

# Approaching Yehud

New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period



Edited by Jon L. Berquist

## APPROACHING YEHUD

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Society of Biblical Literature  
Atlanta

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BO	Bibliotheca orientalis
BTS	Bible et terre sainte
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CANE	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> . Edited by Jack Sasson. 4 vols. New York: Scribner, 1995.
CAT	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
<i>CurBS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
<i>ErIsr</i>	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament

FCB	Feminist Companion to the Bible
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
Fort.	Persepolis Fortification Text
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
HSAT	Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments.
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
IBT	Interpreting Biblical Texts
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JANESCU</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JOTSUP	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
LCBI	Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation
MdB	Le monde de la Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
<i>NEAEHL</i>	<i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> . Edited by Ephraim Stern. 4 vols. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Carta; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.
<i>NIB</i>	<i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology

OEAANE	<i>The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East.</i> Edited by Eric M. Meyers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
Or	<i>Orientalia</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PSB	<i>Princeton Seminary Bulletin</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
REA	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
RES	<i>Revue des études sémitiques</i>
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SB	Sources bibliques
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSemPap	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
Sem	<i>Semitica</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SSN	Studia semitica neerlandica
TBC	Torch Bible Commentaries
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.</i> Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 15 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–2006.
Transeu	<i>Transeuphratène</i>
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
VF	<i>Verkündigung und Forschung</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>



## APPROACHING YEHUD

*Jon L. Berquist*

The recent emphasis on the Persian Empire within biblical studies is not new. A century ago, a number of Persian-period studies were at the forefront of ancient Near Eastern and biblical studies (Strassmeier 1890a; 1890b; Tolman 1908; Cowley). Throughout the early parts of the twentieth century, scholars recognized the influences of the Persian Empire on the social setting and politics of fifth- and fourth-century Jerusalem and speculated about the connections between Zoroastrianism and nascent Judaism and Christianity. However, these studies did not greatly influence the mainstream of biblical studies. Instead, critical biblical studies reflected the Wellhausenian view that Israel's prime occurred earlier, during the monarchy, and that the postexilic period was a lesser, derivative era. Theologically, this reflected an understanding of the period as legalistic (in comparison with earlier periods of Israel's history). At its worst, the disregard of the Persian period participated in a denigration of Judaism that still runs throughout much biblical scholarship.

Biblical studies' interest in the Persian period diminished, although the middle of the twentieth century witnessed the publication of several books that became standards of Persian-period scholarship (Olmstead; Kent). In biblical studies, the Persian period was often depicted as a "dark age" or, at the best, as a "silver age"—a diminished time that eluded historical analysis and that offered little theological or literary innovation. This flowed, in part, from an erroneous assumption about the high degree of historical certainty with which earlier periods could be known. The Persian period was considered an unknown territory in comparison to periods such as the monarchy, at a time when scholarly certainty about the monarchy was at an unsustainable peak. Inherent in the scholarly construction of a "postexilic" era were the assumptions that the preexilic times could be known securely and that the times afterwards were logical extensions of earlier historical events and situations. Biblical scholarship has now lost much of its faith in the older views of great historical certainty in the monarchy, and theories of history now emphasize both continuity and discontinuity of any historical period with its past.

By the 1960s, English-speaking scholarship developed a broad consensus about Israel's exile and restoration (Ackroyd 1968). This consensus view advanced several theses: the Babylonian deportations of 587 B.C.E. substantially emptied the land of Israel; the deported community in Babylonia was the generative inheritor of earlier Israelite tradition; the exilic period (i.e., the Babylonian deported community) was instrumental in the writing and standardization of most older literary and theological traditions; the deportees were united in their desire for a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem to serve as the core of religious experience; this desire expressed itself in some messianic expectations; in 539 B.C.E. the ascension of the Persian Empire allowed for the mass return of these Babylonian deportees; and these people became community leaders in Jerusalem who reshaped the city into a temple-centered community based on the desire to restore First Temple religion in an improved cult. This consensus was rarely questioned for a quarter century.

During this time, studies in Achaemenid history and society continued to grow. The groundbreaking work of Muhammad Dandamayev became available in western Europe and in North America. In Groningen, an Achaemenid History Workshop began meeting in 1983, eventually publishing thirteen volumes of essays that advanced Persian-period studies. Eventually, the rise of new Persian-period historians such as Pierre Briant began to change the field and make the work of a new generation more accessible. In biblical studies, the rise of social-scientific studies of ancient Israel became more prominent through the work of the Society of Biblical Literature's Sociology of the Monarchy Section and the publications of series such as *Social World of Biblical Antiquity*. Perhaps the most important change in this sociological advance was the shift in attention away from the exile and restoration paradigms to concepts of empire and colony. This provided a different conceptual framework for understanding Jerusalem and its environs in the time of the Persian Empire, and sociological attention led to a new set of understandings about the Persian period. This rise of scholarship produced a number of new insights about Yehud, the Persian colony that included Jerusalem.

These new perspectives influenced several commentaries (Petersen; Meyers and Meyers 1987; Blenkinsopp 1988) and became the basis of several monographs (Smith-Christopher 1989; Hoglund 1992; Berquist 1995a). An increasing number of major scholarly publications also reflected these new views. The development of the so-called Copenhagen or minimalist school of historiography also shifted attention from earlier periods to the Persian and Hellenistic periods as crucial contexts for understanding the construction of all Hebrew Bible literature (Lemche; P. R. Davies 1992). Scholars began to talk of the exile as a "myth of the empty land" and thus began to

imagine the postexilic period from a different starting point (Carroll 1992; Barstad). A number of groups arose in the SBL to study the Second Temple period's history, literature, and society. In the last twenty years, a variety of new publications and new scholars have pushed forward the sociological and historical study of Yehud, as well as new analyses of the literature and theology of the period.

Of course, the rise in Persian-period studies was also an attempt to deal with Jerusalem and Yehud in their own terms, apart from a chronological-ideological framework that depicted it as a devolved precursor to the New Testament or to early Judaism. The creation of "Persian-period" studies gave the field a way to speak of itself not in terms of preparing for a new messianic age or in terms of hearkening back to a previous monarchy.

Through these changes in scholarship, a new image of Yehud has emerged. It may still be too soon to refer to this image as a consensus, but much of the last decade's scholarly work has shared a number of these working assumptions:

- ▶ The Babylonian incursions of the early sixth century B.C.E. removed a minority of the population of Jerusalem.
- ▶ Only a small minority of the descendents of these deportees migrated from Babylonia to Yehud in 539, and they migrated over a period of several decades.
- ▶ The population of Jerusalem and its environs in the Persian period was much smaller than earlier estimates (and these estimates have continued to decline from tens of thousands to perhaps a few thousand).
- ▶ The exilic period produced little of the literature that became the Hebrew Bible, but much of the literature may have been assembled in a relatively short period of time in the fifth century (and some would identify a later period).
- ▶ The community of Yehud was not unified but experienced substantial social conflict. This included diverse opinions about the construction and function of the Second Temple as well as cultic practices.
- ▶ Yehudite culture was strongly influenced by Persian imperial politics. The empire utilized methods of social control in Yehud similar to those that the empire employed in other colonies, and the Hebrew Bible shows the evidence of this social and ideological intervention.
- ▶ The economics of Yehud as a Persian colony are crucial to the understanding of the society and literature of the period.

- ▶ Yehud was a site for ethnic conflict and ethnic definition, perhaps setting the stage for later understandings as well.

This new perspective on Yehud has become widespread in biblical scholarship, but the ramifications of these changing assumptions are yet to be seen. The essays in this volume reflect many of these assumptions and contribute to the ongoing process of analyzing Yehud, but they also call into question the methodological issues embedded in these very assumptions.

The first essay in this volume focuses on society and religion. Melody Knowles concentrates on pilgrimage, a key feature of Persian-period religion, treating pilgrimage as a religious practice as well as a social phenomenon.

The next pair of essays examines textuality and intertextuality. Richard Baultch explores the methodological bases of intertextuality, with suggestions about how these methods will influence Persian-period studies. Donald Polaski's essay on power and writing advances the discussion about what texts existed at the end of the Persian period and how Yehud viewed those texts.

Historiography forms the theme for the third set of essays. David Janzen scrutinizes the interpretation of Ezra 9–10, a key passage for understanding ethnicity as well as cultic practice in Yehud. Christine Mitchell discusses the role of identity in the creation of history, attending to the book of Lamentations. Both of these essays suggest new ideas about how and why history is understood and written.

Three essays illuminate issues of prophecy. Brent Strawn's work demonstrates the role of iconography in understanding Isa 60. Jean-Pierre Ruiz uses postcolonial reading strategies to interpret Ezekiel. John Kessler's treatment of Zech 1–8 places this prophetic writing within the context of Yehudite society.

Wisdom literature also receives treatment from two authors. Herbert Marbury focuses on Proverbs, examining the ethnic rhetoric about the "strange woman." Jennifer Koosed's exploration of Qoheleth deconstructs the book's presentation of women. In a final chapter, I offer an exploration of identity in Psalms.

Taken together, these twelve chapters represent a range of studies that push forward new perspectives on Yehud. They treat a range of biblical genres and a variety of textual and historical problems. Several of the essays deal with issues of ideology and power, advancing the study of these concepts. Gender and ethnicity run throughout these chapters, treated in a more sophisticated manner than in earlier works. Economics and imperial politics inform the results of several of these chapters. Issues of empire and colonialism appear in most of the essays, with some moving toward explicitly postcolonial perspectives. Methods of social history, critical theory, and deconstruction also run throughout these approaches. The methodological variety of these chapters

show that Persian-period studies are moving beyond the historical roots and the sociological studies of twenty years ago. The growing consensus about the Persian period is not only a result of changes in scholarship but has become a catalyst that, through interaction with different critical methodologies, is creating prolific new scholarly approaches.

These chapters not only reflect the new perspectives on Yehud but also raise a number of matters that scholarship is only beginning to address: (1) imperialism and its effects, including postcolonial interpretation sensitive to the multiple encodings of agency and resistance; (2) bodies and sexualities as constructed in the Persian period; (3) economics, including food, migration, trade, and class; (4) identity, in particular ethnicity and perceptions of the other in the setting of pluralism; (5) scribalism and canonization, as well as the proliferation of texts; (6) regional differences between Yehud and its neighbors, within the imperial context; (7) relations and influences between Yehud and its non-Persian contacts, including peoples of the Mediterranean; (8) the reintegration of social history with religious practices of the period; and (9) understanding the production and uses of texts within the period, including the history of different writings now extant and the intertextual relations between texts.

This book's essays demonstrate how Persian-period studies can move forward to address these and other questions, building upon the work of the past and integrating a variety of new methods to produce a more fulsome picture of society and religion in Yehud.



## PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD\*

*Melody D. Knowles*

What was the practice of religion in the Persian period, and how did it reflect  $\text{YHWH}$ 's return to Jerusalem? Given that most of the biblical literature of this time emphasizes that  $\text{YHWH}$  is again dwelling in the city ( $\text{YHWH}$  is "the God who is in Jerusalem," according to Ezra 1:3), is it possible to detect this emphasis on sacred geography in the people's worship? According to Safrai, pilgrimage is a feature of the Hasmonean period and later; there is no good textual evidence for Persian-period pilgrimage, and the few biblical examples are only exceptions that prove the rule: "There are various cases of pilgrimage from the Diaspora, but this only proves that there was no kind of widespread need."<sup>1</sup> Although most evidence indicates that the practice of pilgrimage to Jerusalem was not widespread until the Hasmonean period and later, it is possible to trace its earlier manifestations in the biblical texts from the Persian period, including the prophets, the historical narratives, and Pss 120–134. Yet the different genres maintain different emphases when describing the practice of pilgrimage. The prophets emphasize eschatological pilgrimage and include both the Diaspora and the nations as participants. Although the Chronicler recounts pilgrimage as a past event, the nations are included as participants. In Ezra and Nehemiah, however, pilgrimage occurs in the present day and mostly includes only the chosen community in Yehud. Finally, Pss 120–134 speak little of the ethnic categories of the participants, but these "Songs of Ascent" incorporate several themes that relate to and encourage pilgrimage to Jerusalem. I will discuss the evidence for each genre in turn and then present

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\* Another version of this essay appears as chapter 4 in Melody Knowles, *Centrality Practiced: Jerusalem in the Religious Practice of Yehud and the Diaspora in the Persian Period* (SBLABS 16; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 77–103.

1. "Vereinzelte Fälle von Wallfahrt aus der Diaspora gab es wohl schon immer, aber es lässt nachweisen, dass es sich um keinen verbreiten Brauch handelte" (Safrai: 8 n. 45).

two models for understanding the practice of pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Persian period based on the biblical texts and the archaeological evidence.

For the purposes of this essay, I define pilgrimage as travel outside one's sphere of daily activity to a site designated as holy by the community in order to worship or communicate with the divine. This is similar to other scholars' definitions, such as "paying a visit to a sacred site outside the boundaries of one's own physical environment" (Dillon: xviii) or "sacred journey and arrival to the temple, with the prayers and sacrifices which ensue" (Smith and Bloch-Smith: 16). In ancient Israel and Greece, pilgrimage was probably not an infrequent event: Exod 23:17; 34:23 and Deut 16:16 command every male to appear before יהוה three times a year, and journeys to a central cult site were also made on other occasions, such as the birth of a child (Lev 12:6–8). In ancient Greece, the festival at Olympia was celebrated once every four years, the festivals at Nemea and Isthmia were celebrated every two years, and spectators and participants could attend festivals at various other sites (Dillon: 99). Given the frequency of ancient pilgrimage (at least as a desideratum), there was not the same emphasis on the penitential hardship requiring a long or arduous journey as is found in Late Antique, Middle Ages, or Muslim practice. Further, not specifying a particular geographical distance in the definition of pilgrimage (only that the worshiper must leave the confines of her daily world) allows both those coming from within the province of Yehud as well as those who traveled from farther away to be designated pilgrims. This definition differs from more modern conceptions of pilgrimage that predominantly focus on once-in-a-lifetime treks involving a great distance. Such pilgrimages require a radical break from regular social conditions (Turner 1969; 1973a; 1973b; Turner and Turner). Given that ancient pilgrimage often occurred more often than once in a person's lifetime, and given that people from the local communities could worship together at the cult, such radical breaks do not seem as relevant to the ancient world.

Although pilgrimage in the Hebrew Bible is sometimes designated by the terms **גג** or **גג** ("to make a pilgrimage," and "feast, pilgrim-feast," so BDB), journeys to a sacred place are also designated by other terms of travel. In this aspect, Hebrew is similar to Greek, where pilgrimage is designated with the terms such as "those going" and "those coming." Other terms for pilgrimage in Greek texts include "the watchers" (**θεαταί**), "those attending a panegyris" (**πανηγυριζοντες**), and those who wish "to go, to sacrifice, to seek an oracle and to watch" (see Dillon: xv–xvi.) For instance, **בוא** ("to go in, enter") describes the journey to the place where יהוה or other gods are worshiped,<sup>2</sup>

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2. The verb **בוא** is used to describe the journey to the place where יהוה is (Isa

offentimes in the explicit context of a **גן** (Deut 31:11; Isa 30:29; 2 Chr 30:5). In addition, the H form of **בוא** designates the bringing of offerings and sacrifices to YHWH.<sup>3</sup> The root **הלך** often designates the journey to a sacred area,<sup>4</sup> as does **עלה** (Exod 34:23–24; 1 Sam 1:3, 7, 24; Isa 2:3).

#### PROPHETIC BIBLICAL TEXTS

Foundational to the desire to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem is the acknowledgement that YHWH has once again taken up residence there, and this fact is emphasized throughout the prophetic texts of the Persian period. In Zechariah, YHWH proclaims “I have returned to Jerusalem” (1:16) and subsequently calls the temple “my house” several more times throughout the book (1:16; 3:7; cf. 2:10, 11). In Haggai, the temple is also predominantly called YHWH’s “house” (1:2, 9, 14) or “YHWH’s temple” (2:15, 18). Although Trito-Isaiah reminds the reader that YHWH “dwells in the high and holy place” (57:15), Jerusalem and the temple are also designated by YHWH as “my holy mountain” (56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25), “my house of prayer” (56:7), “my house” (56:7), “my glorious house” (60:7), and “my sanctuary ... [the place] where my feet rest” (60:13). Additionally, YHWH promises to “come to Zion as Redeemer” in Isa 59:20.

Since Jerusalem and its temple is where YHWH resides, it follows that worship of YHWH includes pilgrimage to the holy dwelling and the prophets envision this predominantly as a future practice that includes the community along with foreign nations. Zechariah 6:9–12 recounts exiles coming (**בוא**) to Jerusalem from Babylon bearing gold and silver. For the prophet, this act

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27:13), where other gods are worshiped (Judg 9:46; 1 Sam 5:5; 2 Kgs 10:21 [3x]; 2 Chr 23:17; Ezek 20:29; Hos 9:10), or where a prophet resides (1 Kgs 14:3, 5; 2 Kgs 4:42; Ezek 20:1, 3; cf. Ezek 14:4, 7).

3. So Gen 4:3, 4; Num 15:25; Mal 1:13 (2x). It also designates the bringing of offerings and sacrifices to the priests (Lev 2:2; 5:11, 12; 2 Kgs 12:5 [2x; Eng. 12:4]) or into the temple (2 Chr 31:10; 34:9), and to YHWH’s storehouse (Mal 3:10).

4. The verb **הלך** is used when Jephthah’s daughter and her companions went and mourned on the mountains for two months (Judg 11:37) and when, subsequent to her death, the daughters of Israel went out (**תלכנה**) regularly to lament her (11:40). Other examples of this term used to describe a journey to a place of worship and/or sacrifice are found in Gen 25:22 (Rebekah); Exod 3:18, 19 (the Israelites wanting to take a three-day journey into the wilderness); Deut 14:25 (Israelites who live far from Jerusalem), 26:2 (the nation); 1 Chr 21:30 and 1 Kgs 3:4 (David and Solomon going from their home to worship and sacrifice at Gibeon); Qoh 4:17 (Eng. 5:1); Ps 55:15 (Eng. 55:14); Isa 30:29; and Jer 3:6. Examples from outside the Hebrew Bible include the letter from Mari when Kiru, the daughter of Zimri-lim, asked her father permission to leave her situation to “go” (*lu-ul-li-ka-am-ma*) and sacrifice (ARM X 113.20–22; see Batto: 128).