Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period

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Achaemenid Imperial Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the Fifth Century B.C.E.

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Palestine in the Pre-Persian Period: The Geopolitical and Administrative Organization

Tiglath-pileser III's (745–727 B.C.E.) conquest of the Levant shaped its geopolitical and administrative character for generations to come. Tiglath-pileser conquered the strongest and largest kingdoms in the region, inflicting heavy damage. He deported large parts of the populations, replacing them with exiles from remote regions, and annexed their territory to Assyria, turning them into Assyrian provinces.[1] The

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1. Five provinces were established by Tiglath-pileser III in northern Syria and on the Syrian coast after he conquered the region in the early years of his reign (740–738 B.C.E., Weippert 1982: 395–408; Hawkins 1995: 95–97; Na'aman 1995: 105; and see the summary in Lipschits 2005: 4–5): Arpad (Arpadda); Kullanīa-Kalnē/Kinalūa; Ḥatarikka/Ḥadrāk; Ṣimirra (Ṣumur); and Manṣuāti. Three more provinces were established by Tiglath-pileser in central and southern Syria in the territories of Aram-Damascus, after it was conquered in 732 B.C.E.: Qarnīna (Qarnaim); Dimašqa; and Ṣūbat/Ṣūbite (Ṣôbā). At the same time, the Assyrian king established two provinces in the former kingdom of Israel: Dū'ru (Dôr) and Magidû (Megiddo). Many scholars assumed, with Emil Forrer (1920: 61) and Albrecht Alt (1929: 203–5), that another province existed in the northern part of Transjordan during the time of Tiglath-pileser: the province of Gal'ad (Gil'ad/Gilead). However, there is no textual support for this assumption, and there is no concrete evidence regarding the Assyrian provincial system in the northern part of Transjordan. On this subject, see Oded 1970: 177–86; Na'aman 1995: 107, with further literature. For a different opinion, see Eph'al 1984; Stern 2001: 11–12, 43.

extent of Tiglath-pileser's success in annihilating the power of the Syrian kingdoms and abolishing the national distinctions of their populations is revealed by the fact that no independent political entity developed in the conquered Assyrian areas in the following centuries, nor was there any military threat to Egyptian, Babylonian, or Persian imperial rule from them. This state of affairs enabled the succeeding empires, and even the Seleucid dynasty, to control these regions and exploit their economic, commercial, and strategic potential.[2]

During the next 60 years, five more provinces were added to the array of provinces founded by Tiglath-pileser,[3] extending Assyrian direct rule over all the Levant. In addition to the provinces, a line of city-states was allowed to remain along the Phoenician and Palestinian coast, probably because they served the Assyrian interest, especially its maritime commerce, better as they were.[4] In the hill country east and west of the Jordan River, four small territorial kingdoms continued their existence under the Assyrian rule: Udūmu (Edom); Bīt-Ammān (Ammon); Mā'ab (Moab), and Ia'ūdu (Judah). From the Assyrian point of view, these kingdoms were too small and too weak to be a threat, not to mention the fact that they served the Assyrian interests by supplying agricultural products and taking part in overland commerce, especially the Arab trade.

2. On this subject, from the Persian-Period perspective, see the review of Briant 2002: 1014–15, with further bibliography. On the persistence of the Assyrian geopolitical and administrative system at least until the third century B.C.E., see Limet 2000. See also Na'aman 2000: 41–42.

3. Three of the new provinces were founded by Sargon II: Sāmerīna (720 B.C.E.; see Na'aman 1995: 106–7; and fig. 1, p. 105; Stern 2001: 49–51); Ḫamāt (Amattu) (720 B.C.E.; see Hawkins 1995: 97; Na'aman 1995: 107); Asdūdu (Ashdod; no later than 712 B.C.E.; see Tadmor 1964: 272–76; for a critique of Tadmor's proposal, see Na'aman 1994: 9–11, with further literature). During the early days of Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.E.), probably in 677/6 B.C.E., a new province was established south of Gubla (Byblos). Its capital was Kār-Esarhaddon, which had been built close to Ṣūdūnu (Ṣidôn; Tadmor 1966: 98; Grayson 1991: 125; Redford 1992: 358; Na'aman 1995: 17–19, and fig. 3 p. 108). The province of Ṣurru/Ṣūr (Tyre) was established in the last days of Esarhaddon or in the early days of Ashurbanipal (669–627 B.C.E.; see Grayson 1991: 126, 144–45; Na'aman 1995: 107–9 and fig. 3).

4. Along the Phoenician coast, south of the two provinces created by Tiglath-pileser III (Kullanīa/Kalnē and Ṣimirra/Ṣumur), Gubla (Byblos) remained a vassal kingdom, apparently throughout the period of Assyrian rule (Parpola 1970: 135; Elat 1991: 26; Na'aman 1994: 7). Neither the island of Tyre nor Samsimurūna or Arwāda, which extended to the north, were annexed. In Philistia, three small kingdoms survived: Isqalūna (Aškelôn/Ashkelon; Na'aman 1998: 222–25); Anqarrūna (Ekron; Dothan and Gitin 1994: 18–25; Gitin 1997; 1998: 274–78; Mazar 1994: 260–63); and Ḫazzat (Gaza; Tadmor 1964: 271; Katzenstein 1994: 37–38; Na'aman 2004: 55–60).

During the last third of the seventh century B.C.E., the geopolitical and administrative situation of the Levant was totally different from the situation at the beginning of Tiglath-pileser's rule. Besides the geopolitical and administrative changes, the Assyrian conquest wreaked destruction in most of the urban centers and deported large parts of the population. We can assume that Assyrian policy was to retain fortifications only in provincial capitals (Stern 2001: 50) and to build forts and Assyrian economic and military centers in strategic places all over the country. In the former territories of the Israelite Kingdom, for example, except for the three capitals of the provinces,[5] there is not even one fortified settlement that can be dated to the seventh century B.C.E. (Tadmor 1973: 70–71).[6] Most of the major towns in this area were abandoned or only poorly rebuilt, and the total settled area in all cities was much smaller than before the Assyrian conquest. This archaeological phenomenon is descernible by the fact that most of the population in the Assyrian provinces, especially in the interior areas, lived on farms and in villages; there was a marked decline in urban life.

The geopolitical and administrative character of the Levant changed only slightly under Egyptian rule during the last third of the seventh century B.C.E.[7] During the short period of Egyptian rule, for which there is scant historical documentation, Egyptian economic and strategic interests were apparently concentrated primarily along the coast (from Philistia to Phoenicia).[8] It is not clear to what extent Egypt was

5. On Megiddo, see Lemon and Shipton 1939: 62, and see also figs. 71–73, 89; Na'aman 1993: 109–12; Finkelstein and Ussishkin 2000: 601; Peersmann 2000: 525–27, 532–33; Tappy 2001: 242–44. On Dor, see Stern 1990; 2001: 19, and on Samaria, see against the conclusions reached by Kenyon 1957: 199 (Crowfoot 1942; 1957a; Hoglund 1992: 85, 211, but see, however Kenyon 1942: 116, 117), the opinions of Tappy (2001: 223–26, 579) and Stern (1982: 50–51; 2001: 19–20).

6. See also the data from Zertal's survey (1990), and see the summary of Stern (2001: 49–50).

7. This is against the view expressed by Hoglund (1992: 16–17) that during the Egyptian imperial domination of the Levant there was a break with the previous Assyrian imperial system of administration, and as a result the Neo-Babylonians and Achaemenids could not maintain the previous Assyrian administrative patterns in the Levant. Aside from Tyre (perhaps; see below), there is no historical basis for Hoglund's conclusion that the various Levantine territories reverted to their own patterns of hereditary rule during Egyptian domination and that Egyptian overseers collaborated with these local rulers.

8. At a fairly early stage of Egyptian rule of the region, Egypt established its control all the way to Phoenicia, subjugating Tyre and apparently Arwad as well (Katzenstein 1973: 299 n. 24; 313 n. 100; Redford 1992: 442). It seems that Tyre was restored at this time to its status as a vassal kingdom and that the Egyptians established their foothold in Philistia immediately following the Assyrian retreat (Lipschits 2005: 28–29). The establishment of Egyptian dominion in this overland passageway to Egypt was rapid (Redford

interested in the hill country or what effort it invested in establishing its authority there. However, it seems that Egypt ruled the entire area and that Judah was subject to Egypt and unable to conduct its own foreign affairs, certainly not along the coast or in the Jezreel Valley.[9]

The Egyptians had no problem assuming control of the former Assyrian provinces in Syria and as far as the west bank of the Euphrates. However, the ease with which Syria fell into the hands of the Babylonians (summer 605 B.C.E.) and with which the Babylonians conquered all the rest of the Egyptian holdings to the Egyptian border in the following year is evidence that the Egyptians had not truly succeeded in establishing their control of the region and that they held the region more in the sense of filling the vacuum left behind by the Assyrian withdrawal (Lipschits 2005: 31–35).

In his military campaign conducted in Ḥatti-land between June 604 and January/February 603, Nabuchadrezzar conquered all of the Levant as far as Gaza.[10] According to the Babylonian Chronicle, none of the local kings dared to resist Nebuchadrezzar except for the king of Ashkelon. The Babylonian response was decisive, and the fate of that city served as an example to the other kingdoms in the region.[11] During this time, there is no reason to ascribe any other destruction layer in the archaeological record to the Babylonian army: most of the country was organized into provinces that dated back to the Assyrian Period. It appears that the Egyptian retreat left the country to the rule of Nebuchadrezzar, unopposed.

Babylonian policy in the region did not change even following Nebuchadrezzar's failed attempt to conquer Egypt and the subsequent temporary weakening of Babylonian rule in the region (Lipschits 1998: 472–80; 2005: 49–52). However, continued instability during the days

1992: 442); apparently, the Egyptians were required to fight only against Ashdod (Na'aman 1991: 39–40; James 1991: 714; Redford 1992: 441–42).

9. Necho's presence in Megiddo, the killing of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:29), the later deposing of Jehoahaz from the throne (v. 33), and the appointment of Eliakim-Jehoiakim (v. 34) all attest to Egypt's intention of ruling Judah.

10. On the background to the Babylonian military campaign, its main events, and consequences, see Lipschits 2005: 37–42, with further literature.

11. On the description of the destruction of Ashkelon in the Babylonian Chronicle (BM 21946, lines 18–20), see Wiseman 1956: 28, 68–69; Grayson 1975a: 20, 100. On the archaeological evidence for this destruction, see Stager 1996. It might have been at this time that the territory of Ashkelon was annexed to Ashdod. If this is the case, it is the single change that the Babylonians made in the geopolitical and administrative organization of the Levant during the first phase of their rule.

of Psammetichus II (595–589 B.C.E.), and even more during the first years of Hophra (589–570), and the increasing threat from Egypt caused Nebuchadrezzar to modify his policy (589 B.C.E.): during the following years he conquered the remaining small vassal kingdoms near the border with Egypt, annexed them, and turned them into *provinces (Lipschits 1998: 482–87; 2005: 62–68). Judah was the first* target of the Babylonians. Afterward, apparently in 585 B.C.E., they attacked Tyre and Sidon, setting up a siege on Tyre that lasted for 13 years (until 572 B.C.E.; Katzenstein 1973: 330; 1994: 186; Wiseman 1991: 235; Redford 1992: 465–66; Vanderhooft 1999: 100–102). Apparently during the years of the siege, the Babylonians also attacked Ammon and Moab (Lipschits 2004b) and established their control also over Gaza, Arwad, and Ashdod. It is very likely that the successful takeover of northern Arabia by Nabonidus and his move to Tema (553–543 B.C.E.) resulted in the disappearance of the kingdom of Edom and probably the integration of its territory with greater Arabia (Lemaire 2003: 290; and see also Briant 2002: 45).

During this phase of Babylonian rule in the Levant, the Babylonians displayed an attitude toward the kingdoms of Philistia and those on the Phoenician coast that differed from their Assyrian predecessors. The former were conquered and turned into Babylonian provinces. Although the fate of the latter is unclear, it appears that during most of the Babylonian rule, certainly during the Persian Period, they were ruled by kings (Katzenstein 1994: 46–48).[12] The new Babylonian policy was destructive to the southern part of Palestine as well as to the Transjordanian kingdoms[13] as Nebuchadrezzar went about creating a buffer zone between Babylon and Egypt out of devastated, diminished

12. It seems that the explanation for this change is Philistia's strategic importance as the gateway to Egypt and the necessity for Babylon to maintain control over the region. Likewise, the continued instability in Philistia, their close ties with and loyalty to Egypt, as well as intensive Egyptian activity that continued in the region throughout this period all required the Babylonians to tighten their control by conquering and subjugating the region. In contrast, Egypt was less of a threat to the Babylonians on the Phoenician coast, although Babylon's economic interests there were considerable. A generous measure of political and military autonomy was essential to maintaining commerce in the region, including trade with Egypt. A fine account dating to the fifth and sixth years of Nabonidus (551–550 B.C.E.) has been preserved regarding the commerce between Egypt and Babylon; see Oppenheim 1967; Brown 1969: 101; Katzenstein 1994: 48.

13. The Babylonians brought a harsh blow to all the urban centers in Judah and Philistia. However, contrary to the opinion of Stern (summarized in 2000; 2004), we have no archaeological or historical basis for the idea that all or even some of the former Assyrian and Egyptian provincial centers were also destroyed.

provinces.[14] There is no evidence that the Babylonians invested any kind of effort in economic development in this region; furthermore, it seems that Nebuchadrezzar used the destruction of the region as a lever for rebuilding the parts of Babylonia that had been damaged during the long years of war, devastation, and deportation inflicted by the Assyrians. Large groups of exiles from the ruling, economic, and religious elite of the local kingdoms were sent to Babylon and settled in the devastated areas to develop them. However, total devastation of the land was contrary to Babylonian interests, because the rural population was needed as the human nucleus for the new provinces they had established. The rural settlements all over the land survived, even if on a much smaller scale. The Babylonians had no reason to create a settlement vacuum, which would only have undermined stability in the region, making it more difficult to rule and exploit its economical potential. I would even surmise that it was in the Babylonians' interest to preserve the rural settlements in those areas in order to receive their wine, olive oil, grain, and other agricultural produce as taxes (Lipschits 2004a; 2004b; 2005: 212–61). However, because the Babylonians did not have a specific policy for developing and protecting the settlements, especially in the peripheral regions of the south, many changes occurred there, apparently as a side effect of the collapse of the central systems and the infiltration of seminomadic groups.[15]

This was the situation encountered by the Achaemenids when they inherited the Babylonian Empire. From that time on, settlement developed according to Achaemenid interests and needs.

The Geopolitical and Administrative Situation in Palestine during the Persian Period

When Cyrus II conquered Babylon (539 B.C.E.), he inherited a huge empire that included all of Mesopotamia, as well as the area Across the River.[16] During his time and at least from March 535 B.C.E. on, the territories of the Neo-Babylonian Empire were included in one satrapy

14. We have no information about any intended change to the borders of the old Assyrian array of provinces or to the former small kingdoms that became Babylonian provinces during the first half of the sixth century B.C.E. It appears that the former system of borders remained the same (Aharoni 1962: 313; Garelli and Nikiprowetzky 1974: 157–59; Hoglund 1992: 5–6; Na'aman 2000: 41–42; Lipschits 2005: 135–86).

15. On this historical process, see the summary by Lipschits 2005: 140–47; 227–40.

16. On the importance of this historical event, see Olmstead 1948: 59; Cook 1983: 32–33; 1985: 212 ;Frye 1984: 95; Briant 2002: 44–45. In light of this rapid change and the administrative continuity between Babylonian and Persian rule, we can understand why there is no marked change in the material culture in the area Across the River.

under the rule of Gūbaru, Governor of Babylonia and Across the River (Ebir Nāri) (Leuze 1935: 25–36; Rainey 1969: 52; Briant 2002: 64, 71, 74–75).[17] We can conclude that the former administrative system proceeded without any marked change, even after the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses II (525 B.C.E.),[18] when it was added to the Empire as a separate administrative unit (Olmstead 1948: 70–85; Graf 1993: 151; Hoglund 1992: 23; Briant 2002: 48–49). The first changes in the administrative system for the province Across the River followed the suppression of the wide-ranging revolts in various parts of the Empire following the accession of Darius I (522/521 B.C.E.). At this point, the Persians established a subdistrict named Across the River.[19] The province Babylonia and Across the River continued to function as a unit, and in March 520 a new governor, Uštānu, was installed (Rainey 1969: 52–53; Stolper 1989: 289; Briant 2002: 484).[20] More than 30 years later, in October 486, just two months before the death of Darius I and the accession of Xerxes, another governor with the same title appears in a Babylonian legal text (BM 74554), and this is the last time we hear of this large satrapy (Stolper 1989). It was not until after Xerxes suppressed the revolt in Babylon (482 B.C.E.; see Olmstead 1948: 237 n. 23), that the subdistrict of Across the River was separated from the province of Babylon and given independent and equal status (Olmstead 1948: 112, 115; Rainey 1969: 55–58; Eph'al 1998: 109).[21] This independent status was retained until the end of the Persian Period. This is also the picture reflected in Herodotus's description of the middle of the fifth century B.C.E. (Briant 2002: 951, with further literature).[22]

17. It is interesting to note that all of the texts mentioning this title came from Uruk, except for one that came from the area of Babylon. For the list of the texts and further bibliography, see Stolper 1989: 290, and note c; 292.

18. On the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses II, see Briant 2002: 55–61; Cruz-Uribe 2003, with further literature.

19. On the administrative system that was organized by Darius I, see Tuplin (1987: 111–13) and the more cautious reconstruction of Briant (2002: 487–90). On the extent of the satrapy and its inner structure, see Rainey 1969: 51–78.

20. Most scholars have based their reconstruction on the appearance of "Tattenai, the governor (satrap) of the province Across the River" in Jerusalem in the second year of Darius (Ezra 5:3, 6; 6:13) and his appearance with the same title in a tablet dated to 502 B.C.E. They interpret the data as if the region Across the River was at this time a subdivision of the larger satrapy and Tattenai (Tattannu) a subordinate of Uštānu (Olmstead 1948: 78–81; Rainey 1969: 52–55; Cook 1983: 42–43; Frye 1984: 114–15; Stolper 1989: 289–90, 293, and n. 7, n; Petit 1990: 189–90; Briant 2002: 487–88, 951, with further literature).

21. However, see the reservations raised by Stolper 1989: 293–303 (with further literature and various opinions on pp. 292–93, and nn. 9–12).

22. Many scholars have reconstructed the historical events according to the description of Herodotus in 3.88–95 (Leuze 1935: 226–29; for more literature, see Stolper 1989:

Urbanization along the Coast and Ruralism in the Hill Country at the Beginning of the Persian Period

During the long years of Persian rule in Palestine, many geopolitical changes occurred, along with administrative reorganization, particularly on the coast but also in the hill country and in the southern areas of Cis- and Transjordan. We can assume that, like the Assyrians, Egyptians, and Babylonians, the Achaemenids also tried to shape the political, social, and demographic systems in Palestine according to their own military, economic, and governmental interests. The main evidence for this can be found in the large, wealthy urban and commercial centers that were established at the very beginning of the Achaemenid period along the Mediterranean coast, most of them well built and planned, some according to the Hippodamian plan (Kenyon 1960: 311–12; Stern 1990; 2001: 461–64).[23] Each of these cities was surrounded by smaller sites, and between them were many forts and Achaemenid administrative centers.[24]

The Achaemenid regime had governmental, military, and economic reasons for establishing its base along the Mediterranean coast, stabilizing the political situation in this area, and encouraging maritime and overland trade. One of the major goals of the Persians was to secure the Via Maris, as well as the roads in southern Palestine, as part of the military, administrative, and economic effort to control the route to Egypt (Ephʿal 1998: 117; Stern 2001: 371). Another need was to establish a strong political, military, and economic coalition vis-à-vis the Greeks. From the economic point of view, the Persian regime tried to develop and encourage the maritime trade that had been dominated by the Phoenicians (Briant 2002: 383, 489–90).[25]

Development of maritime trade was probably the main reason that the Achaemenids granted authority over all of the coastal area of Pal-

292 n. 9). However, Herodotus's list describes the Persian administrative organization during the time of Xerxes I or later, certainly not during the time of Darius I (Calmeyer 1990; Stern 2001: 368; Stolper 1989: 293 and n. 13).

23. For a detailed list of the cities along the Palestinian coast and for further literature, see Stern 2001: 380–407; Lipschits 2002a: 47.

24. On this settlement pattern along the coast, see Stern 2001: 380–407. On the settlement pattern along the Sharon Plain, see Tal 2000: 115–22.

25. This may explain why the Persians appointed a governor (who bore a Babylonian name) in Tyre already during the time of Darius (Dandamaev 1995: 29–31; but see Briant 2002: 952). Cruz-Uribe (2003: 16) has argued (in contrast to Wallinga 1987) that it may be that the Persians developed a sizable navy after the invasion of Egypt, when they gained control over significant numbers of ships.

estine (to the border of the province of Ashdod) to the kings of Tyre and Sidon at the end of the sixth or the very beginning of the fifth century B.C.E.[26] It appears that (under their patronage and under Phoenician rule) the Achaemenids allowed the coastal population a great degree of independence, at least in regard to internal, commercial, and economic affairs (Elayi 1980: 25; 1982; Stern 1990: 155 and n. 25; 1995: 433).[27] Many of the positions of authority on the local economic and political level had been filled by the Phoenicians after the deportations of locals by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, some as early as the end of the eighth century, and some only two generations previously.

From the archaeological point of view, there is a remarkable amount of Phoenician influence in evidence along the coast of Palestine from the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E.[28] The establishment of most settlements occurred during a period of less than 50 years, which implies that this was the result of some sort of official decision (Tal 2000: 121, and fig. 3, p. 125). Settlement activity culminated during the second half of the fifth and the beginning of the fourth centuries. By then many Phoenicians had already infiltrated the region (Lemaire 1990: 58–59; Tal 2000: 120–21, with further literature).

In contrast to the rich, well-developed cities found along the coast, very few building remains dating to the the Persian Period have been uncovered in the hill country—that is, within the province of Yehud or the province of Samaria (Lipschits 2002a). This is the case even at sites

26. The main source for this reconstruction is the inscription on the sarcophagus of Eshmunazor, king of Sidon, which says "the Lord of the Kings granted us Dor and Jaffa, the mighty lands of Dagan which are in the plain of Sharon" (Donner and Röllig 1962: no. 14, lines 18–19; 1964: no. 14, pp. 19–23. For an English translation, see Gibson 1982: 108). Despite many difficulties with reconstructing the chronology of the Sidonian kings and identifying the Persian king who is mentioned only as the "Lord of the Kings" (see Briant 2002: 490, and further literature on p. 952), it now appears that we can accept the chronological reconstruction of Elayi (2004) and date the delivery of the coastal area to the Phoenician kings to the end of the sixth or to the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E. According to Pseudo-Scylax, in the *Periplus*, neither the Tyrian nor the Sidonian territories were consolidated into a single large domain; instead, their territories were comprised of loosely associated smaller areas (Katzenstein 1979: 30–31; Elayi 1980: 17; 1987: 81–83; Gardiner 1991: 20; Stern 2001: 379–80, 386–87, 418). We may also accept the idea that in the early fifth century B.C.E. the Achaemenids granted Upper Galilee and the area east of Tyre to the Tyrians (Herbert and Berlin 2003: 46–48).

27. Compare with J. Lund's conclusion (1990: 32) about the northern coast of Syria: "if the ancient literary sources had not been preserved, forcing us to rely on the archaeological material alone, few would probably have dared to suggest that the northern coastline of Syria had ever been controlled by the Persians."

28. See Elgavish 1968: 42; 1994: 93–94; Stern 1984: 80–81; 2001: 379–407; Roll and Ayalon 1989: 34; Tal 2000: 120–22.

where an abundance of pottery vessels, seal impressions, and other typical Persian-Period finds have been found (Stern 2001: 424–27, 461–62; Lipschits 2002a: 45–46).

Albright and Kenyon claimed that the archaeological data reflect the cessation of town life in the Persian Period and the concentration of population in villages. Along the same lines, Aharoni and Kelso argued that the archaeological data reflect the fact that Persian-Period residences were built outside the limits of Iron Age cities, which is why they were not found in the excavations (Aharoni 1956: 108; 1964: 120; Kelso et al. 1968: 38). Stern, on the other hand (2001: 461–62), has claimed that the scarcity of building remains from this period does not reflect the reality of that time but is the outcome of incomplete archaeological data caused by three characteristic features of the Persian-Period strata: (1) many sites were abandoned after the Persian Period and never resettled, so the uppermost stratum was damaged (mainly by erosion); (2) at many sites, the Persian-Period occupation level was severely damaged by extensive building activities during the Hellenistic and Roman periods; (3) some sites were occupied by large palaces, forts, or administrative buildings, and the residential area was located at the edge of the site.

I agree with Stern's archaeological assessments in many respects. However, he does not distinguish between the coast and the hill country, and the situation in the coastal area is significantly different from the situation in the hill country. There, the absence of architectural remains is clear on both sides of the Jordan; furthermore, the contrast between the hill country and the coastal area is so sharp that one conclusion is clear: during the Persian Period, as in the Assyrian and Babylonian periods that preceded it, there was a marked process of attenuation of urban life in Judah, and to a lesser degree also in Samaria. This phenomenon contrasts with the continuation of rural settlements in Judah (especially in the northern part of the Judean Hills and in the region of Benjamin)[29] and Samaria.[30] The situation in Ammon and

29. See Carter 1994; 1999: 137–66; Lipschits 1999; 2003: 326–55; 2005: 240–61; Milevski 1996–1997: 7–29; Na'aman 2000: 43.

30. See Finkelstein 1978: 64–74; 1981; Zertal 1990; Stern 2001: 424–28. The survey of Samaria revealed a large rural array, which means that during the Persian Period Samaria functioned as a center for production of olive oil and wine (Zertal 1990: 13–14; 1999). Excavations in this area have revealed Persian-Period strata (without building remains) only at Samaria and Shechem, while at Tell el-Far'ah (N) there were only scanty remains of a small village and at Tel Dothan there was no Persian-Period level at all. On this subject, see the comprehensive review by Stern 2001: 424–28.

Edom is comparable.[31] Exactly the same settlement pattern characterizes the northern coastline of Syria (Lund 1990)[32] and the western part of Galilee, areas that served as the agricultural hinterland for the large coastal towns between Achzib and the Acco plain (Stern 2001: 385).

The settlement pattern of the Persian Period was a continuation of the process that began during the Babylonian Period, after the harsh blow that the Babylonians dealt to the small kingdoms in the hill country west and east of the Jordan.[33] Neither the Babylonians nor the Persians had any interest in encouraging and developing urban centers in the rural hilly regions on both sides of the Jordan. The function of those regions as agricultural areas was much more important and as such they were probably also easier to control.

Achaemenid Interests in the Hill Country and Patterns of Settlement

As demonstrated above, the lack of local power structures (i.e., the local dynasts, priesthood, the landed aristocracy, etc.) in Palestine at the end of the sixth century was the result of the Assyrian and Babylonian onslaught and deportations. Along the coastal area, the Achaemenids allowed the Phoenicians to govern and develop the area in a very early stage of their rule there; hence the rapid urbanization of the area. And, of course, increased commerce enables new social and economic elites to develop quickly.

In the hill country, the economy was agricultural, and the social, political, and demographic conditions were substantially different. Furthermore, the area's importance to the Achaemenid regime was

31. On Ammon, see Sauer 1985: 213–14; 1986: 18; Herr 1995: 121; 1999: 227; LaBianca and Younker 1995: 411; Lipschits 2004b. On Edom, see Bienkowski 2001b: 270.

32. Most of the important sites were near the coast, many with sheltered harbors, and should be regarded as commercial centers of the coastal trade, while the small agricultural sites in the inner plains and the mountain areas served as the agricultural hinterland (Lund 1990: 28). Strabo (7, 16.2.9 [751–52]) described this situation with regard to the Latakia region: "Then one comes to Laodicaea situated on the sea. . . . Its surrounding region . . . abounds in wine. Now this city furnishes most of the wine to the Alexandrians, because the whole of the mountain that lies above the city is covered with vines almost as far as the summits."

33. On the "rural perspective" of sixth-century Judah, see Lipschits (2004a), in contrast to the opinion of Faust (2003: 37–53). In this regard, Hoglund's theory of a "Persian policy" of ruralization (1991: 57–60) is debatable. Hoglund himself has admitted that his argument is speculative and that the data can be explained in other ways. The problem is that he was using very problematic archaeological data (Carter 1999: 247–48). In fact, there is no archaeological evidence of demographic change or of any change in settlement pattern at the beginning of the Persian period (Lipschits 2003: 365).

not as great (Briant 2002: 976).[34] The Achaemenids, like the Babylonians that preceded them, were interested in maintaining the existing rural settlements in the hill country, which were an important source of agricultural goods, which were probably collected as tax. Exactly the same situation obtained in the Negev and the southern Shephelah, as we ascertain from the many ostraca from this region, most of them published in recent years and dating to the fourth century B.C.E.[35]

Thus, the Achaemenids apparently had no interest in establishing urban centers in the hill country or in developing new social, political, and economic power structures on the local level. Their rule over the hill country was different from their rule in the urban centers on the coast: along the main roads and at strategic points, Achaemenid forts and administrative centers were built. Garrison forces, mainly mercenaries, were stationed in the forts, and various economic and administrative functionaries were seated in the administrative centers, where they managed the affairs of the province and were responsible for collecting the taxes, preparing the Achaemenid expeditions, and executing the orders of the central government. Even when the Achaemenids had a specific commercial interest in the hill country, such as in the unique products from ʿEn Gedi, they developed an isolated imperial production center, without any cooperation from the local population.[36]

Samaria and Jerusalem: When Did Jerusalem Become the Capital of Yehud?

Unlike Jerusalem, Samaria continued to exist without interruption from the seventh to the fourth centuries as the political and administrative center of the province of Samaria. The city was able to develop as an urban center long before Jerusalem (see Knoppers, in this volume

34. As an example of the difference between the coastal area and the hill regions, compare the distributions of Greek pottery, as summarized in Lehmann 2000.

35. From the ostraca connected with taxes and tax collectors, we learn about the agricultural economy and understand the importance of this economy to the Persian regime. See Lemaire in this volume (pp. 413–456) for further literature and discussion.

36. The archaeological picture is very clear in this case: in contrast to the end of the seventh century, when there were dozens of small Judahite settlement sites around ʿEn Gedi and between it and the hill country, during the entire Achaemenid period the area was empty and ʿEn Gedi was an isolated economic center. It may even have been a royal estate. The absence of sites in the area of ʿEn Gedi and along the roads that connected it with the hill area is a clear sign of the imperial monopoly on the production and transportation of goods that were produced there (Lipschits 2000: 37, and see also the list of sites from the end of the Iron Age and from the Persian Period on pp. 40–42).

pp. 265–289). The fortifications from the eighth century probably survived until the end of the Persian Period and even into the Hellenistic and Roman periods (see above, n. 5). We know for certain that at the end of the fifth and during the fourth centuries there were local social and economic elites in this region, as the finds from Shechem and Wadi ed-Daliya and the Samarian coins may attest (see the summary of Stern 2001: 424–28). Some of the finds at Samaria dated to the Persian Period may point in the same direction: the imported Persian clay cup (Crowfoot 1957b: 216); the Attic ware (dated from the end of the sixth to the end of the fourth centuries; see Crowfoot 1957b: 213–16); three bronze fragments of an Achaemenid throne (Tadmor 1974: 37–43); the clay mold (dated to the Persian Period; see Resiner 1924: 24, pl. 64m; and cf. Tadmor 1974: 42 and n. 17); and the ostraca (especially in Paleo-Hebrew; see Birnbaum 1957: 11–25). Basing his conclusion on this material, Stern claimed that Samaria was one of the biggest urban centers in Palestine (2001: 424). Zertal has claimed that it was the biggest and most important city in Palestine (2003: 380). The very early date (the middle of the fifth century) of the first phase of the temple on Mt. Gerizim[37] may complete the picture. We can assume that the process of social and religious crystallization in Samaria took place much earlier than heretofore assumed, and it could be that the status of Samaria was enhanced as part of this process.[38]

There are no architectural or other finds that attest to Jerusalem as an urban center during the Persian Period.[39] Furthermore, there are no traces of rich tombs around the city during this period and no signs of rich material culture in or around the city. The absence of architectural remains may mean that Jerusalem was wretchedly poor, not just in the period after the Babylonian destruction but also at the height of the Persian Period (Kenyon 1967: 105; Weinberg 1970: 204; Lipschits 2003: 326–34).

37. See Magen 1993: 104–8; 2000; personal communication; Magen, Misgav and Tsfania 2004: 6; Stern and Magen 2000; 2002; Stern, personal communication.

38. This is not the subject of this paper (and cf. Knoppers' discussion in this volume), but if this is the case, then the term "Samarians," usually used for the pre–Mt. Gerizim Temple inhabitants of Samaria and thought to be an appropriate designation throughout the late Assyrian-Babylonian and early Achaemenid Periods (parallel to Bickerman's "Proto-Samaritans"), no longer should be extended quite so late, and we can start using the term "Samaritans" (Bickerman's "Samarians") for the population of the area following the foundation of the temple at a much earlier period than we heretofore thought. On these labels, see Macdonald 1972: 143–44. For further literature, see Bedford 2001: 13 n. 23.

39. See the summary of the archaeological evidence in Lipschits 2005: 214–16.

In light of this clear archaeological evidence, we should interpret the "Return to Zion" as a gradual process that did not leave its imprint on the archaeological data. After nearly a century of Persian rule, Jerusalem was small; the city itself was not larger than 60 dunams. According to the accepted demographic ratio, we should estimate the total number of Jerusalem residents at about 1,500,[40] probably the nation's elite—that is, priests and other temple servants, landed aristocracy, ruling social classes, and so on. There is no longer any room for theories regarding a "mass return" at the beginning of the Persian Period.[41]

Based on the interpretation of the archaeological material and the historical circumstances (Lipschits 2003; 2005: 123–26, 155–86, 261–74), we can reconstruct a very small return at the beginning of the Persian Period (probably accompanied by the temple vessels) and several small waves of return during the first hundred years of Persian rule (in the time of Cyrus II, Cambyses II, Darius I, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I),[42] probably according to families.[43] If this is the case, we should also presume that most of the returnees were settled in Jerusalem and its surroundings.

We may compare this slow process to the biblical description of the three main "waves" of emigration from Babylon to Judah: the first at the very beginning of the Persian Period, after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (described in Ezra 1:9–11; 5:14–16—headed by Sheshbazzar); the second in the first days of Darius, after the death of Cambyses II (described in Ezra 2:1–2; cf. Hag 1:1; 2:2, 21—headed by Zerubbabel); and the third during the days of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7–8).[44] The "list of

40. See Lipschits 2003: 364–65; 2005: 261–74; and cf. Carter 1999: 201; Becking, pp. 3–18 in this volume. Compare also Noth 1954: 308.

41. The very few, very late clues that we have regarding the first stage of the return to Zion attest to this limited immigration, both in number of people and in ability to found an urban center or even a cultic center. The prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah describe precisely these difficulties and economic problems (Meyers and Meyers 1987: xxxvii). The lack of Levites and Ezra's efforts to coerce some to join him on his way to Jerusalem (Ezra 8:15–20) may support this thesis.

42. See Hoglund 1992: 23; Knauf 1994: 167; Carter 1999: 199–201; Kinet 2001: 190–202; Lipschits 2005: 159–69.

43. On the importance of the family as the primary social entity in the exilic period, see Albertz 1992: 407–11; 2001: 135–36. Note also the evidence of the Neirab archive (Ephʿal 1978: 84–87; see also Timm 1995). See, however, the remarks and reservations of Briant (2002: 885, with further literature).

44. In this essay, I will not deal with the chronological problems of Ezra and Nehemiah but merely state that I agree with the traditional chronology, accepted by most modern scholars. According to this chronology, Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 458 (seventh year of Artaxerxes I, Ezra 7:7) and Nehemiah in 445 (twentieth year of the same Persian king, Neh 2:1).

returnees" in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7[45] also points in this direction.[46] It appears that the list is composed of two major sections, and it is plausible that these lists determined the affiliation of the residents of the province ("the whole community together," Ezra 2:64 and Neh 7:66), who, for the author/editor, are identical with "the people of the province who came up from among the captive exiles," that is, the legitimate continuation of the nation of Israel.[47]

We may conclude that there were no restrictions on Judeans who wished to return to Judah after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus II. However, it is hard to believe that the Persian regime ordered or even encouraged Judeans to do so (Kuhrt 1983; van der Spek 1982; Hoglund 1992: 23). The existence of the temple was the main reason for priestly and Levitical families or other temple functionaries to come to Judah. The situation in Babylon may have been an important motivation for a

45. For a thorough comparison of the lists, see Batten 1913: 71–103; Galling 1951: 149–58; Allrik 1954. Modern scholarship has accepted the conclusion that the list in Ezra is later and secondary to the list in Nehemiah (Japhet 1982: 84; 1993: 112; Williamson 1983; Blenkinsopp 1988: 43–44; 86–87). For further literature, see Williamson 1985: 29–30.

46. Despite the fact that some scholars believe that the list reflects the waves of immigration that reached the province of Yehud at the beginning of the Return to Zion (cf. Galling 1951: 150–51; Myers 1965: 15–16), and despite the clear tendency among some scholars to assume that this was a summary list of several waves of immigration that had arrived before Nehemiah's time, I find it difficult to accept the idea that this was the list of those who actually returned from Babylon, whether at once or in several waves of immigration (Lipschits 2005: 159–69). Batten (1913: 72–73, 74–75), for example, proposed dating the list to the time of Ezra primarily on the basis of parallels between the names of those who immigrated with Ezra and the families of immigrants who appear on the list of the Returnees. Liver (1959: 117–19, and n. 40) attempted to establish this hypothesis on a historical basis, claiming it was during the early days of the Return to Zion that the major waves of immigration arrived and that they were joined by new waves at the beginning of Darius's reign, when the situation in Babylon worsened. On this subject, see also Myers 1965: 15–16; Schultz 1980; Williamson 1985: 31. Rudolph proposed seeing the list as a summary of immigration that took place within a relatively short period during the reign of Cyrus and the beginning of Darius's rule (1949: 17). This is, to a certain extent, an extension of Alt's proposal (1934: 24–25); Alt had postulated that this list was intended to regulate the rights of the returnees over the land. Williamson limits the date of the list to the time of Cyrus and Cambyses (1985: xxxiv, 31–32, with further literature). On this subject, see also Blenkinsopp 1988: 83. However, there is no supporting evidence in the archaeological and historical record for demographic changes to the extent of this list, either at the end of the sixth and beginning of the fifth centuries, or even during the course of the fifth century. Consequently, it is likely that the list of the returnees is a literary construction based on various lists, perhaps a census of all residents of the province made at various intervals.

47. See Gunneweg 1985: 53–66; Blenkinsopp 1988: 83; Albertz 2001: 127–28, and see in this direction the various ideas of Albright 1949: 87–88, 110–11; 1950: 64 n. 122; Bright 1959: 376–77.

few Judean families to move to Judah, especially the consequences of the revolts after the death of Cambyses II (522–521 B.C.E.; see Albertz 1992: 444) and after the death of Darius I (486–484; 483 B.C.E.; see Liver 1959: 117–19 and n. 40).[48] The unstable economic situation in Babylonia may have been another motivation for small groups of Judeans to move to Judah, while the developing coastal area in Palestine provided many possibilities for commerce and for integrating agricultural trade from the hill country with the coastal commerce. The stable situation in Samaria and Judah was a good foundation for developing agriculture and commerce in the area (Meyers 1987: 509–10).

The Status of Jerusalem during the Achaemenid Period: From Cultic Center to bîrâ

The real change in the history of Jerusalem occurred in the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., when the fortifications of Jerusalem were rebuilt. Along with scanty archaeological evidence,[49] we have a clear description of this event in the Nehemiah narrative.[50] The list of the builders of the wall (Nehemiah 3) that was combined with Nehemiah's Memoirs by a later editor (Lipschits in press) is another testimony to this event. Furthermore, the impression of this event as one of the most conspicuous, important events of the time led to enormous expectations for the renewed status of Jerusalem in the mind of the writer(s) of Nehemiah 11 (Lipschits 2002b; 2005: 423–40, with further literature).

The significance of this change in Jerusalem in the middle of the fifth century can only be interpreted in one way: Jerusalem became the capital of the province (*bîrâ*), replacing Mizpah. For the many scholars who have accepted Alt's theory (1931; 1934) that Judah was part of the province of Samaria until the days of Nehemiah, this conclusion is not new (and see in this direction the views of McEvenue 1981 and Bed-

48. Following Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1987), we should be skeptical with regard to the various accounts of the harsh blow caused to Babylon by Xerxes. See also the very critical approach of Briant (2002: 114–16, 543–45) regarding the revolts in Babylon and the Achaemenid reaction. See Briant's survey of various scholars' opinions, with further literature on pp. 899–900, 962–63.

49. On the archaeological finds of the Persian Period city wall, as well as the other material from this period in Jerusalem, see the summary by Lipschits 2001; Stern 2001: 434–36; but see also the opinion of Ussishkin, pp. 147–166 in this volume.

50. On the Nehemiah source, see the summary of Reinmuth (2002: 335–36), who, in many respects following Williamson, argues that the story of the construction of the city wall ("Mauerbau-Erzählung") was composed during the governorship of Nehemiah and that it is a reliable contemporary source.

ford 2001: 45). However, Alt's hypothesis has no serious foundation, and most contemporary scholars do not support it.[51] Mizpah was probably the capital of Judah during the 141 years from the time of Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam (586 B.C.E.; Lipschits 2001) to the end of the Neo-Babylonian Period (Lemaire 2003: 292) and probably until the time of Nehemiah (445 B.C.E.; Blenkinsopp 1998: 42 n. 48; cf. Lemaire 1990: 39–40; 2003: 292).

As has been demonstrated very well by Lemaire and Lozachmeur (1987; 1995), in the Persian Period a provincial capital was called a *birtâ* (Akk. *birtū*, Heb. *bîrâ*), and the meaning was 'a fortified town', usually with a garrison in it (Neh 2:8; 7:2; cf. Hoglund 1992: 208–10; Fried 2002: 11–13). Because the fortifications of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Babylonians (cf. 2 Kgs 25:10), and because the first attempt to rebuild them without the permission of the Achaemenid authorities failed (as reported in Ezra 4; cf. Neh 1:3), it seems that, even if the temple had already been rebuilt in Jerusalem and even if the city had already been reestablished as the cultic center of the Judeans, it could not serve as a capital.

The main question remains: What changed in the middle of the fifth century B.C.E.? Why did Jerusalem become the capital of Yehud?

Why Did Jerusalem Become the Capital of Yehud in the Middle of the Fifth Century B.C.E.*?*

Assuming that the fortifications of Jerusalem were actually built during the first period of Nehemiah as governor in Yehud (Grabbe 2004: 301–2), the main question that may be asked is: What happened during the time when Artaxerxes I allowed the Judeans to build fortifications in Jerusalem? What was the reason for this change in Persian policy?

Most scholars have explained the building of Jerusalem's fortifications as the result of a Persian decision: it was a reward or perhaps even resulted from Persian interests or need. The emphasis has been placed on the active role of the Achaemenids. Most scholars have connected Achaemenid permission to build the fortifications of Jerusalem to political and military developments in the region: the pressure of the Delian League on the Mediterranean coast after 476; the revolt in Egypt (from winter 461/460 to 454); the unrest all along the coastal

51. See, e.g., Lemaire 1990: 32–36; Blenkinsopp 1998: 37; Lipschits 1998: 483; Mittmann 2000: 28–42, with further literature.

area of Palestine (including the reference to Dor in the Athenian tribute list from 454); and the revolt of Megabyzus (448). We do not have to go as far as the theories of Morgenstern (1956; 1957; 1960) or Morton Smith (1971: 127–29, 391–92);[52] sufficient rationales may be found in the explanation put forward by Galling as the reason for the fundamental change in the Persian policy in the Levant and the mission of Nehemiah (1937: 45–47); the many explanations by scholars for the building of the fortifications in Jerusalem as an Achaemenid inducement to loyalty;[53] or the theory that the Persian efforts to fortify Jerusalem, as well as the other actions of Nehemiah, were part of a much larger imperial effort to control and integrate extensive areas into the imperial system (Meyers 1987: 516; Hoglund 1992: 165–69, 207–12, 220–25; Fried 2002).

Most scholars reached their conclusions on this active Achaemenid policy toward Judah on the basis of the Greek sources on the history of this period, the book of Ezra–Nehemiah on the history of Judah and the Judeans during this period, and a basic assumption regarding the strategic importance of Judah.[54] However, it is questionable that there was real danger to the rule of Artaxerxes I in the western part of his empire as a result of the revolt in Egypt,[55] the pressure of the Delian League,[56] and the alleged revolt of Megabyzus.[57] Did the Achae-

52. On the various theories of "the alleged disturbances at the end of the first quarter of the fifth century," see Hoglund 1992: 61–64, 127–28 (and also add to these theories the problematic suggestion made by Sowers 1996). See Hoglund's appropriate answer to these theories (pp. 64–69), and compare with Briant 2002: 960.

53. See Olmstead 1948: 313–17; Rowley 1963: 237–38; Myers 1965: xxii–xxiii; Ackroyd 1968: 141; 1970: 175–76; Widengren 1977: 528–29; Bodi 2001: 69–86. On the various theories, see the review of Hoglund 1992: 86–92.

54. In addition to the basic studies by Hoglund and Carter and the literature cited there, see also Meyers 1987: 511 and n. 13; Albertz 1992: 445–46; Yamauchi 2004: 9. I will not treat here the various claims about the special benevolence of the Achaemenid kings toward the Judeans and Judaism. See, against this, the note of Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989: 249.

55. See, for example, the historical reconstructions by Olmstead 1948: 289–90; Burn 1962: 5–16; and Cook 1983: 127; and compare the discussion of Bigwood 1976: 1–25 and the discussion and concerns raised by Briant (2002: 573–78; 973–74, with further literature). It seems that the revolt was confined to the Delta and did not threaten Achaemenid control in other parts of the Empire.

56. Many historical reconstructions have been proposed, for example, on the basis of the mention of Dor in the Athenian tribute list from 454 B.C.E.; but see, against this, the note of Lemaire (1990: 56 n. 135).

57. There is good reason to doubt the reliability of the description of this revolt (it is mentioned only by Ctesias, *Pers.* 68–70); compare Bigwood 1976; Hoglund 1992: 162–63; Briant 1992: 577–79.

menids sense real danger? Was there any genuine change in the way the Achaemenids ruled the Levant?

Attempting to understand the segmented, literary-theological description in the Bible of the events in Jerusalem in the middle of the fifth century by using Greek literary sources, but without recourse to archaeological or any other evidence (such as Achaemenid sources), to explain Persian policy and action is, to say the least, methodologically problematic. The ubiquity of this problematic methodology was the reason for Hoglund's (1992) research into the efforts by the Achaemenid regime to control and integrate various areas into the imperial system. However, aside from the very problematic methodology[58] he utilized and problems with his archaeological data and conclusions,[59] the more basic problem of his widely cited thesis is the conclusion that the middle of the fifth century was the period when the Achaemenids expended much effort on controlling and integrating large territories of the Levant into the imperial system—and that Judah was an important objective of this effort.[60]

On this last point, I can easily agree with Briant's ironic amazement at the perceived importance of Judah for resolution of the Achaemenid problems along the coast and on the border with Egypt: "I have never understood what decisive strategic advantage against Egypt the small

58. This is not the place for a full criticism of the methodology at the base of Hoglund's thesis. However, aside from his decision to focus on the middle of the fifth century (pp. 163–64, 168–69, and see below), it is methodologically unacceptable to use architectural typology as an analytical tool for assessing possible increases in the garrisoning of imperial forces in the Levant as part of integrating large areas into the imperial system (pp. 165–205, and see esp. pp. 168–69), especially after nearly 300 years of Mesopotamian (Assyrian, Babylonian, and, later, Persian) rule in Palestine; there are many examples of Mesopotamian architecture and Persian reuse of Assyrian structures.

59. This is not the place to discuss the archaeological data presented by Hoglund, but in my opinion most (if not all) of Hoglund's fortresses are not to be dated to the middle of the fifth century. See the critique by Bienkowski (2001a: 358) regarding the date that Hoglund (1992: 172–75) assigned to Persian-Period structures at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh; see also Lemaire 1994. Compare this with Tuplin's explanation for the Achaemenid fortresses (1987).

60. Based on Hoglund's work, Carter (1999) suggests a new subdivision of the Persian Period: Persian Period A (from 539/8 to the mid-fifth century B.C.E.) and Persian Period B (from the mid-fifth century to 332). This division is problematic from almost every angle but especially in its attempt to define a material culture using (very problematic!) historical data (see the critique in Lipschits 2003: 359). The classification of the archaeological evidence into these two subdivisions does not stand the test of reality. Carter does not even try to substantiate the model that he presents. He lacks clearly defined assemblages of pottery that are stratigraphically distinguished and dated decisively in terms of chronology. To a large extent, his ideas remain a theoretical model that should not be adopted.

land of Judah could have had in the eyes of the Achaemenid central authority" (2002: 976, and see pp. 578–79, 974). Even more (in contrast to Hoglund's thesis), I doubt the relevance of a fortified city in the hill country for the Achaemenid military during the fifth and the fourth centuries; I doubt the importance of fortifications or even a garrison in Jerusalem for the continued conflict between the Persians and the Egyptians; and I doubt the need for such a substantial change in *modus operandi* in the middle of the fifth century. I also find no military motivation for strengthening the Persian holdings along the roads in the hill country and the Negev area during this period; however, the fact that Judah was situated between Persia and Egypt may explain the social, economic, and military processes that were at work at the end of the fifth and beginning of the fourth century, when the Egyptians freed themselves from the Persian yoke (preserving their independence until 343 B.C.E.). During this time, the Achaemenids may have thought that Palestine, especially the southern parts of it, had become a very important border area, making it a battlefield for the Persian army and many of its enemies. It may be that this period was the most important one in the history of this region after the Babylonian conquest and destruction at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E. (Briant 2002: 646–55, 663–66, with further literature on pp. 991–92), and this probably was the time when the Achaemenids established their control and reorganized their administration and security along the roads in the southern parts of Palestine (the southern part of the coast area, the southern Shephelah, and along the Beer-sheba–Arad valleys). This is probably when the main administrative center at Lachish (Stratum I) was built (Tal and Fantalkin, pp. 167–197 in this volume); it was the period when most of the forts and administrative centers along the roads in the Negev area were built (Stern 2001: 420–21, 577–79); and it is the time from which come many unprovenanced Aramaic ostraca, as well as the ostraca from the Beer-sheba–Arad valleys. From all of these ostraca we learn about the importance of the southern Shephelah and this region to the Persian economy, military, and administration (see Lemaire, pp. 413–456 in this volume).

The answer to the question why Jerusalem became the capital of Yehud in the middle of the fifth century is found, in my opinion, in the internal Judean (or Jerusalemite) social, economic, political, and demographic process, which the Persians did not prevent, although they probably were aware of the risks they were taking and the fact that the

process was to some extent not in their best interest.[61] At the center of this long process was the temple, not only as a cultic, literary, and theological center, but as a center for gathering taxes and carrying out other important fiscal tasks.[62]

This slow, gradual reestablishment of the local social, religious, and economic power around the temple personnel in Jerusalem occurred about two generations after the reestablishment of the city as the cultic center of Yehud. We cannot detect this process with archaeological tools, because the changes were too slow and too small. It is clear, however, that by the middle of the fifth century Jerusalem had arrived at a point of a change.[63]

If we accept the thesis that the Aramaic letters that were inserted into Ezra 4:7–24 reflect an attempt to build fortifications around Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes I, before the arrival of Nehemiah,[64] we can see this as an attempt by local social powers to fortify Jerusalem without dependence on Achaemenid interests and even without the permission from the Achaemenid regime (vv. 12–16; cf. Williamson 1984: 82).[65] This attempt may explain the news that reached Nehemiah through Hanani, "one of my brothers" (Neh 1:2), who came from Judah and "said to me, 'Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire'" (vv. 1, 3; Williamson 1984: 82; 1985: 56–57, 171; Blenkinsopp 1988: 113–14, 204). The news from Jerusalem stirred Nehemiah to seek permission from the king: "send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I may

61. See the warnings in the letters cited in Ezra 4. For this case, it is not important if the Aramaic documents are authentic or not; see Williamson 1985: 62–63, as well as the discussion below.

62. On the importance of the temple as an instrument of Achaemenid fiscal administration, see Schaper 1995; cf. Schaper 1997.

63. Stern (2001: 581–82) worked with the same assumption, basing his view on the archaeological material, but he interpreted the cause and the results differently.

64. On the possible authenticity of the letters, see Stolper (1989: 300), as against the linguistic and stylistic arguments of Schwiderski (2000: 344–51; 354–80). However, the possibility that they are original documents that were edited and adapted to fit the frame of the editor's purposes should be considered (Williamson 1985: 59–60), as presented by Grabbe (in this volume), even if he is skeptical about the two documents discussed here. On the wall building, see Williamson 1984: 81–82; Yamauchi 1990: 270.

65. Blenkinsopp (1988: 113) has connected it with the mention of the גדר in Ezra's confessional prayer (Ezra 9:9). It is interesting to note, even if it is difficult to accept, the thesis of Morton Smith (1971: 122–24), who argued that with this event Ezra's mission ended in disgrace and he was recalled to the imperial court.

rebuild it" (2:5). This may also explain the description of the wall that Nehemiah inspected (Neh 2:13, 17; cf. 1:3) and the rapid completion of the building project, which focused on blocking the breaches in the wall and erecting gates (Williamson 1984: 82).

When Nehemiah arrived as the governor of the province, he found these local powers already established in Jerusalem. This is the first time that we have any reference to the problems of various social classes: commercial relations with the Phoenicians (Neh 13:16; see Williamson 1985: 395, and the discussion of Edelman, pp. 207–246 in this volume); the economic, social, and family relations with the upper classes and leaders in the neighboring provinces (Neh 6:17–19; 13:4, 23–28); the problem of marriage with foreign women (Ezra 9–10; Neh 13:27); and social conflicts between the rich families, nobles, and landowners and the poor families who had to sell their land and houses in order to pay their debts and heavy taxes (Neh 5:1–13; see Albertz 1992: 495–97, with further literature).

The agreement of the Persians to build fortifications in Jerusalem and to alter the status of the city to the capital of the province was the most dramatic change in the history of the city after the Babylonian destruction in 586. However, we know nothing about the reasons for this change. The most logical explanation is that the Persian authorities agreed to the request (of the Judeans/Jerusalemites/some representatives of the Judeans/Nehemiah?) when they realized that, besides its status as the ideological and literary center, Jerusalem had already become the fiscal center of the province (given the usual role of the temple in gathering taxes; see Schaper 1995; cf. Schaper 1997). It might be that the real Persian interest was in the fact that the governor of the province would as a result be as close as possible to the temple.

The importance of this change was understood by the compiler of the Nehemiah Memoirs and the editor of the book of Nehemiah as the beginning of a new period (Lipschits in press), with high expectations and national aspirations that the city would be renewed as of old, its military, material, and governing powers reestablished, and its status restored (Lipschits 2002b). However, in spite of attempts to repopulate the city, the poor archaeological remains in Jerusalem (at least in the narrow area of the city of David) show us that, even after the city wall had been rebuilt, the actual demographic and architectural situation in the city did not change dramatically. In fact, Jerusalem did not become a real urban center until the Hellenistic Period.

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