

# The Fall of Jerusalem and the Rise of the Torah

Edited by  
PETER DUBOVSKÝ,  
DOMINIK MARKL, and  
JEAN-PIERRE SONNET

*Forschungen  
zum Alten Testament  
107*

---

**Mohr Siebeck**

# Forschungen zum Alten Testament

Edited by

Konrad Schmid (Zürich) · Mark S. Smith (Princeton)  
Hermann Spieckermann (Göttingen)

107





# The Fall of Jerusalem and the Rise of the Torah

Edited by

Peter Dubovský, Dominik Markl,  
and Jean-Pierre Sonnet

Mohr Siebeck

PETER DUBOVSKÝ, born 1965; 1999 SSL; 2005 ThD; currently Dean at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and Professor of the Old Testament and History.

DOMINIK MARKL, born 1979; taught at Heythrop College (University of London), at Hekima College (Nairobi, Kenya) and at Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley (California); currently Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible studies at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.

JEAN-PIERRE SONNET, born 1955; taught at the Jesuit School of Theology in Brussels and at the Centre Sèvres in Paris; currently Professor of Hebrew Bible at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

ISBN 978-3-16-154054-7 eISBN 978-3-16-155014-0  
ISSN 0940-4155 (Forschungen zum Alten Testament)

Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2016 Mohr Siebeck Tübingen. [www.mohr.de](http://www.mohr.de)

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that permitted by copyright law) without the publisher's written permission. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage and processing in electronic systems.

The book was printed by Gulde Druck in Tübingen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

## Preface

The conception of the present volume – and of the conference from which it results – has been guided by the hope that research into the Pentateuch would be stimulated by a broad, interdisciplinary approach that brings experts from archaeology, history and different streams of literary criticism together. It is our first and foremost desire, therefore, to thank all contributors to the conference, both speakers and other participants, for having made this meeting at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, 27–28 March 2015, indeed a memorable experience of open, honest and inspiring discussion.

The Pentateuch's self-presentation as the primeval history of humanity and Israel that, to a certain degree, conceals rather than reveals its "real" historical setting(s), has proven to be a formidable battleground of diverse hypotheses; accordingly there is little agreement – viewed from a global perspective – even on the criteria employed in reconstructing the historical development of the texts in question. One of the key issues involved in many discussions is that of how much of the Pentateuch results from literary activities in the preexilic period, and to what extent it is a document that grew in exilic and postexilic times. Tendencies in this regard could be described in terms of a continental divide between Europe, on the one hand – where many scholars tend to accept later rather than earlier dates for large sections of the Pentateuch – and North America and Israel, on the other – where scholars tend to imagine the Pentateuch as largely a preexilic document. These tendencies, however, cannot be regarded as a rule without exceptions and should not be over-emphasized. We all rely on literary and historical arguments based on the same evidence. In an area of disputed hypotheses we should concentrate on what we think to be the strongest historical arguments.

We have thus chosen the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, the crisis that has sparked most extensive literary reflection on the Hebrew Bible, as the point of departure for this conference. Is the trauma of 587 reflected in the Pentateuch – or can the contrary be demonstrated? We invited outstanding scholars from diverse backgrounds to make a historical or literary argument they consider relevant in this regard and to bring it into discussion. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the opinions expressed in this volume are heterogenous and controversial. Based on feedback from speakers and other participants, however, we are confident that our conference has allowed for a profound confrontation between conflicting views that may help address some of the issues at stake more accurately.

On the basis of thematic considerations, we have divided this volume into four major sections. The first sets the stage by bringing together archaeological, historical and literary perspectives on the fall of Jerusalem in the contributions of Israel Finkelstein, Lester Grabbe, Peter Dubovský and Jean-Pierre Sonnet. In the second part, exemplary texts and themes are discussed, tendentially moving from Genesis to Deuteronomy in the five articles by Angelika Berlejung, Jean Louis Ska, Konrad Schmid, Eckart Otto and Nili Wazana. The third section concentrates on priestly texts and cultic (dis-)continuities in the papers contributed by Nathan MacDonald, Jeffrey Stackert, Dominik Markl and Christophe Nihan, while the final part opens up a perspective on the relationship between the Pentateuch and the prophets in articles by Georg Fischer, Bernard Levinson and Ronald Hendel. The concluding essay, by Jean-Pierre Sonnet, grew out of our first editorial meeting, which started as a celebration of the delightful experience of the conference with a drink on the roof terrace of the PBI, but ended in an intense discussion on the reflection of trauma in literature.

If many questions have been left open, some issues have crystallized with greater clarity and acuteness during the course of the discussion. We wish to mention here three areas that were emphasized by speakers in their retrospective statements.

First, the lack of archaeological evidence of scribal culture in early Persian Jerusalem and Yehud, as pointed out by Israel Finkelstein, stands in stark contrast to exegetes' tendency to date several texts – within or outside the Pentateuch – to this period. “Clearly this is an issue for all of us, whether we hold that texts were mostly transmitted in this period or whether we hold they were mostly being composed (as well as transmitted) in this period”, says Nathan MacDonald. Is the lack of evidence just a result of the very limited archaeological access to the decisive areas of the temple in Jerusalem? Or do we have to consider other settings for the origin of several texts?

Second, as Jean Louis Ska suggests,

The disappearance of a culture triggers off a certain type of literature. This is the case in Mesopotamia with Berossus and in Egypt with Manetho. They wrote their work in Hellenistic times when their civilizations' glory already belonged to the past. The Torah could be – to some extent – an answer of the same type to the end of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah.

Bernard Levinson's question, however, remains open: “Does the non-mention of Jerusalem in the Pentateuch translate into a direct statement about the social world of a text, or does it reflect the literary plot and staging of the text (its pseudepigraphic attribution to Moses prior to the entry into the land)?”

Third, the issue of linguistic dating – a central one for some colleagues – was raised, but not systematically discussed, at our conference. While it is unlikely that anybody would doubt the evidence of linguistic change within the Hebrew Bible, views on when major changes happened and if classical language could have been conservatively used in certain genres even at later stages of linguistic development, remain highly controversial.

We are indebted to several persons and institutions without whose support the conference and its proceedings could not have been realised. We are grateful to the PBI's rector, Michael Kolarcik, for supporting the conference and to Agustinus Gianto, Pro-Dean of the Oriental Faculty of the PBI, who contributed a paper on Daniel. We thank Carlo Valentino, general secretary of the PBI, for taking care of countless organizational details, as well as our doctoral student Simon Weyringer, who helped organize the attendance of more than 200 international participants. We acknowledge the valuable support by many students in our doctoral and licentiate programmes who made speakers and participants feel welcome at the PBI. Speakers enjoyed the hospitality of the Jesuit community of the PBI and the final dinner at Sora Margherita's restaurant in the historic Jewish quarter of Rome.

Elizabeth Lock (Oxford) has done invaluable work as the copy-editor of this volume, both in improving the English of non-native speakers and in handling all the intricacies of formatting. We are grateful to the staff of Mohr Siebeck, especially Henning Ziebritzki and Dominika Zgolik, for their friendly and straightforward collaboration. We thank our doctoral students Charles Samson and Seung ae Kim for proofreading and composing the indices.

Both the conference and the preparation of the proceedings were co-sponsored by Georgetown University (Washington, DC) and the Gregorian University Foundation (New York). We thank both institutions and their representatives, President John J. DeGioia and Fr Alan Fogarty SJ respectively, for their generous support. Finally, we are grateful to Konrad Schmid, Hermann Spieckermann and Mark Smith for inviting us to publish this volume in the series *Forschungen zum Alten Testament*. We hope that this book may help to continue the spirited discussions that we enjoyed in Rome.

Peter Dubovský, Dominik Markl and Jean-Pierre Sonnet  
Rome, Pentecost 2016





# Contents

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Preface..... | V |
|--------------|---|

## *I. The Fall of Jerusalem: Archaeological, Historical and Literary Perspectives*

*Israel Finkelstein*

Jerusalem and Judah 600–200 BCE

|                                                         |   |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Implications for Understanding Pentateuchal Texts ..... | 3 |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---|

*Lester L. Grabbe*

The Last Days of Judah and the Roots of the Pentateuch

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| What Does History Tell Us?..... | 19 |
|---------------------------------|----|

*Peter Dubovský*

Suspicious Similarities

|                                                                 |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| A Comparative Study of the Falls of Samaria and Jerusalem ..... | 47 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|

*Jean-Pierre Sonnet*

The Siege of Jerusalem between Rhetorical Maximalism (Deuteronomy 28)  
and Narrative Minimalism (2 Kings 25) .....

73

## *II. The Rise of the Torah: Exemplary Texts and Issues*

*Angelika Berlejung*

Living in the Land of Shinar

|                                              |    |
|----------------------------------------------|----|
| Reflections on Exile in Genesis 11:1–9?..... | 89 |
|----------------------------------------------|----|

*Jean Louis Ska*

Why Does the Pentateuch Speak so Much of Torah and so Little of  
Jerusalem? .....

113

*Konrad Schmid*

Divine Legislation in the Pentateuch in its Late Judean and  
Neo-Babylonian Context .....

129

*Eckart Otto*

Born out of Ruins

The Catastrophe of Jerusalem as *Accoucheur* to the Pentateuch in the  
Book of Deuteronomy .....

155

*Nili Wazana*

The Law of the King (Deuteronomy 17:14–20) in the Light of Empire  
and Destruction ..... 169

### *III. Priestly and Cultic (Dis-)continuities*

*Nathan MacDonald*

Aaron's Failure and the Fall of the Hebrew Kingdoms ..... 197

*Jeffrey Stackert*

Political Allegory in the Priestly Source

The Destruction of Jerusalem, the Exile and their Alternatives ..... 211

*Dominik Markl*

The Wilderness Sanctuary as the Archetype of Continuity between the

Pre- and the Postexilic Temples of Jerusalem ..... 227

*Christophe Nihan*

Cult Centralization and the Torah Traditions in Chronicles ..... 253

### *IV. Prophetic Transformations*

*Georg Fischer*

Don't Forget Jerusalem's Destruction!

The Perspective of the Book of Jeremiah ..... 291

*Bernard M. Levinson*

Zedekiah's Release of Slaves as the Babylonians Besiege Jerusalem

Jeremiah 34 and the Formation of the Pentateuch ..... 313

*Ronald Hendel*

Remembering the Exodus in the Wake of Catastrophe ..... 329

### *Dis-aster: Reflection and Perspective*

*Jean-Pierre Sonnet*

Writing the Disaster

Trauma, Resilience and *Fortschreibung* ..... 349

List of Contributors ..... 359

Index of Ancient Texts ..... 361

Index of Modern Authors ..... 379

# I. The Fall of Jerusalem: Archaeological, Historical and Literary Perspectives



# Jerusalem and Judah 600–200 BCE

## Implications for Understanding Pentateuchal Texts

*Israel Finkelstein*

Several decades ago archaeology played a major role in Pentateuchal research, mainly in attempts to locate the *Sitz im Leben* – the single historical period – for the Patriarchs.<sup>1</sup> The failure (and, one must say today, naiveté) of this endeavour, and the realization that the texts are multi-layered and do not represent a single period of authorship, left archaeology outside the modern Pentateuchal research arena. This was a mistake<sup>2</sup> because archaeology does have the capacity to shed light on the historical realities behind biblical texts; in the case of the Pentateuch, this means the historical background behind the authors rather than the historicity of the stories. In fact, archaeology can even help in identifying different layers of authorship. I therefore suggest that the future of research into the evolution of biblical texts be in the collaboration between specialists in text analysis and archaeology.<sup>3</sup>

This article is therefore divided into two. In the first part I wish briefly to survey archaeological data on Jerusalem and Judah in the later phases of the Iron Age and the Babylonian, Persian and early Hellenistic periods. In the second part I will attempt to demonstrate possible implications of these data for understanding the historical background in the compilation of several Pentateuchal texts. As an introduction let me emphasize two points: first, my intention is *not* to give an overall *exposé* of the archaeology of Judah / Yehud / Judea;<sup>4</sup> I will introduce some finds which seem to be applicable to topics discussed in this volume. Second, although my title refers to the period of *c.* 600–200 BCE, as I am a devotee of the long-term approach, I will discuss a somewhat broader time-span, which starts with the collapse of the northern kingdom in 720 BCE and possibly ends in the second century BCE.

## The Data

### *The Iron IIB–C*

As far as I can judge, the most important issue here is the settlement patterns. The number of sites in the Judean Highlands in the late Iron IIA (until the

---

<sup>1</sup> ALBRIGHT, “Abraham”; GORDON, “Customs”; DE VAUX, *Early History*, 161–287.

<sup>2</sup> Already in THOMPSON, *Historicity*; VAN SETERS, *Abraham*.

<sup>3</sup> FINKELSTEIN / RÖMER, “Jacob”; *idem*, “Abraham”; *idem*, “Moab”.

<sup>4</sup> For this see, e.g., STERN, *Archaeology*.

early eighth century) can be estimated at about 80. The peak prosperity of Judah commenced in the Iron IIB, in the late eighth century, and continued in the Iron IIC, in the late seventh century BCE, with over 120 sites and dense population in the entire area, including the semi-arid south Hebron hills. The Shephelah, which suffered a major blow from Sennacherib's 701 BCE campaign, partly recovered in the Iron IIC, though on a smaller scale and in a different pattern from previously. The Beer-sheba Valley also reached a settlement peak in the Iron IIB–C.<sup>5</sup> Further to the south, until the withdrawal of Assyria from the region in c. 630–625 BCE, Judahites probably served in Assyrian forts (or Assyrian-dominated strongholds) along desert routes such as En Hazeva and Kadesh-barnea. Archaeological finds, especially at Kadesh-barnea, as well as information in the Arad ostraca regarding movement of troops and shipping of commodities in the south, show that Judah and Judahites continued to be present in the arid areas south of the Beer-sheba Valley even after the retreat of Assyria from the region.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding Jerusalem, I first wish to draw attention to the proposal that the core of the ancient city is located under (beneath) the Temple Mount, and that the “City of David” cannot be regarded as the tell of ancient Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> This theory resolves some of the most tantalizing problems in the archaeology and history of Jerusalem, first and foremost the lack of evidence for activity in the “City of David” ridge in periods for which habitation in Jerusalem is securely attested in textual evidence, such as the Amarna letters.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, the “mound on the Mount” was the location of ancient Jerusalem of the Bronze Age and the early phases of the Iron Age. The city started expanding to the south, to the upper part of the “City of David” ridge, in an advanced stage of the late Iron IIA, that is, the late ninth century BCE.<sup>9</sup> The “Great Leap Forward” in Jerusalem took place in a relatively short period of time in the eighth century BCE, when it grew to cover the entire area of the “City of David” ridge as well as the Western Hill – today’s Armenian and Jewish quarters.<sup>10</sup> This means growth from c. 8.5 hectares to over 60 hectares in a matter of a few decades (Fig. 1).

The reason for the sudden, dramatic population growth in Jerusalem in particular, and Judah in general, has been debated. Ten years ago Neil Silberman and I,<sup>11</sup> following scholars such as Broshi, Schniedewind and Van der Toorn,<sup>12</sup> suggested interpreting this phenomenon against the background of

---

<sup>5</sup> For all this see an updated discussion in FINKELSTEIN, “Migration”.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, COHEN / BERNICK-GREENBERG, *Kadesh-Barnea*.

<sup>7</sup> FINKELSTEIN *et al.*, “Mound on the Mount”.

<sup>8</sup> See discussion in NA’AMAN, “Contribution”.

<sup>9</sup> FINKELSTEIN, “Migration”.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., REICH / SHUKRON, “Urban Development”; GEVA, “Western Jerusalem”.

<sup>11</sup> FINKELSTEIN / SILBERMAN, “Temple and Dynasty”.

<sup>12</sup> BROSHI, “Expansion”; SCHNIEDEWIND, *How the Bible*; VAN DER TOORN, *Family Religion*, 339–372.

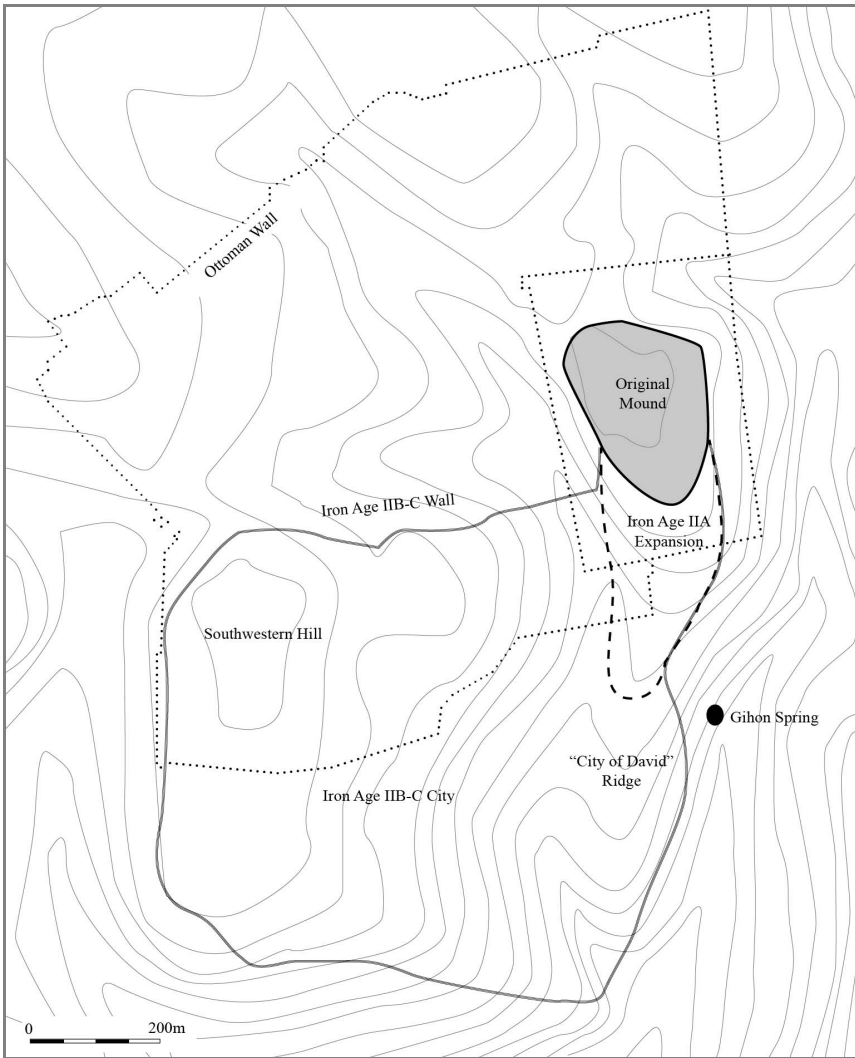


Fig. 1

migration by Israelites to Judah after 720 BCE. Nadav Na’aman opposed this view,<sup>13</sup> and he has recently published another article on the matter.<sup>14</sup> In my answer I updated the demographic data on Jerusalem and Judah, and dealt with material culture indications for movement of Israelites to Judah.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> NA’AMAN, “When and How”; for a rejoinder see FINKELSTEIN, “Settlement History”.

<sup>14</sup> NA’AMAN, “Dismissing the Myth”.

<sup>15</sup> FINKELSTEIN, “Migration” (more below).



Highly important for the study of the Pentateuch is the expansion of writing. Benjamin Sass and I recently investigated the pre-eighth century BCE linear alphabetic inscriptions from the Levant.<sup>16</sup> We especially emphasized the stratigraphy and relative chronology of the contexts where the inscriptions were found, and translated this into absolute chronology using the massive information from recent radiocarbon studies.<sup>17</sup> We showed that there are no inscriptions in the territories of Israel and Judah before the later phase of the late Iron IIA, in the late ninth century BCE. It is clear that writing spread only in the eighth century – in the first half of the century in Israel and in the second half in Judah. Complex literary works appear for the first time in Israel in the early eighth century, at Deir Alla and Kuntillet Ajrud.<sup>18</sup> This is the basic evidence. Regarding interpretation, Sass thinks that writing on papyri must have been present in the administration of the territorial kingdoms, especially Israel, starting in the first half of the ninth century. This is possible, but I would prefer to see evidence for this theory, if not in the form of papyri, then in the expansion of other media of writing such as bullae and seals. For now this evidence is lacking.

In any event, the main expansion of scribal activity and literacy in Judah came in the seventh century BCE. Most corpora of *ostraca* – Arad, Lachish, Uza, Malhata, Kadesh-barnea – belong to this period.<sup>19</sup> The spread of literacy is also attested in the proliferation of seals and seal-impressions; it is noteworthy that a large corpus of *bullae* from Jerusalem, dated slightly earlier, *c.* 800 BCE, is not inscribed.<sup>20</sup> The seventh century BCE is the moment when Judah becomes what one can describe as a “writing society” beyond the circles of temple and palace in the capital. This was probably an outcome of the century (*c.* 730–630 BCE) when Judah was dominated by Assyria and was incorporated into the sphere of Assyrian global-economy, administration and culture.

A research group at Tel Aviv University is working on digital methods of comparing handwriting.<sup>21</sup> The mathematicians on the team developed a method which has recently helped to check the number of (writing) “hands” in the Arad ostraca. We found evidence for several writers; the information in the texts of the examined ostraca discloses that literacy infiltrated to the smallest forts in the Beer-sheba Valley and all the way down the bureaucratic ladder.<sup>22</sup> There is no need to emphasize the importance of this information for

---

<sup>16</sup> FINKELSTEIN / SASS, “West Semitic”.

<sup>17</sup> SHARON *et al.*, “Report”; TOFFOLO *et al.*, “Absolute Chronology”.

<sup>18</sup> For the latter see recently AHITUV *et al.*, “Inscriptions”, 105–120; NA’AMAN, “Inscriptions”.

<sup>19</sup> E.g., AHITUV, *Echoes*.

<sup>20</sup> REICH *et al.*, “Recent Discoveries”.

<sup>21</sup> For previous achievements of this group see summary in FAIGENBAUM-GOLVIN *et al.*, “Computerized”.

<sup>22</sup> FAIGENBAUM-GOLOVIN *et al.*, “Algorithmic Handwriting Analysis”.

the themes discussed here; suffice it to say that the recognition of the power of writing infiltrated all echelons of the Judahite administration, far beyond temple and palace.

### *The Babylonian, Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods*

The archaeology of the Babylonian period is difficult to isolate and study. This is so owing to its short duration and because the finds are difficult to distinguish from those of the earlier Iron IIC and the later Persian period. Still, there are several issues concerning the Babylonian period that can be emphasized in regard to what is being discussed here.

First, the destruction of Jerusalem: a thorough investigation of the data from the many fields of excavations there seems to indicate that destruction by fire is evident only in areas close to the Temple Mount and the Gihon Spring,<sup>23</sup> with the exception of one place,<sup>24</sup> there is almost no sign of conflagration and / or assemblage of broken vessels on floors on the Western Hill.<sup>25</sup> Rural sites in the vicinity of Jerusalem also show no signs of major destruction.<sup>26</sup> Though it is clear that the city *was* devastated – most of its sectors feature a long occupation gap – there are clues in some places to meagre activity immediately after 586 BCE.<sup>27</sup> There is yet another piece of evidence for the continuation of certain activity in Jerusalem after Nebuchadnezzar’s assault; I refer to the *mws*h (Mozah) and lion seal impressions found in Jerusalem, which make the link in the bureaucratic sequence of Judah-Yehud between the Iron Age rosette impressions and the Persian period early Yehud impressions. In other words, they probably represent the administration of the province after 586 BCE.<sup>28</sup> The “City of David” features several *mws*h impressions and a great number of lion impressions; the latter make up a large part of the assemblage in the entire region.<sup>29</sup> Since not a single Babylonian period building was found on the “City of David” ridge, activity must have focused on the core of the city – the Temple Mount. There is simply no other way to understand these finds. Note that no *mws*h and lion impressions were found south of Ramat Rahel, probably indicating that the province stretched over the limited area from Mizpah in the north to Ramat Rahel in the south (more below).

---

<sup>23</sup> BARKAY, “King’s Palace”, 27; details in SHILOH, *Excavations*, 14, 18–19, 29; MAZAR / MAZAR, *Temple Mount*, 16, 21, 43; STEINER, *Excavations*, 108–109, 114; south of the spring evidence for destruction is limited – DE GROOT, “Discussion”, 164.

<sup>24</sup> GEVA / AVIGAD, “Area W”, 134, 155.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., GEVA / AVIGAD, “Area A”, 42; GEVA / AVIGAD, “Area X-2”, 215.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, MAZAR, “Abu et-Twein”, 237; MAZAR *et al.*, “Boarder Road”, 241; EDELSTEIN, “Terraced Farm”, 57.

<sup>27</sup> BARKAY, “King’s Palace”, 27.

<sup>28</sup> ZORN *et al.*, “Stamp Impressions”; LIPSCHITS, *Fall and Rise*, 149–152.

<sup>29</sup> In a seminar paper by my student Erin Hall.

This brings me to a site outside Yehud, but of great importance for the discussion here: Bethel. A few years ago Lily Singer-Avitz and I revisited the finds retrieved from this site – both from the published report and unpublished materials, in storage in Jerusalem and Pittsburg. The results of our investigation<sup>30</sup> indicated that the settlement history of the site was not continuous, as held by the excavators.<sup>31</sup> Rather, it was characterized by oscillations, with three phases of strong activity – in the Iron I, Iron IIB and Hellenistic periods; two periods of decline – in the late Iron IIA and the Iron IIC; and two periods of probable abandonment in the early Iron IIA and, most significantly, in the Babylonian and Persian periods. This evidence cannot be brushed aside as stemming from deficiencies in the excavations, as significant sectors of the small mound – bigger than can be suggested at first glance – had been excavated (more below).

Turning to the Persian period, in Jerusalem evidence for activity comes mainly from the central sector of the “City of David” ridge, above the Gihon Spring. It is characterized chiefly by a relatively large number of early Yehud seal impressions, most of which come from fills. Not a single building or a single floor has ever been found there, or in any other place in ancient Jerusalem. The early Hellenistic period seems to reflect a similar picture.<sup>32</sup> As in the case of the Babylonian impressions, the combination of these data – abundance of Yehud impressions and no architectural remains – must mean that the focus of the Persian period activity was in the old core of the city on the Temple Mount. Yet, even here, settlement activity must have been very low. Only a limited number of Persian period sherds were found in the vicinity of the Temple Mount, in the sifting of debris from the area of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, from the eastern slope of the Temple Mount and from the “Ophel” excavations south of the Temple Mount.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, no sign of a Persian period fortification was found in Jerusalem. As far as I can judge,<sup>34</sup> the description in Neh 3 echoes the construction of the First Wall by the Hasmoneans. The earlier Nehemiah Memoir, which speaks in general about the deplorable state of Jerusalem and its fortifications, probably refers to the mound on the Temple Mount.

The territory of Persian period Yehud has traditionally been reconstructed according to the references to sub-districts of the province in Neh 3.<sup>35</sup> This, of course, is a circular argument because the background and date of this list is

---

<sup>30</sup> FINKELSTEIN / SINGER-AVITZ, “Bethel”.

<sup>31</sup> KELSO, *Bethel*.

<sup>32</sup> Summary in FINKELSTEIN, “Wall of Nehemiah”; for the data see also LIPSCHITS, “Persian Period Finds”.

<sup>33</sup> BARKAY / ZWEIG, “Sifting”, 222; DVIRA (ZWEIG) / ZIGDON / SHILOV, “Secondary Refuse”, 68; personal communication from Eilat Mazar.

<sup>34</sup> FINKELSTEIN, “Wall of Nehemiah”.

<sup>35</sup> For summaries of the different opinions see STERN, *Material Culture*, 247–249; CARTER, *Emergence of Yehud*, 79–80; LIPSCHITS, *Fall and Rise*, 168–174.

far from being decided. And as I indicated a few years ago, the lists of returnees in Ezra and Nehemiah cannot be of help either, because the archaeology of the securely identified sites that are mentioned in them also hints at a Hellenistic period background.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, the only independent way to study the territorial extent of the province is to plot the distribution of the Yehud seal impressions.<sup>37</sup> This map does not fit the territory described in Neh 3. Yehud seems to have extended from Mizpah in the north to Ramat Rahel in the south, possibly slightly further, though Beth-zur probably remained outside it; and from Jericho and En-Gedi in the east to the border of the Shephelah in the west (no Yehud impressions were found in any of the sites of the upper Shephelah). A few years ago I assembled the archaeological data on the settlement patterns in this area in the Persian period. I estimated the total built-up area in Yehud at *c.* 60 hectares, which can be translated into *c.* 12,000 people – about half of the low numbers proposed previously.<sup>38</sup> This estimate suggests a dramatic settlement and demographic decline relative to the situation in the Iron IIC. It contradicts scholars who tend to belittle the scope of the catastrophe that befell Judah in 586 BCE;<sup>39</sup> it also supports the notion that the “return” to Yehud was more a trickle than a flood.

Ofer reported that, in the Persian period, the settlement system south of Hebron, beyond the border of Yehud, “almost died out”.<sup>40</sup> The Beer-sheba Valley is almost devoid of evidence of habitation at that time,<sup>41</sup> and activity in the key sites in the desert south of the Beer-sheba Valley was also weak.<sup>42</sup> The same holds true for the Edomite plateau.<sup>43</sup> The low settlement system in the south is probably the result of a phase of dry climate, as indicated by Dead Sea palynological research led by Tel Aviv University archaeobotanist Dafna Langgut and myself.

Regarding material culture, a crucial piece of evidence for the Babylonian and Persian periods has not been given sufficient attention. I refer to the disappearance of Hebrew writing from the archaeological record. In comparison with the unprecedented prosperity in scribal activity and literacy in the Iron IIC which, as I have shown above, penetrated into the lowest echelons of the Judahite administration, the southern highlands in the Babylonian and Persian periods show almost no evidence of Hebrew inscriptions. In fact, the only (meagre) evidence comes from the few YHD coins which date to the fourth century BCE, and coins can hardly attest to genuine scribal activity. This means

<sup>36</sup> FINKELSTEIN, “List of Returnees”.

<sup>37</sup> Types 1–12 in LIPSCHITS / VANDERHOOF, *Yehud Stamp Impressions*.

<sup>38</sup> FINKELSTEIN, “Territorial Extent”, compared to CARTER, *Emergence of Yehud*, 195–205; LIPSCHITS, “Demographic Changes”, 364.

<sup>39</sup> Also FAUST, *Judah, contra*, e.g., BARSTAD, *Myth*.

<sup>40</sup> OFER, “Hill Country”, 106.

<sup>41</sup> For instance, not a single Persian period site was found in the eastern part of the valley – BEIT-ARIEH, *Map of Tel Malhata*, \*12.

<sup>42</sup> FINKELSTEIN, “Wilderness Narrative”.

<sup>43</sup> BIENKOWSKI, “New Evidence”.

that not a single securely-dated inscription has been found for the period between 586 and *c.* 350 BCE: not an ostrakon, nor a seal, not a seal impression nor a bulla (the little that we know of this period is in Aramaic, the script of the Persian empire)! This can hardly be a coincidence. I am not suggesting, of course, that the knowledge of writing Hebrew disappeared; but scribal activity declined – and significantly so.

### Some Implications for Pentateuchal Studies

My observations below are based on archaeological and historical data and are limited to specific issues. Moreover they are no more than illustrations; combining modern archaeological research with text analysis can lead to many more insights.

Chronologically, I should start with Bethel. Scholars have suggested that the Bethel temple served as the “repository” and place of composition of northern biblical traditions such as the Jacob cycle and the Book of Saviours in Judges.<sup>44</sup> This proposed scribal activity is best associated with the period of prosperity at Bethel in the Iron IIB in the eighth century. Archaeology cannot help in deciding between the years before or after the destruction of the northern kingdom. Historical considerations – the need to promote foundation myths of the north in the period of reorganization of the kingdom under Jeroboam II – may favour the former possibility.<sup>45</sup> The Deir Alla and Ajrud plaster texts – both affiliated with the North and dated to the first half of the eighth century – demonstrate that this is a viable possibility. The other side of this coin is no less important: scholars have proposed that Bethel served as a prominent cult place and centre of learning in the Babylonian period.<sup>46</sup> This idea is contradicted by the archaeological evidence, which shows weak activity in the late seventh and early sixth centuries, probably no activity in much of the Babylonian and certainly no activity in the Persian period.<sup>47</sup>

Thomas Römer and I recently suggested, following de Pury and Blum,<sup>48</sup> that the early layer in the Jacob cycle originated relatively early in the Iron Age and was put in writing at Bethel in the early eighth century. In other words, the northern kingdom had an eponym-ancestor tradition – first oral and then written. We added that this tradition developed in a restricted area in the Gilead – in the Jabbok basin and south of it – and only later, in our view, in connection with

---

<sup>44</sup> KNAUF, “Bethel”, 319–322.

<sup>45</sup> For possible concentration of cult activity in the North at that time see NA’AMAN, “Abandonment”.

<sup>46</sup> PAKKALA, “Jeroboam’s Sin”; BLENKINSOPP, “Bethel”; KNAUF, “Bethel”; GOMES, *Sanctuary of Bethel*.

<sup>47</sup> FINKELSTEIN / SINGER-AVITZ, “Bethel”.

<sup>48</sup> DE PURY, “Cycle de Jacob”; BLUM, “Jacob Tradition”.

reorganization of the kingdom in the days of Jeroboam II, became a “national” myth of the North and was “moved” to Bethel too.<sup>49</sup> These observations call attention to the South. In view of the settlement, demographic and scribal prosperity in Judah in the Iron IIB–C, it is difficult to imagine that there were no southern shrines with competing traditions while the two Hebrew kingdoms lived side by side and after the fall of Israel. This was one of the reasons Römer and I proposed that the original Abraham tradition developed in a cult place in the vicinity of Hebron, perhaps the holy Oak of Mamre.<sup>50</sup> The original, Iron Age Mamre could have been a shrine connected to a sacred tree or grove. Considering that the place of memory of an ancestor is in many cases a shrine related to his grave, it is also possible that there was a burial tradition of Abraham in the area of Hebron already in monarchic times. Machpelah *asher al penei* (in front of; east of; overlooking?) *Mamre* is a different story. The origin of this concept may be sought in the geo-political situation of the Persian period, if not somewhat later: the original cult-place (and possibly sacred tomb) was left outside the province of Yehud, so a tradition developed according to which there was a Mamre somewhere at Hebron and a grave at Machpelah slightly to its north. Note that Herod the Great constructed two monuments – one for the tomb and another for the shrine.

Outside the Pentateuch and the genealogies in Chronicles, Isaac is mentioned independently of the patriarchal triad only in Amos 7:9 and 16, where he seems to represent the South in opposition, or parallel, to the North. If the Isaac tradition indeed comes from the Beer-sheba Valley,<sup>51</sup> it must have originated in the Iron Age, because the area was far from Yehud and, after 586 BCE, very sparsely inhabited (possibly not inhabited at all). It is therefore plausible that there was a second ancestor figure in the South, possibly venerated in a sanctuary at Beer-sheba. In the seventh century Abraham may have had two “sons”, Isaac in the Beer-sheba Valley and Ishmael in the areas further to the south, in the “deep” desert.<sup>52</sup> This may depict realities of the time: Judahite settlement in the Beer-sheba Valley peaked in the late eighth and seventh centuries BCE; activity further south characterizes the same period, when Judahites served in Kadesh-barnea and probably also in the Assyrian forts along the Arabian trade routes.

The possibility of the existence of an Iron II Abraham tradition in Judah raises the question of the merging of the late-monarchic southern Abraham and older northern Jacob cycles into a single Judahite tradition. And this, in turn, raises – yet again – the question of the “migration” of northern traditions to Judah.

There is no escape from the archaeological evidence of a dramatic demographic transformation in Judah in the second half of the eighth century and

---

<sup>49</sup> FINKELSTEIN / RÖMER, “Jacob”.

<sup>50</sup> FINKELSTEIN / RÖMER, “Abraham”.

<sup>51</sup> NOTH, *Pentateuchal Traditions*, 103–107.

<sup>52</sup> FINKELSTEIN / RÖMER, “Abraham”.

the early seventh century BCE.<sup>53</sup> This can in no way be explained as the result of natural population growth, economic prosperity or intra-Judahite movement of people. I therefore insist that many of the new settlers in Jerusalem and the highlands of Judah originated in the territory of Israel, mainly from the southern Samaria highlands, where surveys demonstrate deterioration of settlement activity after 720 BCE. Appearance of items of North Israelite material culture in Judah starting in the late eighth century supports this historical reconstruction. I refer to stone installations for olive-oil extraction, northern pottery forms, ashlar masonry, proto-Ionic capitals, longitudinal pillared buildings which served as stables, and rock-cut tombs. The number of Israelites in Judah was probably large enough to force biblical authors to be mindful of their most important traditions. Of course, some of these traditions could have reached Judah in later times – for instance, Israelite texts could have been preserved at Bethel and found their way to Jerusalem when Judah appropriated this shrine in the late seventh century. In any event, it is reasonable to assume that the merging of the Jacob and Abraham stories was undertaken after 720 BCE but before 586 BCE.<sup>54</sup>

The Book of Numbers presents an intriguing case of centuries-old memories in a late composition. Archaeology and extra-biblical historical sources, most significantly the Mesha Stele, indicate that, although it is the latest book in the Pentateuch,<sup>55</sup> Numbers preserves shreds of Israelite traditions regarding the conquest of the *mishor* (the plain) from a late Canaanite king who ruled from Heshbon, as well as “memories” about the existence of an early Moabite kingdom south of the Arnon River. These traditions can come only from the days of the Omrides – the only period when Israel ruled over territories in northern Moab.<sup>56</sup> If so, how and when did these traditions find their way to Judah and to a late text such as Numbers? The stories must have first been transmitted in the northern kingdom orally (they may have originated in the temple of YHWH at Nebo, referred to in the Mesha Inscription) and were probably put in writing (elsewhere) in the first half of the eighth century. Promotion of memories of Israelite presence in northern Moab could have served Northern territorial ambitions in the days of Jeroboam II; indeed, another layer in Numbers puts the border with Moab on the northern tip of the Dead Sea – in line with the situation in late-monarchic times. The written early North Israelite traditions regarding Moab came to be known in Judah in the decades after 720 BCE, were preserved there in ways not disclosed to us, and still later were incorporated into Yehudite / early Judean works and given a southern orientation.

Regarding Transjordan in the Book of Numbers, attention should also be given to the lists of towns built by the tribes of Gad and Reuben in Num

---

<sup>53</sup> BROSHI, “Expansion”; FINKELSTEIN / SILBERMAN, “Temple and Dynasty”; updated in FINKELSTEIN, “Migration”.

<sup>54</sup> FINKELSTEIN / RÖMER, “Abraham”.

<sup>55</sup> RÖMER, “Israel’s Sojourn”.

<sup>56</sup> FINKELSTEIN / RÖMER, “Moab”.

32:34–38. Six of the places mentioned are excavated and well identified – Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, Jazer, Heshbon and Nebo. They have produced rich Iron Age and Hellenistic finds, but no Persian period material. This piece of evidence, too, cannot be brushed aside when dealing with the process of compilation of texts in the Pentateuch; either we are facing a memory of the situation in the later phases of the Iron Age or an old memory combined with a later (Hellenistic period?) situation.

Numbers brings me to the desert-wanderings lists. This material has been the subject of intensive research, including issues of sources and redactions.<sup>57</sup> Scholars such as Noth, Fritz and Davies assumed that the itineraries are based on early materials.<sup>58</sup> If so, the period from which these toponyms originated can be located in two ways: the archaeology of sites that can be securely identified and possible knowledge of the southern deserts by biblical authors.<sup>59</sup> For the latter, let me start with the period of the latest redaction(s) of the text by Priestly or post-Priestly scribes, probably in the Persian period, and then pull back chronologically. As I have indicated above, the sparsely settled and demographically depleted province of Yehud stretched no further than Beth-zur in the south. There was no Jewish presence at that time in the southern Hebron hills or the Beer-sheba Valley, and activity at the key sites in the south was weak. Under these circumstances, Priestly author(s)' knowledge of the southern desert must have been fragmentary at best. The toponyms that appear in the wandering narrative and itineraries can hardly represent Persian-period realities.

In the closing decades of its history, after the Assyrian pull-out, Judah was still strongly present in the Beer-sheba Valley. Further to the southwest, finds at Kadesh-barnea indicate that the fort continued to function after Assyria's withdrawal, probably under Judahite auspices.<sup>60</sup> The Arad ostraca, dated *c.* 600 BCE, mention movement of units and shipment of commodities in the south, probably also beyond the Beer-sheba Valley.<sup>61</sup>

The "Assyrian Century" – *c.* 730–630 BCE – evidenced the strongest Judahite activity in the southern desert. This was the time of peak prosperity in the Beer-sheba Valley. The towns and forts there, and especially markets and khans, were places where Judahite merchants and administrators met Edomites and Arabs from the desert.<sup>62</sup> Beyond the Beer-sheba Valley, the Assyrians controlled the desert trade routes from several pivotal strongholds, which were probably manned by local people – Edomites, Arabs and possibly also Judahites.

---

<sup>57</sup> For instance, NOTH, "Sinai"; *idem*, *Numbers*, 242–246; COATS, "Wilderness Itineraries"; DAVIES, "Wilderness Itineraries"; RÖMER, "Israel's Sojourn".

<sup>58</sup> NOTH, *Numbers*, 243; *idem*, *Pentateuchal Traditions*, 224–227; FRITZ, *Israel*, 116–117; DAVIES, "Wilderness Itineraries".

<sup>59</sup> For both see in detail in FINKELSTEIN, "Wilderness Narrative".

<sup>60</sup> COHEN / BERNICK-GREENBERG, *Kadesh Barnea*.

<sup>61</sup> AHARONI, *Arad Inscriptions*, 15.

<sup>62</sup> THAREANI-SUSSELY, *Tel 'Aroer*, 301–307.



Information about the south could also have been transmitted by Arab merchants who visited Jerusalem.<sup>63</sup> What is clear from this short review is that detailed knowledge of the south, accompanied by lists of toponyms, probably represents a pre-586 reality. Needless to say, the incorporation of this material into the biblical texts could have taken place later.

Much of what I discussed above indicates that the Pentateuch includes significant traditions that come from the Iron Age, and that at least some of them were probably put in writing for the first time in the later phase of the Iron Age. This old material went through several stages of redaction in the Persian and possibly the Hellenistic period, and much material was added at that time. But where was this done?

This question brings me to the issue of composition of biblical texts in Yehud of the Persian period, in fact also in Judea of early Hellenistic times. As I have already shown, there is almost no evidence for Hebrew writing in Yehud in c. 586–350 BCE, and very little evidence until c. 200 BCE. This should come as no surprise: the destruction of Judah brought about the collapse of the kingdom's bureaucracy and deportation of many of the educated intelligentsia – the literati; the “vinedressers and ploughmen” who remained in the land were hardly capable of producing written documents. This should serve as a warning signal to those who tend to place much biblical material in Persian period Yehud. My humble advice is therefore twofold:

First, to try to date as much material as possible to periods in Judah / Judea that demonstrate widespread scribal activity and literacy in all media and all forms of inscriptions, that is, the latest phase of the Iron Age and Late Hellenistic period after c. 200 BCE. The latter possibility calls for a clarification – is it possible that material was added to the Pentateuch as late as the second century BCE? A good example is the Melchizedek episode in Genesis 14, which may be understood against the background of the Hasmonean period.<sup>64</sup> The translation of the Torah into Greek is commonly supposed to have taken place during the third century BCE, and it may be difficult to imagine that the first Greek translation was based on a Hebrew text to which whole chapters were later added. On the other hand, it is also obvious that the translated Hebrew text was not yet considered as fixed and stable and that the Greek Torah text is the result of revisions that persisted into the Hasmonean period.<sup>65</sup> So it is possible that, even after a first translation into Greek, short passages were added or revised.<sup>66</sup>

My second piece of advice is, for the time between c. 600 and 200 BCE, especially the Babylonian and Persian periods, to place the compilation of as much material as possible in Babylonia.<sup>67</sup> Of course, I accept that there must

---

<sup>63</sup> SHILOH, “South Arabian Inscriptions”; LEMAIRE, “New Perspectives”.

<sup>64</sup> SOGGIN, “Abraham”.

<sup>65</sup> TILLY, *Septuaginta*, 57–58, 81–87.

<sup>66</sup> FINKELSTEIN / RÖMER, “Abraham”.

<sup>67</sup> For instance, ALBERTZ, *Israel in Exile*. But this raises the question of how Hebrew was preserved in the communities of the exiles.

have been continuity in production of literary works in Yehud (after all, the ability to write Hebrew texts must have been somehow preserved to make revival of Hebrew in the second century BCE possible); one can imagine, for instance, a secluded, educated priestly group near the temple. But even this is not an elegant solution, as I would have expected something to leak into daily life. In short, I too am tantalized by this fact and can only urge scholars not to ignore the archaeological evidence – despite the fact that at times it is mainly negative, and even if it threatens to shatter slick, fad-driven theories.

## Literature

- AHARONI, Y., *Arad Inscriptions*, Jerusalem 1981.
- AHITUV, S., *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period*, Jerusalem 2008.
- AHITUV, S. *et al.*, “The Inscriptions”, in: Z. Meshel (ed.), *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah–Sinai Border*, Jerusalem 2012, 73–142.
- ALBERTZ, R., *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, Atlanta 2003.
- ALBRIGHT, W. F., “Abraham the Hebrew: A New Archaeological Interpretation”, *BASOR* 163 (1961) 36–54.
- BARKAY, G., “The King’s Palace and ‘The House of the People’ in Jerusalem at the Time of the Babylonian Conquest”, *New Studies on Jerusalem* 9 (2003) 21–28 (Hebrew).
- BARKAY, G. / ZWEIG, I., “The Project of Sifting Soil from the Temple Mount – Preliminary Report”, *New Studies on Jerusalem* 11 (2006) 213–237 (Hebrew).
- BARSTAD, H. M., *The Myth of the Empty Land*, Oslo 1996.
- BEIT-ARIEH, I., *Archaeological Survey of Israel, Map of Tel Malhata (144)*, Jerusalem 2003.
- BIENKOWSKI, P., “New Evidence on Edom in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods”, in: J. A. Dearman / M.P. Graham (eds.), *The Land That I Will Show You. Essays in the History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Honour of J. Maxwell Miller*, Sheffield 2001, 198–213.
- BLINKINSOPP, J., “Bethel in the Neo-Babylonian Period”, in: O. Lipschits / J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, Winona Lake 2003, 93–107.
- BLUM, E., “The Jacob Tradition”, in: C. A. Evans *et al.* (eds.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (VT.S 152), Leiden 2012, 181–211.
- BROSHI, M., “The Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh”, *IEJ* 24 (1974) 21–26.
- CARTER, C. E., *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period*, Sheffield 1999.
- COATS, G. W., “Wilderness Itineraries”, *CBQ* 34 (1972) 135–152.
- COHEN, R. / BERNICK-GREENBERG, H., *Excavations at Kadesh Barnea (Tell el-Qudeirat) 1976–1982* (IAA Reports 34), Jerusalem 2007.
- DAVIES, G. I., “The Wilderness Itineraries and the Composition of the Pentateuch”, *VT* 33 (1983) 1–13.
- DE GROOT, A., “Discussion and Conclusions”, in: *idem* / H. Bernick-Greenberg, *Excavations at the City of David 1978–1985 Directed by Yigal Shiloh*, vol. 7A, *Area E: Stratigraphy and Architecture, Text* (Qedem 53), Jerusalem 2012, 141–184.

- DVIRA (ZWEIG), Z. *et al.*, “Secondary Refuse Aggregates from the First and Second Temple Periods on the Eastern Slope of the Temple Mount”, *New Studies on Jerusalem* 17 (2011) 63–106.
- EDELSTEIN, G., “A Terraced Farm at Er-Ras”, *Atiqot* 40 (2000) 39–63.
- FAIGENBAUM-GOLOVIN, S. *et al.*, “Computerized Paleographic Investigation of Hebrew Iron Age Ostraca”, *Radiocarbon* 57 (2015) 317–325.
- , “Algorithmic Handwriting Analysis of Judah’s Military Correspondence Sheds Light on Composition of Biblical Texts”, *PNAS* 113 (2016) 4664–4669.
- FAUST, A., *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period: The Archaeology of Desolation*, Atlanta 2012.
- FINKELSTEIN, I., “The Settlement History of Jerusalem in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries BCE”, *RB* 115 (2008) 499–515.
- , “Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah”, *JSOT* 32 (2008) 501–520.
- , “The Archaeology of the List of Returnees in Ezra and Nehemiah”, *PEQ* 140 (2008) 7–16.
- , “The Territorial Extent and Demography of Yehud / Judea in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods”, *RB* 117 (2010) 39–54.
- , “The Wilderness Narrative and Itineraries and the Evolution of the Exodus Tradition”, in: T. E. Levy *et al.* (eds.), *Israel’s Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective: Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience*, New York 2015, 39–54.
- , “Migration of Israelites into Judah after 720 BCE: An Answer and an Update”, *ZAW* 127 (2015) 188–206.
- FINKELSTEIN, I. *et al.*, “The Mound on the Mount: A Solution to the ‘Problem with Jerusalem?’” *JHS* 11 (2011).
- FINKELSTEIN, I. / RÖMER, T., “Comments on the Historical Background of the Jacob Narrative in Genesis”, *ZAW* 126 (2014) 317–338.
- , “Comments on the Historical Background of the Abraham Narrative: Between ‘Realia’ and Exegetica”, *HeBAI* 3 (2014) 3–23.
- , “Early North Israelite ‘Memories’ on Moab”, in: J. C. Gertz *et al.* (eds.), *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures between Europe, Israel and North America* (FAT), Tübingen (forthcoming).
- FINKELSTEIN, I. / SASS, B., “The West Semitic Alphabetic Inscriptions, Late Bronze II to IronIIA: Archeological Context, Distribution and Chronology”, *HeBAI* 2 (2013) 149–220.
- FINKELSTEIN, I. / SILBERMAN, N. A., “Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology”, *JSOT* 30 (2006) 259–285.
- FINKELSTEIN, I. / SINGER-AVITZ, L., “Reevaluating Bethel”, *ZDPV* 125 (2009) 33–48.
- FRITZ, V., *Israel in der Wüste: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung der Wüstenüberlieferung des Jahwisten*. Marburg 1970.
- GEVA, H., “Western Jerusalem at the End of the First Temple Period in Light of the Excavations in the Jewish Quarter”, in: A. G. Vaughn / A. E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, Atlanta 2003, 183–208.
- GEVA, H. / AVIGAD, N., “Area A: Stratigraphy and Architecture, Introduction”, in: H. Geva (ed.), *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem*, vol. 1, *Architecture and Stratigraphy: Areas A, W and X-2, Final Report*, Jerusalem 2000, 37–43.
- , “Area W: Stratigraphy and Architecture”, in: H. Geva (ed.), *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem*, vol. 1, 131–197.
- , “Area X-2: Stratigraphy and Architecture”, in: H. Geva (ed.), *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem*, vol. 1, 199–240.
- GOMES, J. F., *The Sanctuary of Bethel and the Configuration of Israelite Identity*, Berlin 2006.
- GORDON, C. H., “Biblical Customs and the Nuzu Tablets”, in: E. F. Campbell / D. N. Freedman (eds.), *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, vol. 2, Garden City 1964, 21–33.

- KELSO, J. L., *The Excavation of Bethel (1934–1960)* (AASOR 39), Cambridge 1968.
- KNAUF, E. A., “Bethel: The Israelite Impact on Judean Language and Literature”, in: O. Lipschits / M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, Winona Lake 2006, 291–349.
- LEMAIRE, A., “New Perspectives on the Trade between Judah and South Arabia”, in: M. Lubetski (ed.), *New Inscriptions and Seals Relating to the Biblical World*, Atlanta 2012, 93–110.
- LIPSCHITS, O., “Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.”, in: O. Lipschits / J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the New Babylonian Period*, Winona Lake 2003, 323–376.
- , *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, Winona Lake 2005.
- , “Persian Period Finds from Jerusalem: Facts and Interpretations”, *JHS* 9 (2009) art. 20.
- LIPSCHITS, O. / VANDERHOOF, D. S., *The Yehud Stamp Impressions: A Corpus of Inscribed Impressions from the Persian and Hellenistic Periods in Judah*. Winona Lake 2011.
- MAZAR, A., “The Excavations at Khirbet Abu et-Twein and the System of Iron Age Fortresses in Judah”, *EI* 15 (1981) 229–249.
- MAZAR, A. *et al.*, “The ‘Boarder Road’ between Michmash and Jericho and Excavations at Horvat Shilbah”, *EI* 17 (1984) 236–250 (Hebrew).
- MAZAR, E. / MAZAR, B., *Excavations in the South of the Temple Mount: The Ophel of Biblical Jerusalem* (Qedem 29), Jerusalem 1989.
- NA’AMAN, N., “The Contribution of the Amarna Letters to the Debate on Jerusalem’s Political Position in the Tenth Century B.C.E.”, *BASOR* 304 (1996) 17–27.
- , “The Abandonment of Cult Places in the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah as Acts of Cult Reform”, *UF* 34 (2002) 585–602.
- , “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah’s Premier City in the Eighth–Seventh Centuries B.C.E.”, *BASOR* 347 (2007) 21–56.
- , “The Inscriptions of Kuntillet ’Ajrud through the Lens of Historical Research”, *UF* 43 (2012) 1–43.
- , “Dismissing the Myth of a Flood of Israelite Refugees in the Late Eight Century BCE”, *ZAW* 126 (2014) 1–14.
- NOTH, M., “Der Wallfahrtsweg zum Sinai (Nu 33)”, *PJb* 36 (1940) 5–28.
- , *Numbers: A Commentary*, London 1968.
- , *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, Sheffield 1981.
- OFER, A., “‘All the Hill Country of Judah’: From Settlement Fringe to a Prosperous Monarchy”, in: I. Finkelstein / N. Na’aman (eds.), *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, Jerusalem 1994, 92–121.
- PAKKALA, J., “Jeroboam’s Sin and Bethel in 1 Kgs 12:25–33”, *BN* 112 (2002) 86–93.
- PURY, A. DE, “Situer le cycle de Jacob: quelques réflexions, vingt-cinq ans plus tard”, in: A. Wénin (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History* (BETL 155), Leuven 2001, 213–241.
- REICH, R. *et al.*, “Recent Discoveries in the City of David, Jerusalem”, *IEJ* 57 (2007) 153–169.
- REICH, R. / SHUKRON, E., “The Urban Development of Jerusalem in the Late Eighth Century B.C.E.”, in: Vaughn / Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology*, 209–218.
- RÖMER, T., “Israel’s Sojourn in the Wilderness and the Construction of the Book of Numbers”, in: R. Rezetko *et al.* (eds.), *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, Leiden 2007, 419–445.
- SCHNIEDERWIND, W. M., *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel*, Cambridge 2004.

- SHARON, I. *et al.*, “Report on the First Stage of the Iron Age Dating Project in Israel: Supporting a Low Chronology”, *Radiocarbon* 49 (2007) 1–46.
- SHILOH, Y., *Excavations at the City of David I: 1978–1982, Interim Report of the First Five Seasons* (Qedem 19), Jerusalem 1984.
- , “South Arabian Inscriptions from the City of David, Jerusalem”, *PEQ* 119 (1987) 9–18.
- SOGGIN, J. A., “Abraham and the Eastern Kings: On Genesis 14”, in: Z. Zevit *et al.* (eds.), *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, Winona Lake 1995, 283–291.
- STEINER, M. L., *Excavations by Kathleen M. Kenyon in Jerusalem 1961–1967*, vol. 3, *The Settlement in the Bronze and Iron Ages*, London 2001.
- STERN, E., *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period, 538–332 B.C.*, Warminster 1982.
- , *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, vol. 2, *The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732–332 B.C.E.)*, New York 2001.
- THAREANI-SUSSELY, Y., *Tel ‘Aroer: The Iron Age II Caravan Town and the Hellenistic–Early Roman Settlement*, Jerusalem 2011.
- THOMPSON, T. L., *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham*, Berlin 1974.
- TILLY, M., *Einführung in die Septuaginta*, Darmstadt 2005.
- TOFFOLO, M. B. *et al.*, “Absolute Chronology of Megiddo, Israel, in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages: High-Resolution Radiocarbon Dating”, *Radiocarbon* 56 (2014) 221–244.
- VAN DER TOORN, K., *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, Leiden 1996.
- VAN SETERS, J., *Abraham in History and Tradition*, New Haven 1975.
- VAUX, R. DE, *The Early History of Israel*, Philadelphia 1978.
- ZORN, J. *et al.*, “The *m(w)sh* Stamp Impressions and the Neo-Babylonian Period”, *IEJ* 44 (1994) 161–183.

# The Last Days of Judah and the Roots of the Pentateuch

## What Does History Tell Us?

*Lester L. Grabbe*

My assignment was to focus on the historical context. What I propose to do is start from what we know, or at least what I think I know, and work out from there: first, from the time when the Pentateuch was known; then back to its possible roots in the early monarchy; on to the Judahite kings, Hezekiah to Zedekiah; a brief look at the exilic period; then, finally, the Persian period, when I think the Pentateuch was finalized. The question of linguistic dating will inform the discussion at various points.

### 1. First Signs of the Pentateuch<sup>1</sup>

We begin with the position that is very clear to me: the Pentateuch as a collection of definite scrolls did not exist until the late Persian period. In spite of references to the “book of the law” at various points in the biblical text, such a book was unknown in the Persian-period sources before 400 BCE. Our first clear evidence for the Pentateuch as a religious document accepted by many Jews seems to be Ben Sira, sometime around 200 BCE. In his “Praise of the Fathers” he goes through most of the books of the Hebrew Bible, as they relate to various figures, but it is clear that he is at times quoting or closely paraphrasing passages from the Pentateuch (Sir 44–50). The probability that he has before him a version of our present-day Pentateuch is overwhelming, though not necessarily one agreeing precisely with the present-day Masoretic text, nor indeed with the Septuagint or the Samaritan Pentateuch. We also have the strong tradition that the Pentateuch was translated into Greek in Egypt during the reign of Ptolemy II (282–246 BCE), even if there are good reasons for doubting many of the details (*Letter of Aristeas*). There is no question that the writing alleged to have been translated was the Five Books of Moses. A little earlier, perhaps around 300 BCE, we have the statement of Hecataeus of Abdera that the Jews have a “written” law (Diodorus Siculus 40.3.6).

---

<sup>1</sup> This summarizes discussion given at greater length in GRABBE, *History*, 331–343; “Elephantine”. For reasons of space, I shall only summarize certain issues if they have already been published with detailed arguments and primary and secondary bibliography.