they control the economics and power which is vested on them. Hence the Persians used intermediaries to promote through their economic gains. Much of the manipulation was done by informing to the common people, that what they were doing was right and hence the hegemony of the Persians persisted with the help of the elite in Yehud.

14 Kondasingu Jesurathnam, Old Testament Theology: History, Issues and Perspectives (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2016), 91. In his book author mentions that the relevance of Sabbatical and Jubilee was especially for the returnees of the exile, who were deprived of their rights by their fellow country people.
15 In the magazine called “The Week” (November 23, 2014), 8.
8.3. Religion and Political dimension

Both these factors are seen very well conglomerated. During the rebuilding of the Temple, Religion and Politics had a very thin layer of separation.\textsuperscript{17} Even in the Indian situation, this is very true. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s gifted 2.5 tonnes of sandalwood to Kathmandu’s Pashupatinath temple during his two-day visit which costed about Rs. 1.9 crore. It is reported that, this is not the first time India has used religion to push soft power.\textsuperscript{18} Religion and politics are very much intertwined, this particular quotation from the newspaper clearly affirms the fact that it is very much found in the Indian subcontinent, and other nations are not exempted from this fact. Another example, is the Babri Masjid issue, though it is a little older historical fact but it is still very fresh in the memories of the Indian people which make this fact more clear that religion and politics are interrelated. This was very true even with the Uttarakhand flood, which, drained down the temple premises and the worship was stopped, one could see a good example of how the religion got mingled with politics. The tragedy in the northern part of India, mostly Uttarakhand and the region experienced an unprecedented and unpredicted cloudburst, which caused substantial damage and loss. Many thousands lost their lives and far more have lost their homes and everything they possessed. Families have been rent apart and infrastructure in the affected parts has been virtually wiped out. It is therefore no surprise that Hindutva proponents like Narendra Modi offered to re-build the Kedarnath Temple.\textsuperscript{19} Narendra Modi took his Hindutva politics to a new level by expressing his desire to “rebuild the Kedarnath Temple.” Modi flew over flood-hit Uttarakhand to take stock of the situation. Modi’s trip intensified the politics played over the natural calamity.\textsuperscript{20} All political parties were trying to take mileage not with a purpose to help the victims or their real interest in renovating the temple but lot of hidden agendas.\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{19} Cyril Georgeson “Facing up to natural calamities” in \textit{Light of Life} (August, 2013): 46-47.


\textsuperscript{21} “As politicians squabbled and cleaved relief efforts along political lines...”. Sandeep Unnithan, “Flights of Heroism” in \textit{India Today} (July 8, 2013), 21, 30; ... As refugees swarmed the valleys and politicians feasted on the disaster.
Rejecting Narendra Modi’s offer to rebuild the Kedarnath temple, the then, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Vijay Bahuguna said that the state government would bear the expenses. “We will work on a war-footing to restore the infrastructure. The Kedarnath temple is going to be rebuilt by the state government and whoever wants to give any support is welcome.”

The disaster has put a full stop to Char Dham Yatra (pilgrimage to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri), which has been a major source of revenue to the Uttarakhand government, bringing in nearly 12,000 crore of rupees annually. According to the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, about six lakh people are benefited from the Yatra, directly or indirectly... priest of several temples, are now deprived of their means of livelihood.

The dominant always have a strategic move of selective help that will benefit their agendas. The priestly class was very keen of restarting the worship and even hired helicopters to reach the temple not with a great liking for the worship but because of the loss they would be incurring if the worship does not start. This debarred the elite of their rights and privileges. Even in the interpretation that is dealt from Ezekiel chapters 40, 44 indicate the importance the Zadokite priestly class, especially distributing the works and how keen they were to carry out the priestly office. This is very true with the politics and the economic gain of the Persian Empire and the rich priestly elite. The temple rebuilding was done with great political agenda by the people who held power and knowledge, which could be seen even in the present scenario at different forms.

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22 Aamne Samne by Rishi Kapoor, “Uttarakhand CM rejects Modi’s offer to rebuild Kedarnath temple, says state will bear the expenses”, CNN-IBN, Updated Jun 26, 2013 at 06:01pm IST


24 Narendra Modi swooping in to rescue Gujaratis sparked off the political Tug-of-war, “Politics of Disaster: Lessons still unlearned” by Bhavna Vij-Aurora and Amarnath K. Menon, in India Today (July 8, 2013), 44.

25 One good observation could be seen in Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective, Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox divide the role of religion in two broad categories: the “priestly” or accommodating role of religion and the “prophetic” or oppositional role of religious politics. This is very much true in the prophetic interpretations already seen in the preceding chapters, where priestly class becomes more pro to the conglomeration of Religion of Politics and religion. Ted Gernard Jelen and Clyde Wilcox (eds.), Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective: The One, the Few, and the Many (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Timothy J. Steigenga, “Political Science and Religious Conversion” in The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion, eds. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (USA: Oxford University Press, 2014): 406-407.
8.4. Social dimension

During the initial Postexilic time, the Empire with the help of elite did very systematic marginalization and created intra community conflicts Ezra 3:10; 6:3. In today’s context, there are systematic social marginalization of the people in the periphery that may include the children, Dalits, Tribal, women, and the poor. The poor countries are prone to face the challenges of insecurity and related suffering. According to the United Nations estimate, close to one-sixth of the population suffer chronic hunger in the world and about half of the humanity is malnourished.26 This is because the elite, the dominant group discards the others in the periphery who were also authorized to receive and their voices go unheard. Rajeswar Mishra, a well-known sociologist defines poverty as a social phenomenon in which a section of society is unable to fulfill even its basic necessities of life. When a substantial segment of a society is deprived of the minimum level of living and continues at a bare subsistence level, that society can very well be called as sick.27 This destitution persists even though human conditions have improved more than ever in the history of humankind... “Global wealth, global connections and technological capabilities have never been greater.” But the distribution of these gains is extraordinarily unequal. The average income in the richest 20 countries is 37 times the average in the poorest 20, a gap that has doubled in the past few decades.28 Behind these figures are human faces filled with human pain and alienation. Therefore, the church and the leadership should be mindful of the people who are deprived of their rights as human beings at the cost of the dominant ideology of exploitation. Any system, ideology, theology or phenomena that relegates or reduces human beings from human to sub-human, from person to non-person, from the centre to the periphery should be condemned.29 Blurring the boundaries is very important to create equality and sharing of all the resources rather than compartmentalizing the centre and periphery of God’s benevolence.30 Hence, a blurring of space is very much needed, rather than compartmentalizing groups.

28 For more reference see the Business section of The Hindu entitled “World Bank calls for comprehensive approach on poverty” (14.9.2000), 20. Though this statistics is of old but this has not decreased but indicates to an increase.
29 I. John Mohan Razu, “Practical Theology for the Marginalised: Pastoral Care as a Point of Reference,” 52.
30 This idea is drawn by reading the title of this article written by James Elisha Taneti, “Blurring the Boundaries: Telugu Bible Women, Itinerancy and Social Mobility” in Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns, Protagonists and Perspectives, eds. Peniel Jesudason et
8.5. Ecclesiastical dimension

The elite and the knowledgeable always decide and give the voice for millions of other who are not at all heard and thus the voices mostly support and enhance the plans and purposes of the dominant (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1; Haggai 1:1, 2). This was true to the prophets and the priestly scribes who gave a new dimension to the Persian colonial power during the rebuilding of the Temple, who presented them more than what they did and acted (Ezra 6:4). Even during the time of Reformation, the funds were raised in the form of the souls who were believed to have been released from the purgatory, for the building of temple of Basilica. This was a manipulation done by the authorities who were confronted by the proponents of Reformation. This is a historical fact, which is, attested in the history too, where the elite class manipulated the Word of God for their own agendas very similar to the elite of the rebuilding process during the Persian hegemony when the priest and the elite attested the empire’s agendas.

Cyrus is attested by the writers who will provide the funding for the rebuilding, whereas the interpretation dealt speaks very well about Ancient West Asian world where the people pooled the wealth in the form of taxes and indirectly the empire was benefited. The labor force was provided by many unknown but only few names are always highlighted because of the background they come. E. Said has defined the theological vocation as ‘Speaking Truth To Power,’ he calls the theological thinkers as ‘intellectuals.’ In his words, “Nothing in my view is more reprehensible than those habits of mind in the ‘intellectual’ that induce avoidance, that characteristic turning away from a difficult and principled position which you know to be the right one, but which you decide not to take.”

He further comments on the mindset of the intellectual who might surrender his/her principled life for achieving mundane, careerist and materialist gains. This was very similar to the priestly class of that early Second Temple time to agree to the colonial power and give attestation to their work and agendas. “They always wanted to be on a board of prestigious committee. This is very much seen even today when the elite intellectuals compromise to remain within the responsible mainstream, you do not want to be too political; you are afraid of seeming controversial; you need the approval of the boss or the authority… for an intellectual these habits of mind are corrupting par excellence.”

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Many times the deceptive theologies that are linked with the church authorities are even seen in the church and parachurch organizations where lot of disparities are seen flourishing based on the region, language, denominations and other differences which are promoted, to get the agendas of the influential prevail. This is well said by Kosuke Koyama,\textsuperscript{33} when he mentions in relation to the temple of God. He refers to Jeremiah and writes that his attack was not directed at the temple of the Lord itself but the deceptive theology hanging around the sacred institution.

Christian life is surrounded by innumerable institutions and establishments. Institutions have their respective histories. They tend to become rigid and inflexible. The real danger of institutions must be located, not in the institutions themselves, but in the ‘theology’ that surrounds them. The deceptive theology characterized could be seen in a diversified form in our churches; ‘This is what the bishop / leader / or any head of the institution may say,’ ‘This is what the Church Council decides,’ ‘This is what the theological faculty decide,’ ‘This is what the mission board says,’ ‘This is what the denominational headquarters agreed.’\textsuperscript{34}

This is to a great extent seen similar to the texts that have been dealt with the rebuilding of the temple. This elite mind set has been portrayed and thrust on the people and it is well projected in the dealt text from Haggai 1:2. The interpolation of certain words done indicates some may manipulate to show the dominance on others as in the book of Ezekiel 48:11. It indicates that the people of the land felt that this is not the time because the Persian Empire was still dominating Haggai 1:2. It was exerting domination for its own profits and the elite intermediaries were to a great extent giving the voice to the voiceless for the benefits of the Empire.

\textbf{8.6. Missiological dimension}

In the words of Michael Hundley, “Remembering and forgetting form an inherent part of recounting any event, with selective exposition..., the priestly writers are no exception to the trend. The Priestly account chooses to remember certain elements while omitting or marginalizing others.”\textsuperscript{35} This was done with a great

\textsuperscript{33} Kosuke Koyama, \textit{The Waterbuffalo Theology} (London: SCM Press, 1974), 188. He compares to the Japanese belief that no matter what might happen Tokyo would not fall because it is the seat of the emperor, he is the successor of the Sun goddess. He is God incarnate. A very similar thinking to the people of Judah, to which Jeremiah is confronting that, the people of God should not live in a false assumption. Kosuke opines in p. 187, that even, Tokyo was destroyed.

\textsuperscript{34} Kosuke Koyama, \textit{The Waterbuffalo Theology}, 189.

\textsuperscript{35} Michael Hundley, “The Way forward is back to the Beginning: Reflection Second Temple Judah,” 209, 221.
intention of bringing the temple under the control of the elite and the returnees of the
exile that were from an aristocratic class under the intensive support of the
Persian Empire to facilitate their gains (Zechariah 4:6-10). Many times the
mission of the church is limited to provide the voice of the rich to provide the
mission strategies that will benefit the rich of the church.

Many times the church and the leadership tend to forget or pretend to
forget, and thus, facilitate opportunities for the powerful and the dominant.
Missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries saw the colonizing process as part of
God’s provision to facilitate the spread of the Gospel. Their patriotism usually
blinded them to harsh realities of oppressive colonialism as experienced by the
colonized peoples. Many times the missionaries were deceived or were ignorant
of the perniciousness of colonialism. The missionaries, generally stayed out of the
political affairs, but this approach laid them open to the charge that they were
‘pie-in-the-sky’ preachers who were not really concerned about the oppression
under which the people they professed to love, were suffering.

There were some unhealthy relationship that existed between missionaries
and the colonizing powers in the past but occasionally these powers were
condemned by the missionaries for their atrocities. The atrocities committed by
King Leopold came into stark criticism by the press of the missionaries. The
Belgian Congo headlined the “The Congo Outrages” calling him most murderous
than Nero and more merciless than a Borgia..., this infamous king, the most
murderous and merciless of modern times, violated all his pledges and killed the
natives by the most unspeakable tortures, cutting off their heads, feet, etc.
did therefore there were missionaries who refused to be numbered with the
imperialists and who resisted colonist exploitation to the hilt.36

God is looking for stalwarts in God’s kingdom that will not align with the
dominant and the exploiters but their mission will be to stand for the people
whose voices are not heard, cf. Isaiah 66:2. God is calling with a mission to raise
the voice and be an advocate for the exploited and the poor, who become an easy
prey to the dominant in the church and outside the church. In this 21st century,
the demand of the hour is that the church and the leaders should play a vital role
in blurring the space of inequality based on of region, denomination, economic,
social, religion and political power play. In this century the church is also called to
voice against the ecological exploitation37 against the Multinational companies

36 Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism*
37 For more insight on this refer to Rayappa Kasi, “A Religious Response to Ecological Crisis:
A Theological Antidote to 21st Century Problems” in *Indian Journal of Christian Studies* 3.1
(January-June, 2013): 101-114. I like the usage of ‘It’s your hands he needs to deliver his
work in his world today’ by P. Joseph Titus, “The Lowly People as Partners in God’s
and unjust economic structures. The land grabbing tendencies of the land Mafias are another serious problems the poor face in our times. Economics and the land are intrinsically related and this is very true even in this 21st century where the land mafias and the Multinational companies try to acquire land in the pretext of development and helping the poor but make the ultimate profit at the cost of the people who are in the margins.

Therefore, the need of the hour is to have a holistic perspective of how God sees. Many a time, church and leaders have stood with the powerful thus ‘creating boundaries and have failed to imagine’\textsuperscript{38} what God intends His people and especially the leaders to do. God’s appointed leaders are not to be facilitators of the dominant ideologies, just as the Zadokites and the elite who succumbed for some special favors from the Persian Empire, on the contrary raising voice for the voiceless.

8.7. Hermeneutical dimension

The Priestly and elite class who returned from exile were patronized by the Persians and to a great extent were impolite. They had an identity that was very much in tune of the empire to promote the domination of the Persians and present them in a well reputed manner. The silencing of the people who were left behind after the exile was done with extra care by the intermediaries of the Persian Empire who were sent to rebuild the temple as they were doing it for all the subjects who were taken by the Babylonians. Spivak’s emphasis on the complicity of western intellectuals in silencing the voices of the oppressed groups by speaking for them\textsuperscript{39} seems very true. The priests who had implemented the knowledge decided to silence the voice of the oppressed by using their knowledge, the clear demarcation of the groups in the interpretation done from

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the book of Ezekiel clearly indicates that the Levites were looked down for no reason (Ezekiel 44:10-16). Their efforts of imparting the knowledge looked glamorous in the face value, as if it was spoken for the benefit of the poor who were left behind. On the contrary, it facilitated the elite class and ultimately the Persian Empire.

Bible was written under the pretext of Empires. Therefore the author would wield some power based on the economic conditions required to make the activity of writing possible. Text production, being an expensive, difficult, labor-intensive, and time-consuming process, had to be an economically supported and a politically driven venture by people with ways and means. Text production required money and specialized knowledge. Texts were not written to be read at leisure. They had economic and political functions, so any scribal activities would be sought for at a scribal school linked to some kind of political administration. In keeping commercial records, they exerted control over the economy in keeping the archives, the controlled knowledge of the past, the formulation of new traditions, as well as the legitimacy of the ruling dominant elite. The postexilic writings would have required time, money, resources, motivation, and above all, particular writing and text production skills. The archival nature of the texts during this time suggests that the author(s) could be linked to the temple within the hierocratic governing system of the time. One would expect them to write to a great extent what their paymaster told them to write, or, at least, to write in such a way they would not endanger the power of their paymasters. These scribes were not working for government so to speak but they were part of the governing structures. It is fair to assume that scribal activity lay within the hands of those who exerted political and economic power. “Said’s work sparked off almost a new genre of scholarly literature for India focusing on the way in which colonial knowledge was seen to objectively manipulate and dominate aspects of society and culture.”

Writing involved professional

administration and the latter, in turn related directly to the seat of power in ancient west Asian culture. So the prophetic writings (even Ezra-Nehemiah) would have taken place at or near the center of power, hence the Empire was presented in Golden letters (Ezra 6:4). In controlling the contents, the ruling elite and the Persian Empire at the background were able to create and establish a public transcript whereby they could explain why they were in power, why they were doing what they are doing, why society needed to be structured in a particular way. With this public transcript, they created a portrait of themselves as they wished to see themselves and how others needed to see them.\(^{42}\)

James Scott states, “The theoretical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear. The dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes prevail. In short run, it is in the interest of the subordinate under the powerful who are writing for the powerful to produce a more or less credible performance, speaking the lines and making the gestures he / she knows is expected from him / her. The result is that the public transcript is- barring in crisis-systematically skewed in the direction of the liberetto, the discourse, represented by the dominant. In ideological terms the public transcript will typically, by its accommodation tone, provide convincing evidence for the hegemony of dominant values, for the hegemony of dominant discourse. It is in precisely this public domain where the effects of power relations are most manifested and any analysis based exclusively on the public transcript is likely to conclude that subordinate groups endorse the terms of their subordination and are willing, even enthusiastic, partners in that subordination.”\(^{43}\)

8.8. Summary

This chapter makes it clear that during early times of the postexilic age, the Persian colonial power controlled the various aspects of life. The Social setting clearly demarcates the conflict that took place between the elite group that returned from the exile and the people who were left behind. The Persian Empire which was presented by the biblical writers was an oppressive force as they were the colonial power. The Empire appeared to be very good but they had oppressive agendas. This is very true to the Indian context, where religion and politics are


\(^{42}\) Gerrie Snyman, “Identity, Power and the World of Ancient (Biblical) Text production,” 140.

very much intertwined and the oppressive forces could be seen destroying the social rubric of the society. The text provides traps and opportunities; every trap has opportunity and every opportunity has trap. The need of the hour for the church in this 21st century is to turn the traps in the biblical accounts that were developed under the pretext of empire into opportunities for giving voice to the voiceless. There are certain opportunities which are provided in the Biblical texts that show the initiatives of the Persian Empire with the help of intermediary elite. Sometimes, by presenting the empire very well at eh cost of the people in the periphery, could be seen as traps. The work of God is highly affirmed as the Bible portrays, but an attempt is made to see how the unheard and unnoticed individual or groups could be brought to the forefront. The blurring of the space has to be done so that the contribution of the unnoticed could be noticed by all and especially to the readers at the present time.
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

The Bible has been written in the context of Empires. The books of the Bible have great volumes to talk about the empires and the sociology of that time. Therefore, the researcher had a great curiosity to unravel the period of the rebuilding of the Temple during the Persian Empire and the Biblical passages in relation to it. On the one hand, this thesis in no way discards the mighty work of God behind the rebuilding of the Temple and God behind this great project; on the other hand, the agendas of Persian Empire, the elite priestly class and the influential, cannot be overlooked. S. John Boopalan opines that “Empire’s ideologies often draw on history, scrutinize and mould the history that could be or was never, making a part of the whole, and distorting what is left. The past thus calls for an analysis that will scrutinize details and verify facts sufficiently. This in turn necessitates different perspectives that will offer a counter to the supposed legitimacy of those events and happenings of the past that are used for propaganda by the empire or elite ideologies and structures.”¹ The leadership or the hegemony does not operate by forcing people against their conscious but on the contrary, describes a situation whereby the consent is actively sought for those ways of making sense of the world which fits in with the interests of the hegemonic alliance of classes. This is applied to family, education, state and law, as institutions which are considered to be impartial or neutral but are producers of knowledge, meanings and sense. Therefore, the researcher feels that socially and culturally people get engrossed with what is created, though it may have its own repercussion for sometime but people get used to it as the people having the knowledge create the meanings. The history when widely accepted becomes soaked into the popular consciousness and the dislodging of the accepted ideologies becomes a Herculean task. This study has attempted to do in-depth study taking biblical passages and the sociology of the times. The researcher through his research is attempting to join the race of many worthy predecessors who have already contributed in the area of Persian history and the rebuilding process. Though there are many who have contributed in the last few decades, the study of the rebuilding of the Temple from postcolonial and sociological perspective makes it distinct in its own worth. The research has tried to deal with some uniqueness to study the empires,

especially the Babylonian empire and initial time of the Persian Empire, because the former was instrumental in the destruction of the Temple of God and the latter for the rebuilding of the Temple. The researcher agrees with Daniel Smith that the starting point for understanding the Persian period and the society of both exilic and postexilic society is the historical reality of the catastrophe surrounding the destruction of temple in 587 / 586 BCE and the subsequent deportation from Judah and forced enslavement by the Babylonians. Therefore, in this research an attempt is made, to highlight the fall of Jerusalem and the aftermath. From that vantage point, one needs to assess the responses of minority populations in a condition of forced removal and settlement under imperial control and power. Both the empires played a crucial role in the history of the People of God but having their own agendas.

The details on the area of interest and the problem are presented in the initial few pages. It also gives the details and further clarity about the scholars dealing in this particular area of the rebuilding of the temple during the Persian period. Many prominent scholars have given their view on the Persian Empire from various perspectives for the factors behind the process of rebuilding of the second Temple. The research has tried to elaborate the sociological and postcolonial readings and how these readings will facilitate in the further movement of the thesis, is dealt in this chapter.

Temple had a prime importance in the life of the people who lived around the people of Israel. The brief analysis presented, shows how significant was the construction of the temples in Ancient West Asia. There appears to have lot of similarities with the temple building, role of the temple and the temple elites, like the priests and the scribes with the surrounding nations. There appears to be cultural and conceptual continuum between the nations, though the researcher does not agree with Herbert B. Huffmon (1983) when he coins the term “pan-Babylonianism” which assumes all ideas originated in Babylonia and moved westward. On the one hand, Semitic world constantly influenced one another. On the other hand, one cannot completely give credit to the West Asian context for the development of the Temple as there was remarkable distinctiveness too. The initial chapter facilitates our understanding through the background study of other temples in Ancient West Asia. The study has brought forth more clarity on the Biblical Temple and its proceedings that facilitated the move for Temple in Solomon’s time.

The Temple in Israel had very similar strings attached to the beliefs and practices of the people around the neighbouring nations, though it had its own distinctiveness. It was considered a place where the presence of the deity was experienced. The temple, which David wanted to build, was later built by
Solomon; the Temple gave a place to the Almighty to whom the universe belonged. Therefore the grandeur of the temple by Solomon came under strict criticism from many quarters because of the exploitative religious structure but at the same time was held high by prophets from the very beginning of its existence. The temple had politico-economic and socio-religious factors that played a vital role in the sphere of its working. The centralization of Jerusalem temple clearly affirms the fact that religion, economics and politics are the main domain for the empire to function and in the course of time becomes an oppressive factor.

The centralization of the cult led to the disintegration of the traditions which were held very dear. The empire twisted its actions for its own propaganda even at the cost of the people who were in periphery because the scribes gave a religious tone to their activities. There were two priestly classes; the Abiathar group and the Zadokite group during the time of David and the latter group became the sole dominant priestly class during Solomon’s time as they supported Solomon to ascend on the throne. Hence, the politics of domination began in a more obvious form during the time of Solomon and this problem persisted even during the destruction of the temple and even more when the elite returned from exile with the Persian decree of rebuilding the temple which is dealt in the interpretation of the Biblical texts in the succeeding chapters. Furthermore, more input is given into all the factors that are related to the building of the first temple i.e. the economic, political, religious and social reasons behind the construction of the temple. This gives the reader the wider perspective on why, how and who were the most beneficent group, once the temple came into existence. This created a great wedge between the aristocratic priestly class i.e. the Zadokite group who facilitated the royal ideology and the royal throne who complimented the throne for attaining favour. In this course, they dismantled all that acted as a threat to their oppressive ideologies. Hence, the sanctuaries that posed a threat were erased and people were left alone. As the research proceeds it highlights how these dreams and aspirations were shattered when the people had gone in exile and also when the temple was destroyed.

The fact is clear that just as the temple was necessary for the nation to come into existence, all attempts were made by the other nations to discard the authority of the gods of other nations. In the quest to disarm the God of Israel, the Babylonian empire tried their level best to destroy the temple, the people related to the temple and the elite were carried away in exile. One thing is clear that the domination of the empires were made clear by destroying the house of the deities in the Ancient West Asia. This domination was not true with the God of Israel. This was made clear by the prophets at regular intervals before the exile happened. Yahweh could not be defeated or disarmed but it was the people who failed by not living up to the standards of God. Therefore, the prophets like
Jeremiah and Isaiah confronted the people for the false security they were engrossed in. Babylonian empire left no stones unrolled to humiliate the people of God before the Ancient West Asian world. The Babylonian empire took them as slaves at different intervals and the most important was the destruction of the Temple. This led to the shattering experience of the people of God. This point of history is considered as a watershed experience where nothing and nobody was spared. The ‘nobody’s’ during the latter part of the monarchy became ‘somebody’s’ once the elite group was taken into the Babylonian captivity. The Babylonian empire did not leave the people at their own discretion but appointed governors who governed the people. Most of the prime post and resources which was not shared came to ‘the people of the land.’ The Babylonian empire dominated in all the aspects of the people of God. The research tries to throw light to make it obvious that the Babylonian Empire had their agenda for dominating the colonized. The books in the Bible are demonstrating the exilic time and this is substantiated by taking the Biblical text. The interpretation shows the extent of the damage done to the people of God. The loss they underwent in terms of losing their homeland which led to the ransacking of the theological foundations that they held for so long. The loss of Kingship, the Temple and the thorough and strategic destruction by the Babylonian Empire in its fullness is well documented. The exilic period shows the Babylonian empire’s role in confiscating the sacred vessels and defaming the people of Israel to assert the superiority of their gods and goddesses. This period instilled a great desire for the people to live with a hope to return (Jeremiah 52:13-19). The pain that the people had gone through was unrepairable and heart breaking as the text dealt from the book of Jeremiah clearly portrays. The Biblical passage clearly portrays that the trauma people went through when they were colonized is unforgettable and people recollected it even during the exile, the fate that they had met in the history. The Temple was ransacked and completely destroyed and people taken into exile, some people left behind and the others forced into Egyptian exile. The theological significance is dealt elaborately in this chapter. On the contrary, the other text from the book of Isaiah portrays that God did not leave His people, when discouragement was at its peak. God gave the people a great hope of the return. This makes the chapter very important for the understanding of the transition time and its importance for the rebuilding of the Temple during the early period of the Persian kingdom. The role of empire to present its emperor as one who is very much important for the restoration program, the designation which was not used for any other person outside the fold of the people of God is suddenly given new dimension (Isaiah 44:28-45:1).

This part of the work acts as a spring board to understand the exile under the other colonial power i.e. the Persian Empire. The next part of the research
The interpretations and the linguistic study of the various texts dealt with the interpretations of various texts that deal with the early part of the post exilic time in relation to the rebuilding of the Temple. More light is thrown to understand the dynamics of inter / intra community conflicts and tensions prevalent during the initial return that happened under the reign of Cyrus and the rebuilding process. As the research proceeds it helps in getting the glimpse of the role played by the Persian Empire and the elite group in the political, economic, socio-cultural and religious level so that both can be mutually benefitted. This critical reading gives many insights which otherwise would not clarify many of the tensions prevalent in the texts which are dealt more succinctly. This helps to see the resistance voice of the exploited people in the periphery and whose voices could go unheard otherwise, and that is explicated at various levels. The resistance voice makes it clear that not everything is good and satisfactory in the policies and decisions, which the dominant made. Though the Babylonian exile is over, still the people were not completely free because the empire exploited them for all good reasons, especially the taxes that made the situations more deteriorating. One thing gets clear, that the colonial or dominant with their own agendas will benefit the most and not the colonized or people who live in the periphery. This is facilitated even by the elite appointees or groups; most of their names appear again and again Zechariah 4: 6-10; Haggai 2:1-4; Ezekiel 44:45-46a; 48:11, whereas the people of the land or the sidelined group remained unnoticed. The elite who had their own vested interest and the colonial power will be helpful to them till the time they are helpful to the colonial power.

The biblical texts and interpretations that deal with the rebuilding of the temple are taken into consideration for understanding the Persian colonial strategic moves. The economic, political, social and religious context of the times portrays that there were lots of identity issues within and outside Yehud. Furthermore, the interpretation of the Biblical
passages illuminates the role of the prophets during the early Persian period who promoted the rebuilding process and also presenting the empire as facilitative agents (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1, Ezra 6:4). The empire and also the elite had their agendas of economic, political, religious and social gain. The press and media played a vital role during the Persian period and were mostly inclined towards the dominant because the dominant pump resources into, and hence, the powerful is projected with flowery shades. Hence, the study becomes very relevant and contextual for the 21st century. Many times few voices of the elite represented the whole group of people. This is evident in our political, economic, social, religious and even the cultural situations, everyday one can see the painful implication on clever ways of the political and religious leaders, built on wickedness, pride of power and money. People are divided by the conscious divisive ways of the wicked and unjust rulers and elite class, fanning into flames, passion of communalism for grasping power. The world is witnessing the unhealthy alliances of the rich and powerful in the political, religious and economic front to silence all the cries for freedom and survival of the people who live in the periphery. This century is witnessing the distortion of facts and truth to sell particular image of the nation – a script that is being sold to deceive the millions. The voices in the periphery go unheard hence the sociological and postcolonial studies help us to incline to the voices hidden behind the more audible voices. The people of the land had a resistance voice for the whole project saying ‘this is not the time’ in Haggai 1 and also the dissidence voice in Isaiah 66: 1-3. The names of the elite are highlighted whereas the people who were in the periphery are left alone. The role and the place assigned and the allegations mentioned in Ezekiel 40:45-46a and 44:10-16, clearly affirms the fact of sidelining the marginalized. Therefore, these deliberations does help us to focus our attention, so that the space may not turn from center to periphery or from periphery to center but it will help to blur the spaces and be sensitive to the various voices. The social times of the rebuilding of the temple contributed to the colonial domination because the people of God were still under the reign of Persian Empire. So the Empire always used the knowledge and the skills of the elites to facilitate what was best for the empire in economic, religious, social, cultural and political level. The dominant always took the lead to decide and give voice for the voiceless. The authors or their paymasters had access to the official public memory as the text mentioned in the book of Ezekiel. This, they then, changed to suit them better in a changed socio-political context, the group name is mentioned and certain instances are mentioned which has no relation to what is been projected. Hence power, economics, religion, knowledge, social and cultural interconnectivity needs to be evaluated with microscopic lenses. Many a time, the voices of the people in periphery go unheard, and hence the sociological
and postcolonial studies help us to incline our ears to the voices hidden behind the more audible voices.

The Persian Empire had a well-planned and strategic move to have their dominion well established on the colonized world. The work and reforms of the elite who were appointed by the Persian Colonial power kept the domination and the loyalty of the Empire intact (Ezra 6:4f) and they fared well to their times, presenting that the empire has helped in building but the real people who provided were the common mass who paid lot of taxes in different forms. They shared their concerns of how the religious and social factors had direct repercussions on the political and economic life of Yehud. The Persian Empire to make a secure base in Yehud transacted human and economic resources for the rebuilding program so that they could get Yehud’s assured loyalty. The elite were used as intermediaries to promote the empire’s plan. Even the benefits to some extent fostered the plans and agendas of the elite than the people in the periphery whose voices went unheard. In the book of Isaiah chapters 56-66 the universality of all nations projects God’s universal motifs thus portraying the inclusiveness of all people irrespective of region, religion, caste or sex. The dealt passage of Isaiah 66: 1, 2, makes it clear that there is a voice that wants to blur the centre and periphery by affirming that God does not need and the word used intensifies the question, such a house does not exist and cannot exist. Hence the voiceless should be heard, their efforts that had gone unnoticed should be brought into light and an attempt is made to see the other side of the coin which is not illumined. The blurring of the differences between the powerful should happen, to give voice to thousands who had no voices. There are chances that the elite who had the power of knowledge at times manipulate as per the voice of the Empire. The aristocratic priestly group with the agenda of the empire had tried to codify the law that would suit the dominant to silence the voiceless (Ezekiel 44: 45-46a; 44:10ff; 48:11). The dominant never control the stage absolutely but their wishes and desires prevail. The elite silenced the voices of the oppressed by using the knowledge and by speaking on behalf of the unheard. The elite spoke in lines and gestures that comforted the dominant colonial power (Ezra 6:4). The same could have happened to the intermediaries who were appointed by the colonial power. The writings were costly affair as it required time, money skills, motivation and the writings took place at or near the center of power and therefore presented with extra pomp and glory (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). Therefore, they could have written to a great extent what their paymaster liked, without endangering the power of their paymaster. The temple provided economic impetus to the province along with political identity and cohesion, and therefore the urge to build the temple among the elite and the colonial power is seen on the rise. It was a symbol for the people, as well as for Persian rule and its beneficence. Hence in the biblical
text taken for interpretation shows the exaggeration in the size mentioned in Ezra 6:3. The writer takes space to project the empire as the one who were funding but the truth is not affirmed that it was the poor or the marginalized that were paying to the treasury in the form of taxes. The intra community tension between the priest and the Levites that is reflected in the interpretation of Ezra 3:10 is a matter of concern. It was Xerses’ and Artaxerses’ foreign policies and strategic agendas that depleted the resources of the colonies by extravagant tax system. Ezra and Nehemiah facilitated, to promote the plans of the colonial power. The new imperial policies increased the social control through the appointed governors. It has to be understood that once the governors who are appointed by the imperial powers, will always have the tendency to cater and facilitate to the agendas of the imperial plans though they may facilitate the good of the people. The sixth chapter discusses the work and reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah who were appointed by the Persian Colonial power to keep the domination and the loyalty of the Empire intact and they fared well. The Persian Empire to make a secure base in Yehud transacted human and economic resources to have Yehud’s assured loyalty. Even the benefits to some extent were fostering the plans and agendas of the powerful than the people in the periphery. Thus, the elite had good intentions which the researcher does not negate but the sociological reasons and the postcolonial reading give the researcher a space to see how the governors and the influential priestly class could have facilitated the agendas of the colonial power to a great extent. It is the voice of the elite which is heard as representing the voiceless and those at the periphery. These readings help to give voice to the voiceless and blur the space so that all could be given equal worth.

The implications for the Church and the Indian context are divided into economic, religious, social, political, missiological and hermeneutical dimensions. The early postexilic age under the Persian colonial power controlled all the aspects of life. The Social setting clearly demarcates the conflict that took place between the elite group that returned and the people who were left behind. The Persian Empire presented by the biblical writers was an oppressive force as they were the dominant. The Empire appeared to be very good but they had oppressive agendas. Religion and Politics was intertwined so well during the early time of the Persian Period. Great similarity could be seen in the Indian context, where religion and politics are very much intertwined and the oppressive forces could be seen destroying the social rubric of the society. The text provides traps and opportunities, every trap has opportunity and every opportunity has trap. The need of the hour for the Church in this 21st century is to turn the traps in the biblical accounts that were developed under the pretext of empire into opportunities for giving voice to the voiceless. There are certain opportunities which are provided in the Biblical texts that show the initiatives of
the Persian Empire with the help of intermediary elite and these could be seen as traps.

The research concludes that the sociological and the postcolonial readings help us to understand the economic, political, religious, social and cultural matrix of the time of the empires. Without addressing the sociology of empires in a wider outlook as mentioned above from different angles, the needs and motivations of the Persian Empire cannot be extracted more objectively.

The Babylonian empire and the Persian Empire played a vital role in the history of the People of God especially from the Temple’s perspective, i.e. the destruction and the rebuilding of the Temple. The Persian Empire had their own agenda, the elite class had their own agendas as the intermediaries and everyone was in the race to fulfil their own agendas. The temple in the Ancient West Asia had lots of land and people attached to it; therefore the desire of rebuilding was the ultimate agenda. This was not just limited to the people of Israel but to all the colonized nations of that time as the Cyrus Cylinder portrays.

The Indian society too, takes pride in temple centered life and the elite priestly class stringed to it in all religions, existing side by side. Huge areas of land all around the country are under the control of temples, Mutts and caste-feudal lords who have confiscated large area of public property. Though, there are many laws to confiscate the public property still the powerful enjoys and the laws are given deaf ear as the powerful dominates. Land grabbing is at random. The people in the margins and the most vulnerable are deprived and suffer land alienation which in turn led them and even presently leading many, into grave debts. These people become the most exploited group as they turn into agricultural labourers in rural and cheap labourers in the cities. The local people are made ‘no people’ before the dominant paradigm of development, in which the rich and the multinational companies are benefited the most.

The Dawn of Globalization, Privatization, and Liberalization accentuates the economic mobility of the nations, thus, providing a larger space for the International companies (Multinational and Transnational companies) to intrude into the local market through investment for the economic development of both the state and foreign markets. This new phenomenon constructs an innovative allusion with the local structure where the dominant socio-economic forces utilize maximum fruits of those economic developments. In Indian contexts, the so-called dominant caste utilizes the new phenomenon coming up with investments by controlling the local market. The World Bank and the IMF seem to dominate by the way of giving credit. HIPC is a joint initiative launched in September 1996 by these two agencies. It recognizes that many heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCds) continue to have difficulty in paying their external debt-
service obligation. It is presented as if the dominant want to help the poor but indirectly they make the people in the margin more dependent, just like the Persians who came in the forefront to help in the rebuilding of the Temple but their motive was to make the maximum benefits in all the areas of their domain. These countries who are receiving the credit go on paying, and pay more than what is borrowed and yet still owe as much as they had borrowed. The credit is too freely available everywhere and many are in debt beyond their ability to repay. A fifth of the world's people are suffering because of unpayable debt. This was very true with the colonized under the Persian kingdom, the help extended to the people in Yehud made them more vulnerable to the whims and fancy of the empire, through the strategic intermediaries of elite. The people were not slaves in strict sense but they were not free either.

The Christian Church needs to be vigilant over the signs of time and come up with its theological treasures to reconstruct responsible relationships in society. Even after 60 plus years of our Independence there is a widespread deprivation and active ‘marginalization’ of a vast majority. Economically they are exploited, socially they are discriminated, politically they are rendered powerless and culturally they live in silence. Such is the predicament of the majority of the population of our country. The Church too needs to demonstrate the Gospel values not siding with dominant and exploitative group who through their knowledge and resources make people ‘no people.’ The Indian Church needs to set an example in an appropriate manner in dealing with land and other property management. This world and especially the land of India, poverty continues to rise, financial crises remain entrenched. The natural world suffers the increasingly dire consequences of climate change; degradation of the ecology is rampant. Societies struggle to respond to catastrophic diseases and natural calamities. Religious fundamentalism and extremism expands and grows ever stronger. Minorities are targeted, threatened, persecuted. Violence prevails across in South Asia and also globally. No countries are exempted, the powerful always dominates. The powerful propagates very good picture of the dominant and their new religious values, which curtails the religious freedom of the powerless.

Even in this situation the researcher sees a ray of hope at the end of the research. Though there are difficulties, conflicts, powerful exerting their dominance and things are all adverse. On the contrary, the church should not give up but continue her steadfastness and legitimate creative popular of resistance: resistance driven by love, not by hatred and revenge. Freedom and self-identity is the ambition of every human being, no one likes to be subject to any kind of oppression. The main reason for most of the turning points in the history of the world was the quest for freedom and identity. On the other hand, the church in this 21st century should also keep in mind the Kairos, it is an opposition concept
for all oppressive regimes: its message, after all, is fundamentally a message of hope. Rifat Odeh Kassis writes that the "Kairos believes in people’s will and advocates nonviolent means to end the oppression. This hopeful, peaceful position is far more threatening to the oppressive and dominant forces than anything else." If this is kept in mind, the Church as a miniature of God’s kingdom will help to build the world in God’s perspective and a better place to live with all our differences and limitations within the micro and macro level.

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Limitation and further scope of Research

The researcher is restricted to the initial return under the Persian Empire, though more text could have been dealt from the book of Nehemiah and also from the book of Malachi. The space does not allow venturing more in details into the book of Ezra and Nehemiah. Hence there is a great scope to deal these books with a juxtaposed reading and throw more light on the empire intervention that could illumine why the Persian Empire intervened in the rebuilding process of both the Temple and the restoration of the broken walls.
Appendix I

THE CYRUS CYLINDER


One line destroyed,

...[r]ims (of the world)...a weakling had been installed as the enu of his country; [the correct images of the gods he removed from their thrones, imi]tations he ordered to place upon them. A replica of the temple Esagila he had...for Ur and the other sacred cities inappropriate rituals...daily he blabbered [incorrect prayers]. He (furthermore) interrupted in a fiendish was the regular offerings, he...he established with the sacred cities. The worship of Marduk, king of the gods, he [cham]igned into abomination; daily he used to do evil against his (i.e. Marduk's) city... He [tormented] its [inhabitant]s with corvée-work (literally, a yoke) without relief; he ruined them all. Upon their complaints the lord of all the gods became terribly angry and [he departed from] their region; (also) the (other) gods living among them left their mansions, angry that he had brought (them) into Babylon. (But) Marduk [who cares for]...on account of (the fact that) the sanctuaries of all their settlements were in ruins and the inhabitants of Sumer and Akkad had become like (living dead), turned back (his face); [his] an[ger] [abated] and he had mercy (upon them). He scanned and looked (through) all the countries, searching for a righteous ruler willing to lead him (i.e. Marduk) (in the annual procession). (Then) he pronounced the name of Cyrus, king of Anshan, pronounced [his] name to be(come) the ruler of all the world. He made the Guti country and all the Manda-hordes bow in submission to his (i.e. Cyrus') feet. And he (Cyrus) has always endeavored to treat the black-headed (people) whom he(Marduk) made him conquer according to justice. Marduk, the great lord, a protector of his people/worshippers, beheld with pleasure his (i.e. Cyrius') good deeds and his upright mind (lit. heart) (and therefore) ordered him to march against his city Babylon. He made him set out on the road to Babylon, going at his side like a real friend. His widespread troops – their number like that of the water of a river could not be established – strolled
along, their weapons packed away. Without any battle, he made them enter his town Babylon, sparing Babylon any calamity. He delivered into his (i.e. Cyrus') hands Nabonidus, the king who did not worship him (i.e. Marduk). All the inhabitants of Babylon as well as the entire country of Sumer and Akkad, princes and governors (included), bowed to him (Cyrus) and kissed his feet, jubilant that he (had received) the kingship, and with shining faces. Happily they greeted him as a master through whose help they had come (again) to life from death (and) had all been spared damage and disaster, and they worshipped his (very) name.

I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, legitimate king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four rims (of the earth), son of Cambyses, son of Cyrus, great king, King of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan, of a family (that) always (exercised) kingship; whose rule Bel and Nabu love, whom they want as king to please their hearts.

When I entered Babylon as a friend and (when) I established the seat of the government in the palace of the ruler under jubilation and rejoicing, Marduk, the great lord, [induced] the magnanimous inhabitants of Babylon [to love me], and I was daily endeavoring to worship him. My numerous troops walked around in Babylon in peace; I did not allow anyone to terrorize (any place) of the [country of Sumer] and Akkad. I strove for peace in Babylon and in all his (other) sacred cities. As to the inhabitants of Babylon, [who] against the will of the gods [had/were...], I abolished] the corvée (lit. yoke) that was against their (social) standing. I brought relief to their dilapidated housing, (thus) putting an end to their complaints. Marduk, the great lord, was well pleased with my deeds and sent friendly blessings to me, Cyrus, the king who worshipped him, to Cambyses, my son, the offspring of [my] loins, as well as to all my troops, and we [praised] his great [godhead] joyously, standing before him in peace.

All the kings of the entire world from the Upper to the Lower Sea, those who are seated in throne rooms, (those who) live in other [types of buildings as well as] all the kings of the West land living in tents, brought their heavy tributes and kissed my feet in Babylon. (As to the region) from...as far as Asshur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the towns Zamban, Me-Turnu, Der as well as the region of the Gutians, I returned to (the) sacred cities on the other side of the

Tigris, whose settlements had been established of old (or abandoned previously) I for a long time, the images that (used) to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I (also) gathered their (former) inhabitants and returned (to them) their habitations. Furthermore, I resettled upon the command of Marduk, the great lord, all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus had brought into Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed in their (former) chapels/sanctuaries, the places that make them happy.
May all the gods whom I have resettled in their sacred cities ask daily Bel and Nabu for a long life for me and may they recommend me (to him); to Marduk, my lord, may they thus say this: ‘Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses his son...’ ...all of them I settled in a peaceful place...ducks and doves,... I endeavored to fortify/repair their dwelling places... 
Six lines destroyed.

Appendix 2

Chronology
Kings of Ancient Mesopotamia

**The Neo-Babylonian Dynasty**
1. Nabopolassar 625–605
2. Nebuchadnezzar II 604–562
3. Evil-Merodach 561–560
4. Neriglissar 559–556
5. Labaši-Marduk 556 (three months)
6. Nabonidus 555–539

**The Achaemenid Rulers**
1. Cyrus II 559–530
2. Cambyses II 529–522
3. Bardija 522 (six months)
4. Nebuchadnezzar III 522 (two months)
5. Nebuchadnezzar IV 521 (three months)
6. Darius I 522–486
7. Xerxes I 486–465
8. Artaxerxes I 465–424
9. Darius II 424–405
10. Artaxerxes II  405–359
11. Artaxerxes III  358–338
12. Artaxerxes IV  338–336
13. Darius III  336–331

**The Macedonian Dynasty**
Alexander III  330–323

**Egyptian Pharaohs**

**Dynasty XXVI**
1. Necho II  610–595
2. Psammetichus II  595–589
3. Apries (Hofra)  589–570
4. Amasis  570–526
5. Psammetichus III  526–525

**Dynasty XXVII**
1. Cambyses II  525–522
2. Darius I  522–486
3. Xerxes I  486–465
5. Darius II  424–405
6. Artaxerxes II  405–359

**Dynasty XXVIII**
1. Amyrtaeus  404–399

**Dynasty XXIX**
1. Nepherites I  399–393
2. Psammuthis  393
3. Achoris  393–380
4. Nepherites II  380

**Dynasty XXX**
1. Nectanebo I  380–362
2. Tachos 362–360
3. Nectanebo II 360–343

Dynasty XXXI—Second Persian Period
1. Artaxerxes III 343–338
2. Artaxerxes IV 338–336
3. Darius III 336–332
4. Khababash 333 (last known indigenous Egyptian ruler)

The Macedonian Dynasty
Alexander III 332–323
Ptolemy I Soter 323–282
Ptolemy II Philadelphos 282–246
Ptolemy III Euergetes 246–222

Appendix 3
The Tension within the community and the role of the elite for promoting the Persian Empire

1. The portrayal of Mixed Marriage in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

Finally, the text from both Ezra and Nehemiah suggest that the problem and the solution took slightly different form, for Ezra than for Nehemiah.\(^2\) Ezra’s policies

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\(^2\) Ezra 9–10 narrates the story of the Persian-period community’s mandating of a divorce and expulsion of all foreign women from its midst. Three basic types of explanations in particular can be identified: the divorces and expulsion were mandated because (1) the community was attempting to prevent widespread apostasy caused by these foreign women; (2) the community was hoping clearly to define its ethnic identity; and (3) there were economic and / or political factors that would benefit some or all of the community should these women be forced to leave. Two questions will be at the forefront here: did the editor of Ezra 9–10 hide the community’s real motives for the expulsion of the foreign
women behind an ideological veil of piety, and do we employ an appropriate understanding of ideology when we limit the rationale for this expulsion to a social action solely in reasons of economic and political expediency? When it comes to answering these questions, it will give reasons to argue that anthropological theory can again save the day and point us toward a helpful understanding of ideology and ideological motivation. David Janzen, “Scholars, Witches, Ideologues, and What the Text said: Ezra 9–10 and Its Interpretation” in Approaching Yehud: New approaches to the Study of the Persian period, ed. Jon L. Berquist, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007): 49, 50.

Geertz refers to the view that ideology is “a mask and a weapon” that advances particular political and economic agendas by institutionalizing a party’s or class’s view of reality both as the “interest theory” of ideology and, less kindly, as “superficial utilitarianism,” Clifford Geertz, “Ideology as a Cultural System” in The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays, ed. Clifford Geertz, (New York: Harper Collins, 1973): 201-202; David Janzen, “Scholars, Witches, Ideologues, and What the Text said: Ezra 9–10 and Its Interpretation,” 67.

The hiphil of ישב is also used in reference to the community’s actions in 10:10, 12, 12, and 17. While it is often translated as “married” rather than “cause to dwell,” the usual Hebrew verbs that are associated with marriage ( נושא, הוה, and התן) are used in 9:1, 12, 14; 10:44. The sense of this verb in this context is somewhat different especially as nowhere else could ישב in the hiphil refer to marriage. It is easiest to take it at face value: the men have been charged with causing foreign women to live in a place where they should not. David Janzen, “Scholars, Witches, Ideologues, and What the Text said: Ezra 9–10 and Its Interpretation,” 60.

Blenkinsopp notes that the Achaemenid employed endogamy in order to preserve patrimony. He is quick to point out that this is not to imply that the Persians would have approved of the tactic of mass divorce followed in Ezra 9–10, but he does at least hold it up as one possible impetus behind this movement Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Social Context of the “Outsider Woman” in Proverbs 1–9” in Biblica 72 (1991): 472–473. On the other hand, Smith-Christopher argues that the Persians could have supported the intermarriage of leaders of the Jerusalem community with leaders of the surrounding groups and so have been partly responsible for the situation that the community attempts to correct in Ezra 9–10. See Daniel Smith-Christopher, “The Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13: A Study of the Sociology of the Post-Exilic Judaean Community” in Second Temple Studies, vol. II, Temple and Community in the Persian Period, ed. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Kent Harold Richards, JSOTSupp 175 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994): 261–264. Blenkinsopp and Smith-Christopher thus use a similar point (the Persians intermarried) in order to come to two different conclusions: Blenkinsopp argues that the Persians may have encouraged the local leadership in Yehud to marry amongst itself (influence that could have led to the expulsion); and Smith-Christopher arguing that the Persians may have encouraged the local leadership in Yehud to marry outside of its own group in the first place. It is well to take a middle path that the Persians might have encouraged in the beginning as part of their agendas of making everybody comfortable, hence even the priest who wanted to marry for upward mobility and later forbade, Refer to Joseph Blenkinsop, Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988); Joseph Blenkinsop, “The Judaean Priesthood during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: A Hypothetical reconstruction” in CBQ 60 (1988):25–43, points to two studies that make this point: Clarisse Herrenschmidt, “Notes sur la parente chez les Perses au debut de l’empire Achemenide” in Achaemenid History II: The Greek Sources, eds.
reflect the priestly attitudes and ideologies as he was a priest and is thus a representative of the priestly traditions that include Leviticus and Ezekiel. For Ezra, the concern focuses on Yehud’s leadership. Yehudite men, including priests, Levites and officials, have married from the neighbouring areas (Ezra 9: 1-2; 10: 2-4). The problem focuses on the elites, and there is indication that the inheritance of the children is at least part of the problem (Ezra 9: 12). Ezra depicts a harmonious solution ‘to isolate the assimilationist....’ Ezra’s orientation reflects the priestly writer’s obsessions with “separations” between pure and impure. Such concern with separation and identity maintenance in much of the Priestly legislation is consistent with a group under stress. This use of Hebrew term (bādal) בָדָל is a key to discovering the Priestly theology of a “culture of resistance”

Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amélie Kuhrt, (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1987): 53–67; Martin Schwartz, “The Old Eastern Iranian World View according to the Avesta” in The Cambridge History of Iran, ed. Ilya geshevitch, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1985): 655–656. There is no evidence that the Persians encouraged this practice among the provincial leadership, even for reasons of political expediency rather than cultural habit. Kenneth Hoglund argues that the Persians attempted to keep particular ethnic groups separated into clearly defined units in the interests of ameliorating the flow of taxes into imperial coffers, K. Hoglund, “The Achaemenid Context,” pp. 65–68. In the specific case of the community in Yehud, he concludes, “[m]embership in the assembly was contingent on one’s ethnic identity as a ‘Yehudian’ or ‘Jew.’ Loss of such ethnic distinction carried with it the possible diminution of collective privileges or property and subsequent impoverishment of the assembly.” K. Hoglund, “The Achaemenid Context,” 67. The community, he argues, had a stake in clearly delineating its ethnic boundaries in order to receive Persian sponsorship. However, Hoglund’s argument lacks evidence that would show such a requirement of ethnic purity to be imperial policy. Hoglund does mention an account in Herodotus of a deported ethnic group (apparently) remaining together for some time, and he makes mention of four of the Persepolis Fortification tablets that refer to rations being given to work groups indicated by ethnicity. All that tells us, however, is that in one case a deported group remained together and that in some cases the Persians dispensed rations to work groups that they designated by national origin. We do not see an empire-wide program to promote intermarriage. Refer to David Janzen, “Scholars, Witches, Ideologues, and What the Text said: Ezra 9–10 and Its Interpretation” in Approaching Yehud: New approaches to the Study of the Persian period, 58, 59.


4 Joseph Blenkinsopp, Ezra-Nehemiah, 193.

(or a ‘spirituality of Resistance’) which uses a religious term to accomplish social ends, namely the avoidance of social ‘pollution’.6

The Book of Nehemiah presents the problem in a different way. Yehudite men have married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab (Nehemiah 13:23). On the other hand, Ezra deals with all foreign women. The more specific problem is that the children of such marriages speak only the languages of their mothers (Nehemiah 13:24), and would not be capable of assuming the prominent leadership position. He then offers the problems Solomon faced because of different marriage alliances. He indicates that the problems may involve foreign complicity of other nations intervening and thus creating a threat to the empire and may create a rift within issues of colonial policy (Nehemiah 13:25-27). Nehemiah does not suggest divorce and thus has a different view point when compared to Ezra in the solution as well as in the precise definition of the problem. For Nehemiah, the problem is one of native speech and foreign collusion, and the problem has to be solved by the cessation of intermarriage.7 Hoglund suggests that the opposition to intermarriage of both Ezra and Nehemiah is best understood in the context of a Persian policy of establishing ethnic enclaves throughout the empire. This policy included the restructuring of traditionally independent villages into collectives which were administered and taxed as a unit.8 According to Hoglund, the concern for religious and ethnic purity,9 which runs throughout the Ezra and Nehemiah traditions, has as its root the economic viability of the golah community, which perceived itself as ‘slaves’ living under the yoke of the empire.10 In the comment on Nehemiah 9: 36- 37, one of the most significant

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complaints against the Persians can be noted. Holmgren also indicates the resentment and unrest mentioned, “To be ‘almost free’ means that you are still a slave. Under the Persian rule the Jews were ‘almost free’.” This is further evident in the phrase, qahal haggolah, ‘assembly of the gohali’ which is ‘suggestive of a corporate identity not definable by a territorial or political referent’ - that is, it is a socio-economic rather than a political term. The concern for purity of marriages, then, is not just a concern for religious purity but is rooted in the community’s claim to land. A mixture of ethnicity would undermine the community’s political, economic and religious survival. Tamara Eskenazi has argued in support of the view that inheritance was a major issue of concern in the postexilic community, particularly noting that women could inherit land, as shown in the Elephantine Papyri. The concern would be to solidify political control and economic security within the ruling stratum of Jerusalem society. Thus, even though the question of intermarriage was posed in theological terms, imperial concerns were always behind the actions of both reformers. The theological concerns in Ezra-Nehemiah could be viewed as a means of promoting Persian imperial policy. Jon Berquist sees that marrying outside the class was also an issue. The aristocratic landowners had a chief concern i.e. to centralize their own control over the land and the wealth. This required an emphasis on marrying within the class. Hence the land and resources could be kept within the aristocracy. Perhaps Ezra’s confrontation refers not only to foreign women per se but to women who inhabited the countryside.

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17 Since Ezra 9.1, surprisingly, does not divulge the precise ethnic identity of the women, and hence the kind of ‘stranger’ that they were, one can postulate several possible referents for these ‘peoples of the lands’. On the terminology for groups in Israel in the post-exilic era, see J. P. Weinberg, “The Am Ha-Aretz of the 6-4 Century BCE” in *The Citizen-Temple Community*, JSOTSupp 151 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992): 62-74. Refer to Tamara C. Eskenazi and Eleanore P. Judd, “Marriage to a Stranger in Ezra 9-10” in *Second Temple*
of Yehud and were thus socially distant from the aristocracy classes of Jerusalem and Yehudite elites.\footnote{The description given is worth noting, ‘The Hebrew in Ezra 9.1, however, is more complicated. The JPS Tanakh renders it more accurately: ‘The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the land whose abhorrent practices are like those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites’. The interpretative difference comes from recognizing that the כַּתָּן עֲבָתָהּ מִלַּכְנָנִי indicates a simile which leaves the actual ethnic background of the women unspecified; they are not necessarily Canaanites, Hittites and the rest, but rather like them.’} The concept of Hebrew term for “separation” is more found in the cultic settings as mentioned in 1 Chronicles 12:9; 25:1; Deuteronomy 4:41; 19:2,7, Leviticus 20:24-26. But the term becomes more significant in the Persian period texts especially Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra 6: 21; 9:1, 10:11; Nehemiah 9:2; 10:29, this usage is with the sense of purity among the social groups. This use is particularly evident in the use of the term in Ezra-Nehemiah to describe the separation of the pure Israel from foreigners, especially foreign wives. The polemic against foreign wives in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah had as part of its motivation an attempt to control the inter-tribal connections of the people of Judaean territory. This control by means of divorce would weaken the links between the ‘holy seed’ and the ‘peoples of the lands’ (Ezra 9:2) and this will lead to the breaking up of


Ezra 9:1 (NRSV) After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, “The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.” This passage shows the list of the people from various ethnic backgrounds which focuses on the old “people of the land” that had inhabited Palestine and especially the Jerusalem area since before the settlement and who continues to be problematic. Jon L. Berquist, \textit{Judaism in the Persian Shadow: A Social and Historical approach}, 118. Hence this makes sense that the families are affected, and the economic effects of depletion would further increase if the scarce resources are shared further with other regional governments.

See also H. G. M. Williamson, ‘(they) have not kept themselves separate from the peoples of the lands, but have acted according to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites’ in \textit{Ezra, Nehemiah}, 125. It is true that women from some of these nations appear in Nehemiah 13: 23-24 as wives of Judahites. But it is methodologically unsound to suppose (automatically) that Ezra and Nehemiah face an identical situation, especially given the fact that they take differing measures to combat the ‘problem’. Each case needs to be examined in its own context prior to comparing their function in the final form of the book. The literary and historical issues need to be kept distinct. Our concern here is with plausible historical reality. Refer to Tamara C. Eskenazi and Eleanore P. Judd, “Marriage to a Stranger in Ezra 9-10,” 268.
territorial holdings. The smaller the territory controlled by the ideological masters of Jerusalem the more easily controllable it would be. This could be a very well planned move of the Persian Empire to promote though; it’s not well documented evidence in terms of textual strategies of Second Temple politics.20

On the other hand there is dissent voice that these foreigners are not to be rejected. This is a protest on the part of certain members of the community-those who have clear sympathies to the traditional tales of Ruth and Jonah. Hence, the priestly concern should not become very obsessive.21

2. The Sociology of Mixed Marriage22

Ezra is very worried about the marriage ethnically outside as reported in Ez 9: 1. Robert Merton’s widely noted sociological definition of endogamy: “Endogamy is a device which serves to maintain social prerogatives and immunities within a social group. It helps prevent the diffusion of power, authority and preferred status to persons who are not affiliated with a dominant group. It serves further to accentuate and symbolize the ‘reality’ of the group by setting it off against other discriminable social units.” 23 Charles H. Kraft, defines endogamy marriage within one’s own group (clan, tribe, town).24 Ezra is very sure of the purity and this could be because of his priestly background, but the issue is that there is no voice for the voiceless, like the women and the children who are the most vulnerable. They are given voice which dehumanizes them.

The powerful wanted to keep the power and in no way wanted it to be diffused or decentralized. It was the priest and the people who came from the exile

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who decided for inter marriage\textsuperscript{25} and now the women folk and children are at the receiving end. Merton continues to formulate theoretically by focusing on “exchange theory” and the related “hypergamy” theory.\textsuperscript{26}

2.1. Hypergamy Theory

Ernest Porterfield works with Levi-Strauss’s idea that marriages are an effective control of human commodities, and that they are “exchanged” in order to gain certain advantages. This “exchange” basis for the analysis of mixed marriages has led to the so-called hypergamy theory. The advocates of the hypergamy theory contend that success- or status-minded males from low status groups will attempt to “marry up” among females of the majority or higher status groups.\textsuperscript{27} Males from the majority, higher status groups usually do not need to legitimate mixed liaisons with formal marriage but have tended to keep mistresses instead. On one hand, this

\textsuperscript{25} Moshe David, “Mixed Marriage in Western Jewry: Historical Background to the Jewish Response” in \textit{JSS} 10 (1968):178. He clarifies the terms \textit{intermarriage} and \textit{mixed marriage}, which are interchangeably used. \textit{Outmarriage} applies to both intermarriage and mixed marriage. Mixed marriage means marriage between a Jew and the non-Jew in which neither partner renounces his or her religious faith and do not regard the differences as obstacle to the totality of their marital aspirations. Intermarriage is the one, where one of the partners adopts the faith of the other before marriage on the attempt to achieve a religious unity in the family. It is clear that both were prevalent in Yehud, but the fear that the children will adopt the religion and language of the mother was seen as the great threat not only to the religion of the Israel but even to the empire.


\textsuperscript{27} In Indian context lot of honour killings take place, in most of the cases it’s a high caste girl marrying to a low caste boy. This has led to many couples being killed by their relatives and by the dominant caste people. One such example is mentioned in an article “Uncle murders girl, boyfriend in Dharwad” in \textit{The Times of India}, Bangalore, (Monday, September, 15, 2014), 1.
point may be open to question\textsuperscript{28} but on the other hand, this is to a great extent a reliable truth in mostly all societies, because almost all societies have witnessed such marriages, at different times. Gutiérrez rightly puts the idea that, human action must be understood as expressing an underlying potential and it becomes only real through expression in action and for him, expressivism is fundamental.\textsuperscript{29} So the men were blamed for their irresponsible actions and the demand to nullify the marriage left the sinful action more heinous because the Outmarriage could be intermarriage or mixed marriage. The action demanded by Ezra, to a great extent is justified on what happened during the pre-exilic kings but the real issue of hypergamy leaves an important question, what about the unheard voices of the vulnerable? Should there be some amicable solutions for the ones whom the men have already married to? There seems some haste in trying to keep the group boundary for the sake of the empire.

\subsection*{2.2. Group Boundary Maintenance}

Norwegian anthropologist, Frederick Barth has called “boundary maintenance”\textsuperscript{30} and Bernard Siegel refers to as “defence structuring.”\textsuperscript{31} Some sociologists prefer to see prohibitions against mixed marriage as a sociopsychological indicator of worries by a group for their own identity and cultural survival.\textsuperscript{32} Glick notes that early immigrant men are often more willing to marry local women until the immigrant group can establish itself as a viable community.\textsuperscript{33} Once the pressure of

being a disadvantaged group eases, endogamous marriage becomes more common. This approach to mixed-marriage analysis also raises interesting questions for understanding the biblical community, such as the possible breakdown of communal boundaries and socialization (until Ezra and Nehemiah attempted to highlight them).34

The books of Ezra-Nehemiah have apologetic aims, including the desire to present the Persian kings and government as acting under the divine guidance of Yahweh to support the Jewish community and temple. 35 The text dealt for interpretation from Isaiah 44:28; 45:1 gives importance to Cyrus with terminologies which are unknown to the people of God for a non-Jew. The comparison with the Cyrus Cylinder mentioned in p. 275, clearly portrays the name of Marduk rather than Yahweh. The importance, the Persian Empire and Cyrus got is beyond match. Another text from Ezra 6:4, affirms with great authenticity that the expense for the rebuilding will be taken care from the Persian treasury but whether it really happened is a big question. The writers and compilers would naturally use any authentic documentation to demonstrate this, but it is not inconceivable that they might also use doctored documents or reinterpret matters to the advantage of their own viewpoint and this could be clearly observed in the interpretation from the book of Ezekiel 44:45-46a; 44:10-16; 48:11; Zechariah 4:6-10, where few names and group are given importance and mentioned, whereas the contribution and importance of others are at stake and even at times degraded. Thus, the information of the books must be sifted critically and not simply taken at face value. Alleged favour from Persian officials in particular must be scrutinized with care. This is an elementary point but one seemingly forgotten in some discussions of the subject. As M. Dandamaev and A. Lukonin have noted, there are ‘no grounds for speaking of a special benevolence towards Judaism on the part of the Persian kings.’36

3. High Priest

The book nowhere states that Ezra was high priest. Because no high priest is named in the Ezra Memoir, however, one might assume that Ezra held this office. Indeed, he takes on many of the functions that one would expect the high priest to carry out: settling the issue of mixed marriages, reading the law, declaring a religious festival.37 Furthermore there is no mention of anyone else as high priest. There is neither the list of high priests in which Ezra’s name is mentioned (e.g. Nehemiah 12:10-11, 22, 26), nor is he said to be high priest in any of the later Ezra legends. It seems unlikely that his status would have been suppressed in the tradition in the same way that reference to him as governor was hidden.38

4. Governor

It is almost universally agreed that Nehemiah held the post of governor. Not surprisingly, some have proposed—or simply assumed—that Ezra was also governor.39 Although no reference to such an office for Ezra is made in the text, it might have been suppressed in the narrative, just as it seems to have been for Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel.40 The decisions Ezra allegedly made fit well to the role of governor, in particular, intervening to force those with mixed marriages to divorce and having the right to set up judges. Also, no governor seems to be around during his activity.

The sociology behind the conflict tradition is very much present in the initial time of the temple building and the elite were seeking to identify and analyze relationship among social groups that compete with one another for priority and influence. It examines the ways in which these competing groups asserts their influence, how they protect themselves against the interests of others, how they

relate to the established order. Ultimately the conflict tradition suggest that social systems achieve balance through systems of constraints, that is, they impose a certain level of order on the various groups that constitute the society.\textsuperscript{41}

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