FROM JUDAH TO JUDEA

Hebrew Bible Monographs, 43

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FROM JUDAH TO JUDAEA

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD

Edited by

Johannes Unsok Ro

SHEFFIELD PHOENIX PRESS

2012
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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

ALEXANDER FANTALKIN is a Lecturer at the Jacob M. Alkow Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures at Tel Aviv University, Israel.

AVRAHAM FAUST is a Professor in the Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology at Bar-Ilan University, Israel.

YIGAL LEVIN is a Senior Lecturer in the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan University, Israel.

JOHANNES UNSOK RO is a Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at International Christian University, Japan.

YOSHINORI SANO is a Professor in the Department of Literature at International Christian University, Japan.

OREN TAL is a Professor at the Jacob M. Alkow Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures at Tel Aviv University, Israel.
**ABBREVIATIONS**

[placeholders included - need ‘proper’ abbs list for this volume at next proof stage]

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<td>ABD</td>
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<td>Afo</td>
<td>Archiv für Orientforschung</td>
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<td>AnBib</td>
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<td>AOAT</td>
<td>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</td>
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<td>BETL</td>
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<td>BIS</td>
<td>Biblical Interpretation Series</td>
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<td>BZAR</td>
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<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<td>Discoveries in the Judean Desert</td>
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<td>JRSS</td>
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<td>LHB/OTS</td>
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<td>PEQ</td>
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<td>PNAS</td>
<td>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America</td>
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<td>RB</td>
<td>Revue biblique</td>
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From Judah to Judaea

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<td>SAOC</td>
<td>Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization</td>
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<td>SBL</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature</td>
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<td>SEA</td>
<td>Svensk exegetisk årsbok (Swedish Exegetical Annual)</td>
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<td>SFSHJ</td>
<td>South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism</td>
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<td>SJLA</td>
<td>Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity</td>
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<td>STDJ</td>
<td>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUNY</td>
<td>State University of New York</td>
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<td>TRE</td>
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<td>TWAT</td>
<td>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</td>
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<td>Vetus Testamentum, Supplements</td>
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<td>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>ZA</td>
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Judah and Its Neighbors in the Fourth Century BCE: A Time of Major Transformations

Alexander Fantalkin and Oren Tal

Abstract

The current article deals with Achaemenid imperial policy in fourth century BCE southern Levant, as is evident by the historical sources and the archaeological data. It is suggested that following the Egyptian rebellion of 404–400 BCE, southern Palestine underwent major transformation as a result of becoming the southwestern frontier of the Persian Empire. An attempt to reconstruct the political history and its social and economical manifestation is been offered, while focusing on the inland regions of Judah and Edom. One of the major consequences of this new geo-political reality has resulted in the canonization of the Torah. Thus, its inception should no longer be viewed as an outcome of inner-societal compromises between different Judahite groups, but rather as a conscious response of Jerusalem’s priestly circles to early fourth century BCE Zeitgeist of the southern Levant, when Egypt was no longer a part of the Persian Empire.

Keywords: Southern Levant, Judah, Edom, Achaemenid, Egypt, Fifth Satrapy, Southern Frontier, Imperial Policy, Archaeology, History, Lachish, Architectural Landscape, Moneyed Economy, yhd/yh Stamped Seal Impressions, Administration, Pentateuch, Canonization.

This paper aims at summarizing and updating in a coherent manner a number of previously published ideas regarding the Achaemenid imperial policy in fourth-century BCE southern Levant, accompanied by new research findings and yet unpublished insights.1 Using the results of archaeological excavations and surveys, and the available historical sources, we will try to

1. The framework of the International Symposium on Socio-economic Structures of Judah and its Neighbors in the Persian Period, which took place at Tokyo International Christian University (February 17–19, 2011), provided a great opportunity for such an endeavor, undertaken at the request of the symposium’s organizer. In this respect, we are grateful to Johannes Unsok Ro for his kind invitation and warm hospitality. The text of the paper follows in the main a number of studies previously published (Fantalkin and Tal 2004; 2006; 2012), with additional yet unpublished observations.
reconstruct the political history and its social and economical manifestation, focusing on the inland regions of Judah and Edom. Judah and especially Jerusalem, owing to their role in biblical literature and their religious impact on western civilizations, have long been archaeologically researched. However, the research directed at the region’s first millennium BCE history has been mostly focused on the periods that preceded and succeeded the fourth century BCE, that is, the First Temple period and the latter part of the Second Temple period, when the country was a small but independent political entity. In the last few years there has been a growing interest in the settlement archaeology of the Neo-Babylonian, Persian (Achaemenid) and early Hellenistic (Ptolemaic-Seleucid) periods. The available data-base on Judah seems at first glance to be sufficient to tackle the problem at hand. Yet, this data-base is actually quite problematic. In many of the large-scale excavations carried out in archaeological sites in Judah, the strata pertaining to the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods were meager; some revealed few architectural remains with unclear building plans or pits (silos, refuse, etc.), while others yielded pottery that at best was in some cases unearthed and unstratified and did not represent proper occupational layers. Suffice it here to mention sites, such as Bethel, Tell en-Naṣbeh (biblical Mizpah), Gibeon, Tell el Ful (biblical Gibeath of Saul), Nabi Samwil, Anathoth, Bethany, Ramat Raḥel, and Jericho (cf. Stern 2001: 428-43; Lipschits 2005: 154-81; Tal 2006: 15-163 [and index], and Betlyon 2005: 20-26 [for a recent survey]). In the case of Jerusalem, the Persian period city shrank back to its pre-eighth century BCE size and the western hill was empty until the second century BCE (Geva 2003: 521-24; Finkelstein 2008; Lipschits 2009). Even this small area of the city was apparently sparsely settled and mostly confined to the southern part of the City of David near the Pool of Siloam. The most impressive building plan of the period under discussion in Judah was discovered at ‘En Gedi (Building 234) and dated to the Persian period (and below). The stratigraphic relation of the first fortress at Beth-Zur with occupational layers of Persian date is questionable and there we cannot assign its building plan to the Persian period with certainty (and below). Other late Persian and early Hellenistic buildings were documented in non-urban sites. Worthy of mention are the fortress and agricultural estate of Har Adar (Dadon 1997) and the agricultural estates of Qalandyah (Magen 2004) and Aderet (Yoge 1982) (for a list of sites of early Hellenistic date, see Tal 2006: 125-29, 145-54). On the other hand the so-called satrapy of Late Persian- and Early Hellenistic-period Edom (Idumea) differs geographically from the territory of Edom of the Late Iron Age. Although the name Edom is normally reserved for the older, trans-Jordanian, abode of the Edomites, distinction was made in the scientific literature, and the Greek place-name Idoumaia—or more frequently the Roman Idum(a)ea—became the preferred toponym of the region that is generally located in the inland of southern
Palestine. The region, according to the consensual view, is bordered by the Negebite desert on the south, Philistia on the west, Judah on the north, and the Dead Sea and the trans-Jordanian mountain ridge on the east. In terms of settlement archaeology, the region’s major border sites are Beth-Zur on the north, Beersheba, Tel ‘Ira, Aroer, and Arad on the south, Tell Jemmeh and Tell el Far‘ah (south) on the west, and the hamlets of the southern Dead Sea on the east. The archaeological evidence from these sites on the fourth century southern Levant is far more extensive and will be shown below.

Our first focus of interest is the site of Lachish which is located on the northwestern ‘buffer zone’ between Judah and Edom. Extensive archaeological excavations carried out at Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir) had uncovered substantial architectural remains and pottery finds attributed to Level I. Both the British excavations on behalf of the Wellcome-Marston Archaeological Research Expedition to the Near East, under the direction of J.L. Starkey (Tufnell 1953), and the renewed excavations on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, under the direction of D. Ussishkin (2004), have produced remarkable archaeological data. These data together with the results of surveys in the areas surrounding Lachish (Dagan 1992; 2000) enable us to revise previous interpretations of the finds from Level I (fig. 1). Following our revision, we shall argue that the construction of the Residency of Lachish Level I, and a number of other structures, should be dated to c. 400 BCE, or shortly thereafter, in sharp contrast to the previously suggested date of c. 450 BCE. Our revised chronology for Level I, combined with a reassessment of other sites in southern Palestine, demands a fresh look at a wide range of issues related to the Achaemenid imperial policy in the region. It seems that the establishment of the fortified administrative center at Lachish around 400 BCE and of other Persian centers in southern Palestine at that time or shortly thereafter, became necessary when Persian domination over Egypt came to an end in 404–400/398. Consequently, southern Palestine became an extremely sensitive frontier of the Persian Empire, all of which paved the way to a higher level of direct imperial involvement in the local administration.

Archaeological Synopsis of Lachish Level I and its Dating

Lachish is located on a major road leading from the Coastal Plain to the Hebron hills, bordering the Judean foothills (the Shephelah in the local idiom), some 30 km southeast of Ashkelon. According to the archaeological evidence, both the Residency and fortifications (the city wall and the gate) were constructed according to a preconceived plan. These architectural components suggest a Persian governmental center. The Residency was erected on the highest point of the mound upon the podium of the destroyed Judean palace-fort of the Late Iron Age. It was thus located close to the
center of the mound, with its back wall facing the city gate. The ground plan of the Residency reflects the combination of an Assyrian building with central courtyard, evident by the open court in its northern part, and a Syrian bit-hilani, evident by the portico in the west part of the courtyard (fig. 2). 2

Columns of the porticoes were made of well-cut drums standing on round column bases above a square, stepped plinth. The presence of characteristic dressed stones indicates that some of the rooms were roofed by barrel vaulting. 3


3. The well-cut drums found in the Residency at Lachish are the earliest stone-made examples documented in Palestine (see Fischer and Tal 2003: 21, 29). In earlier periods, they were most likely preceded by wooden columns, such as those reconstructed in the megar-a-styled Late Bronze Age buildings of cultic nature. A similar process is evident in the dressed-stone barrel vaulting, which likely replaced a similar technique in mud.
Figure 2. Lachish, Residency (after Tufnell 1953: pl. 119).
The city wall and the city gate reused the ruined fortifications of the Late Iron Age Level II, while preserving their contour and method of construction (fig. 3). By contrast, the Residency was built on pits and debris layers, which contained Persian-period pottery predating its construction, as shown in the renewed excavations (Ussishkin 2004: 96, 842). There is also evidence for its reuse during a subsequent Late Persian or Early Hellenistic stage: the drums of dismantled columns were found in a secondary context (Tufnell 1953: 133 and pl. 22.7).

Based on renewed stratigraphic analysis (Ussishkin 2004: 95-97, 840-46), we may conclude that Level I consisted of three phases:

- The first phase is designated by us Level IA, which is characterized by Early Persian pits.
- The second phase is designated Level IB, which is characterized by massive Late Persian construction. This included the Residency, fortifications, and a number of other structures and it corresponds to Lachish’s role as a regional administrative center.
- The third phase is designated Level IC, which is characterized by a Late Persian and/or Early Hellenistic occupation, corresponding to the reuse of both the Residency and the building next to the Great Shaft, and the erecting of the Solar Shrine.

In the process of studying local and imported pottery from the renewed excavations of Level I, we were able to establish a more accurate dating for each of these phases (Fantalkin and Tal 2004). The assemblage of Level I consists of common, semifine and imported fine wares. The vast majority of common and semifine ware is definitely local, though there is a single example of an Egyptian ware bowl and few examples of East Greek amphorae from Chios. The common ware includes bowls and heavy bowls, as well as kraters, cooking pots, juglets, flasks, storage jars, amphorae, and lamps. The semifine ware includes bowls, juglets, and amphorae. The fine ware, for which we have a considerable number of fragments, is restricted to Attic imports. The pottery finds are mostly of Persian date and came from pits and fills that represent occupation layers. The difficulty in distinguishing typological developments in common and semifine ware pottery types of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, forced us to regard the Attic imports as the best anchor in establishing a chronological frame for the occupational periods of Level I.
The bulk of Attic imports retrieved in the renewed excavations must be placed in the first half of the fourth century BCE, with several transitional late-fifth/early-fourth-century BCE types (Fantalkin and Tal 2004: 2187-88). The same holds true for the vast majority of Attic imports retrieved during earlier British excavations at the site. This pottery is cursorily described in Lachish III but has never been fully published. 4 Despite the difficulties in

4. The present whereabouts of many of these sherds is unknown. However, we located and inspected more than two dozen fragments in the storerooms of the British
distinguishing between common and semifine ware from the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, the general impression is that a majority of the local pottery is datable to the first half of the fourth century BCE. This impression is based on the appearance of so-called ‘coastal’ types at the site and the high occurrence of various pottery types of different wares. These characteristics may point to the fourth century BCE, when the regional frontiers of material culture (and especially pottery) were blurred. Unlike the frequency of imports on the Coastal Plain, the diffusion of Attic imports in inland regions such as the Judean foothills and the central mountain ridge is low. Therefore, when encountered in assemblages, Attic imports are typically connected to major administrative centers (as in the case of Samaria). It appears most logical to attribute the bulk of Attic ware retrieved from the site to the Residency— in other words, our Level IB.

In 1953, Olga Tufnell, in her *Lachish III*, dated the foundation of the Residency to c. 450 BCE (Tufnell 1953: 58-59). This date was based on the Attic imports and the mention of Lachish in Neh. 11.30. This date has been subsequently accepted in the archaeological literature as an undisputed fact, the most recent studies not excluded (cf., e.g., Hoglund 1992: 140; Carter 1999: 170; Stern 2001: 447-50; Lipschits 2003: 342). However, since the publication of *Lachish III*, significant progress has been achieved in the study of plain Attic ware and painted Black and Red Figure ware. Based on studies Museum. The vast majority of these newly rediscovered sherds can be dated to the first half of the fourth century BCE, a date consistent with that of the Attic ware retrieved during the more recent excavations.

5. See Tufnell’s observation: ‘At the time of excavations Starkey was of the opinion that the temporary resettlement of the ruined Residency took place in the middle of the fifth century B.C., on the evidence of the Black Glazed and Black Figured Attic sherds, which J.H. Iliffe dated to 475–425 B.C. Further investigation of the position of sherds in relation to the Residency floor levels, however, does not preclude the possibility that the good quality Attic imports were used by the original inhabitants of the building, for there were Attic sherds lying on or close to the original floor surfaces in several rooms’ (1953: 133).

6. ‘Taking into consideration Sir J.D. Beazley’s remarks on the Red Figured sherds, Miss du Plat Taylor noted an equal proportion of fifth- and fourth-century types, which limits the time range more closely to the last half of the fifth century, continuing into the fourth century B.C.… The contents of the floors and fillings of the Residency rooms were consistent. Characteristic Attic sherds provided the best comparisons to dated pottery from other sites, ranging from the mid-fifth to mid-fourth century B.C.… A date for occupation of the Residency from about 450–350 B.C. is in close agreement with the historical evidence, for Lachish is mentioned as one of the villages in which the children of Judah dwelt after Nehemiah’s return about 445 B.C.’ (Tufnell 1953: 133, 135).

7. It will suffice to cite the publications of the Athenian Agora (namely, Sparkes and Talcott 1970), as well as the series of articles and monographs of B.B. Shefton (2000, with earlier bibliography), among others. We should add that in many instances the dating of a given assemblage in the Athenian Agora is based (in whole or in part) on the recovery
that have appeared since the publication of *Lachish III*, du Plat Taylor’s observation regarding an equal proportion of fifth- and fourth-century types (above n. 6) appears to be inaccurate. Consequently, if the bulk of imported pottery should be placed in the first half of the fourth century BCE, Tufnell’s date for the establishment of the Residency, c. 450 BCE, is irreconcilable with ours. Her argument rests on a miniscule proportion of Attic sherdos datable to the late fifth century BCE. We believe, however, that these sherds are better explained as heirlooms than as constituting a chronological anchor for the establishment of the Residency.

Most of the pits from Level IA clearly predate the construction of the Residency. Indeed, unlike the Residency, the Attic pottery from these pits includes mostly fifth-century BCE types, such as a few earlier forms of Attic Type A skyphoi. It seems that the ‘pit settlement’ of Level IA, preceding the of Athenian tetradrachms currently dated to circa 450s–404 BCE (cf. Kroll 1993: 6–7), and that, more often than not, the higher dating (the 450s) was assumed while establishing a date for any given context. The chronology of the Athenian Agora deposits was criticized by Francis and Vickers (1988) as a part of their approach in lowering the dates of all late Archaic Greek art by roughly 50 years (cf. Francis and Vickers 1985). In this regard, one should mention Bowden’s attempt to lower the chronology of Greek painted pottery by roughly 40 years (1991). In both cases, the suggested low chronology for the Greek pottery should be rejected (for a general critique of the low chronology of Francis and Vickers, see Cook 1989; for rejecting their lower date for the Athenian Agora deposits, see Shear 1993; for rejecting their lower date for the Near Eastern sites, such as Mezad Ḥashavyahu, see Waldbaum and Magness 1997: 39-40; Fantalkin 2001a: 128-29; for the improbability of significant lowering of accepted Aegean Iron Age absolute chronology and related problems, see Fantalkin 2001b; Fantalkin, Finkelstein and Piasetzky 2011). Recently, James has reopened the debate (2003), modifying Bowden’s earlier study (1991); see, however, Fantalkin 2011; forthcoming.

8. The renewed excavations demonstrate that the Residency was erected above pits and debris layers containing typical Persian-period pottery (Ussishkin 2004: 96). Moreover, more pits were uncovered in the Iron Age courtyard, and C. H. Inge suggested (in a field report dated February 1938) that they also predate the Residency (cited in Tufnell 1953: 151). The Level I city was fortified by a city wall and a city gate built over the ruined fortifications of Level II (Tufnell 1953: 98-99, pl. 112). In Area S of the renewed excavations, it was observed that a Level I pit (Locus 5508) had been cut in a place where the city wall, not preserved at this point, must have passed. According to the excavator, it indicates that the fortifications were also built in our Level IB (Ussishkin 2004: 97, 463, fig. 9.41).

9. It is worth noting that, according to registration files in the British Museum, a fragment of an early-fourth-century BCE Attic glazed bowl (BM/1980,1214.9758) was found in the burnt brick debris, below the level of one of the Residency’s rooms. If this is indeed the case, this sherd may serve as further evidence for placing the Residency within the first half of the fourth century BCE, as suggested by the vast majority of the finds from the Residency’s floors and fills.
massive construction activities of Level IB, may be generally dated to the fifth century BCE. Level IC is attributed to the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic occupation of the site. The finds retrieved from the Residency reflect no definite Hellenistic use. It may be assumed, therefore, that the Residency was reused before the end of the Persian period and abandoned during Late Persian times. The ceramic evidence does not clarify the nature of this later phase, and the reasons for the site’s abandonment during the Hellenistic period cannot be determined. The Solar Shrine appears to be the only building of a secure Hellenistic date (fig. 4). Following Aharoni’s suggestion, it may be reconstructed as a Yahwistic shrine serving nearby rural, and possibly urban, inhabitants of Jewish faith during the Early Hellenistic Period. We have a dedication altar with a possible Yahwistic name incised upon it found in Cave 534 southwest of the city gate (Tufnell 1953: 226, no. 534, pls. 49.3, 68.1; and see also pp. 383-84; for its reading, Dupont-Sommer in Tufnell 1953: 358-59; and Aharoni 1975: 5-7, fig. 1, with discussion). This altar formed part of an assemblage found in a number of caves southwest of the city gate (506, 515, 522, 534; cf. Tufnell 1953: 220-21, 224-26) and was probably cultic in nature. The recovery of Persian and Hellenistic pottery in Pit 34 below the floor in the center of the temple’s courtyard strongly suggests a Hellenistic date for its foundation. According to Ussishkin (2004: 96 n. 9), this datum is not reliable: only a few Hellenistic sherds were uncovered in Pit 34, their stratigraphy is unclear, and a single fragment was uncovered deep beneath the floor of the antechamber. However, if we accept Aharoni’s stratigraphic attribution of Building 100 to the Hellenistic period and contemporaneous stratigraphic relation to the Solar Shrine (Aharoni 1975: 5), we see no possibility for an earlier dating. Moreover, none of the finds recovered in the Solar Shrine is of Persian date. The same holds true for the Hellenistic pottery recovered during Aharoni’s

10. We tend to consider this phase sporadic, because not all the pits of Level I are necessary connected to Level IA. Moreover, the possibility of the existence of earlier pre-Level I occupations at the site cannot be completely rejected. There are a few vessels of possible late-sixth-century BCE date that were retrieved in the renewed excavations; among them are an Egyptian bowl (cf. Fantalkin and Tal 2004: fig. 30.7: 1) that is dated according to comparative material to the Late Saite and Persian period; and two fragments of Chian amphoras (cf. Fantalkin and Tal 2004: figs. 30.2: 1; 30.3: 16) that can be dated to the late sixth century BCE. In both cases, however, a much later date appears to be possible.

11. Starkey’s identification of its cult as an intrusive one, ‘introduced during the Persian regime’ (Tufnell 1953: 141 [PEQ October (1935) 203]), supported by Ussishkin in light of his reconstruction of the Solar Shrine as a cultic Persian governmental center (2004: 96-97), can be rejected due to the late date of the finds (third and second centuries BCE).
Plan of Strata IA-IB.

Figure 4. Lachish, Solar Shrine (after Aharoni et al. 1975: pl. 56).
excavations but never presented in the report. This pottery is at present in the Israel Antiquities Authority storehouses.

Some reference must be given to another building (fig. 5, bottom) still in use during this phase and discovered to the north of the Great Shaft (Grid Squares R/Q/S.15/16: 10–21). According to Tufnell (1953: 147), ‘Nearly all the pottery fragments were found on or in the floor levels of the building and can be associated with it’. She adds, ‘…there are enough fourth- to third-century forms in the rooms to show that the house was in use at that time’ (1953: 148).12 Aharoni’s suggestion, based on their similar building

12. Tufnell misread, however, the cooking-pot fragments that are of Early Roman
plan, orientation, and a limestone altar imitating a shrine (1975: 9-11, fig. 3), that this building served as the fourth- to third-century BCE forerunner of the Solar Shrine is reasonable. It seems that both the Solar Shrine and the building in Grid Squares R/Q/S.15/16: 10-21 were abandoned sometime during the second half of the second century BCE.\(^{13}\)

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*A Reorganization of the Southern Frontier of the Fifth Satrapy*

*The Arrangement of Boundaries*

Our reevaluation of the archaeological data and the revised chronology for Level I force us to reconsider a range of issues related to Achaemenid imperial policy in southern Palestine.

First, we have to address the question of ‘Lachish and its fields’ mentioned in Neh. 11.30. One could suggest that our ‘pit settlement’ (Level IA) is a reflection of the settlement’s renewal, which can be connected to Judean settlers returning from the Exile. Likewise, the establishment of the fortified center with the Residency (Level IB) could have been initiated by the Achaemenid government in response to changes occurring in the Judean foothills at the time (cf. Tufnell 1953: 58-59). However, does the present state of research permit us to take literally the passage in Nehemiah 11? Much of the scholarship regarding this particular chapter has recently been summarized and reevaluated by O. Lipschits (2002). According to Lipschits, although a few scholars accept the list’s historicity despite historical and textual problems, the vast majority suggest different interpretations. According to some, this list represents settlements where Judeans resided before the Exile, although certain parts of the region were no longer within the boundaries of the province of Yehud. Others suggest that these are the settlements that were not destroyed by the Babylonians and, as such, continued to be settled by Judeans, even though they were subjected to Edomite/Arab influence. It has even been proposed that the list reflects the reality of the end of the First Temple Period or even the Hasmonean Period (see Lipschits 2002, with earlier references). The majority of scholars, however, follow the view of Gerhard von Rad (1930: 21-25), who saw the list in Nehemiah as an ideal vision and not an actual reflection of the borders of Yehud. According to this date (cf. 1953: pls. 104, 692) and may well correspond to the two Roman coins found minted at Ashkelon (cf. 1953: 413, nos. 56a and 56b).

13. According to Finkielsztejn (1999: 48 n. 6), Hellenistic Lachish was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in the course of his campaign in Edom. We cannot support such a claim, however. No Hellenistic destruction is documented at the site, and none of the Hellenistic finds attests to an exclusive Edomite presence.
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view, it is a utopian outlook, based on perceptions of the remote past and on hopes for the future, after the building of the walls of Jerusalem.14

What can be said from an archaeological perspective? The establishment of the Persian fortified administrative center around 400 BCE is definitely preceded by the ‘pit settlement’. A special term appears in Neh. 11.30 for the hinterland of Lachish—שדותיה, that is, its fields. It seems that the author had an intimate knowledge of Lachish’s area and thus deliberately labeled it in a different manner as an agricultural hinterland. In the survey map of Lachish, eleven settlements from the Persian period were documented (Dagan 1992: 17*). Given the nature of material collected in the surveys, it is virtually impossible to establish their precise chronological setting within the Persian period. Generally, they could be attributed to a fifth and fourth centuries BCE chronological horizon. It seems to us, however, that given the existence of the ‘pit settlement’ at Lachish already in the fifth century BCE (Level IA), it is more than probable that some of the sites discovered in the survey are of the same date. The establishment of the Persian fortified administrative center around 400 BCE (Level IB) can be seen as a response to the changes occurring in the area. Who were these new settlers? Were they Judeans, Edomites/Arabs, or both? Based on the archaeological data, we find it virtually impossible to answer this question in a satisfactory manner. It should be noted, however, that even many of those who follow von Rad’s view admit that, although Nehemiah 11 is an ideal vision, there is no dismissing the possibility that Judeans continued to live in the towns of the Negev and the Judean foothills during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, after the Babylonian destruction (Lipschits 2002). It seems that, even if some Judeans did indeed remain in this region, a larger number of Edomites/Arabs expanded toward the north, gaining control over lands of questionable Judean control. Epigraphic evidence suggests that, by at least the second half of the fourth century, a majority of Edomites/Arabs inhabited the region side by side with a minority of Judeans (Zadok 1998a: 792-804; Lemaire 2002: 218-23, 231-33, 264-83, 284-85). The resettlement in the area surrounding Lachish during the fifth century BCE, either by Judeans, Edomites, or both may have created potential territorial quarrels between the inhabitants of the area. The establishment of the administrative center at Lachish (bordering Judah and Edom) could have played a significant role in preventing any further territorial disputes in an area where borders are flexible. This new reality required a new policy in which a Persian official, or officials, most likely with a garrison, were

14. For a different approach that ascribes the account in Nehemiah 11 to the late Hellenistic period, implying that the addition in Neh. 11.25-35 may reflect the actual borders of Judah after the Maccabean victories, see Wright 2004: 307-309, with earlier literature.
stationed permanently at Lachish in order to protect the political, economic, and social interests of the Empire in the region.

This new interpretation of the archaeological data from Lachish forces us to reconsider the previous scholarly consensus regarding the boundaries of the province of Yehud. Those who believe that the list in Nehemiah 11 is wishful thinking have stated that such a utopia can be explained by the fact that most of the settlements appearing in the list are in areas that are not within the boundaries of the province at the time of the Return, whereas the actual areas of settlement are hardly represented. What do we really know about the boundaries of the province at the time of the Return, that is, the fifth century BCE? Can the existence of these boundaries during the Early Persian period really be assumed?

The boundaries of Yehud are one of the most debated issues in the study of the Persian period in the region of Israel. According to most scholars, after the Neo-Babylonian destruction, Lachish never reverted to being a part of Judah, and it likely served as the center of the province of Edom (see, most recently, Lipschits 2003: 342). However, there are still numerous questions concerning the boundaries of both provinces, Yehud and Edom, during the Persian Period (see Carter 1999: 75-113, 288-94, with earlier references). The insufficiency of biblical testimony and the fragility of the archaeological interpretations have led some to apply Christaller’s ‘Central Place Theory’ (1933) to the analysis of the boundaries of Yehud. This theory is based on the logical assumption that the socio-economic relationship between larger, central sites and smaller, ‘satellite’ sites is best represented graphically, through a series of interconnected hexagons, a spatial organization that is similar to the geographical organization implemented in southern Germany during the 1930s. This model was subsequently applied to other geographical settings, while political, economic, and social aspects of a settlement were reconstructed according to a pattern of ‘Site Hierarchy’ (cf. Lösch 1954; Haggett 1965: esp. 121-25). Later scholars such as Johnson (1972), who suggests that a rhomboid pattern is preferable to a hexagonal one, modified the model without contradicting its basic premises (see in general Jansen 2001: 42-44). Scholars who have tried to apply this theory to the boundaries of Yehud have drawn a series of circles or ellipses with radii of approximately 20 km surrounding Jerusalem, Lachish, and Gezer (cf., e.g., Carter 1999: 93-97, fig. 7). Both Lachish and Gezer, at least according to general scholarly consensus, have architectural remains that can be interpreted as governmental complexes. It is postulated that the spheres of influence of these sites intersect at the border of the Judean foothills and the hill country. The Judean foothills were therefore outside the province of Yehud.

It is definitely not our intention to embark here on taking theoretical models from the exact sciences and applying them to a complicated human past. What appears to be quite certain, however, is that the new archaeological evidence from
Lachish undermines previously proposed reconstructions of the boundaries of the provinces of Yehud and Edom, based as they are on the Central Place Theory. These reconstructions assumed the establishment of Lachish Phase IB as a major administrative center by at least 450 BCE (i.e., Tufnell’s dating), in stark contrast to the foundation date closer to 400 BCE that is suggested here. It seems to us that, given the contested nature of the region’s periphery (cf. Berquist 1996; M.J. Allen 1997), the final settlement of its boundaries, including those of Yehud, is better seen as part of a flexible process that was finally accomplished no earlier than the fourth century BCE. In this regard, it is worthwhile to remember that the creation of an Idumean provincial district cannot be traced before the fourth century BCE (cf. de Geus 1979–80: 62; Eph’al 1984: 199; Graf 1990: 139-43). The same holds true for Yehud. This is not to suggest that Judah was not an autonomous entity with a series of governors already in the beginning of the Achaemenid period (Williamson 1998) and perhaps even earlier (Na’am 2000). But signs of autonomy such as the minting of Yehud coins and standardized Aramaic stamp-seal impressions on local storage-jar handles probably did not appear before the fourth century BCE.

Yehud Coins and Judahite Moneyed Economy

It has been argued that the coinage of Judah served temple needs rather than the general economy (Ronen 2003–2006: 29-30; Tal 2007: 24-25). The fact that most of these coins bear legends written in paleo-Hebrew script (and not in the common Aramaic script) lend support to such an assumption. If they were intended for temple payments (poll tax dues and the like), we can explain also their Hebrew legends, which in a way ‘cleansed’ them from their conventional secular role and facilitated their use in the temple. Finally, the circulation of these coins (mostly in the region that is defined as Persian-period province of Yehud) (Ariel 2002: 287-88, table 3), small denominations (weighing some 0.5 [grh, 1/24 šql] or 0.25 [half-grh, 1/48 šql] gr) (Ronen 2003–2006: 29-30; Tal 2007: 19-20), and purity (c. 97% silver on average) favor such an explanation. Until now around 20 Persian-period yhd coin-types have been documented. Jerusalem struck small silver coins under the Achaemenids bearing the abbreviated name of the province yhd (and less frequently in full yhwd) but sometimes bearing the legends

15. One should make the logical assumption that the coinage of Judah as Temple money would have served mainly a poll-tax (e.g., Liver 1963; Schaper 1995); the latter suggested that two separate taxation systems were operated at the Jerusalem Temple: the Persian one, organized at satrapy level, and the local one. Following Schaper’s argument, the local indigenous coins served the latter, i.e., the local taxation system, due to the coins’ provincial circulation and use.

of personal names and titles. Stylistically, the coins can be identified as Athenian-styled issues (normally with the head of Athena on the obverse and with an owl and olive spray as well as the legend $yhd$ or $yhwd$ on the reverse), or Judahite-styled issues (bearing more varied divinities, humans, animals and floral motifs) (Meshorer 2001: 6-19, passim).

Of special interest are the Judahite-styled issues that bear the dissemination of the head of the Achaemenid king (e.g., Gitler 2011). How should such coins, which are the most common $yhd$ type known at present, be understood in relation to the use of money in the temple economy? We suggest that Achaemenid motifs—which originated in the Persian heartland and were mimicked in Phoenician, southern Palestinian and especially Jerusalemite ($yhd$) monetary series—may be viewed as expressions of Persian ideologies and imperial power (fig. 6). According to this approach, the Achaemenids may have manipulated royal artistic imagery as a form of communication in order to support or advance official ideology. Even if the motif of the Achaemenid king on the $yhd$ coins merely typifies imperial iconography, the social impact of such a motif suggests a high degree of loyalty among the Judahite subjects. Although it is very unlikely that these coins inspired worship of the Achaemenid king, they did affirm Persian sovereignty over the province of Yehud in the face of the Egyptian threat. It is no coincidence that in Judah during the fourth century BCE, a poll tax was apparently levied from ‘third of a šql’ in the time of Nehemiah to ‘half a šql by the sacred standard ($šql \ hqdš$)’ or ‘$bq$’ in the Pentateuch. The latter may quite possibly be traced to the time of Ezra. If so, it should be viewed against the backdrop of what seems to have been increased Achaemenid involvement in the region, which required a much higher degree of monetary investment in building operations, conscription and garrisoning (Lemaire 2004; Liver 1963).

Here one must emphasize once again that the advanced coin-based economy—or more specifically, the ‘small change’ in the provinces of southern Palestine (Philistia, Samaria, Yehud and Edom)—is evident mainly from the fourth century BCE. Prior to this stage, larger denominations were minted (mostly in Philistia) (fig. 7). Likewise, it should be noted that southern Palestinian coins of the Persian period were not minted on a regular basis. They were probably issued on official occasions and only as needed; e.g., for taxes, transactions, or to celebrate the independence of a city (or new rights granted to it). Judahite coinage, like other early coinages (in southern Palestine and elsewhere), seems to have been used for a limited range of purposes and by a limited number of people. This is supported by the total number of Persian...
(and Early Hellenistic) Judahite coins known to us, and by the scarcity of Judahite coins retrieved from controlled archaeological excavations (Ariel 2002: 287-88, table 3). The minting of coins of small denominations in Judah (the grh and half-grh), in the fourth century BCE, apparently occurred during the ‘second minting stage’ of the southern Palestinian coins, which many scholars have assumed to be the first stage. This is to say that according to the hoard evidence, Palestinian coin-based economies began in Philistia with šqln (‘tetradrachms’) and rb’n (‘drachms’), whereas smaller denominations were introduced only after the local and neighboring authorities (Samaria, Judah and Edom) acknowledged the economic benefits of the minting of local coinage on a wider scale. Smaller denominations (in the case of Judah, the grh, half-grh and smaller fractions) not only enabled a wider range of flexibility in daily economic life and especially in cultic transactions, but also facilitated wealth accumulation.
The yhd/yh Jars with Stamped Seal Impressions

Circulation of storage jars with yhd/yh Aramaic stamped seal impressions on their handles serves as additional evidence for the borders of the province of Yehud, since these impressions are discovered, with few exceptions, at clearly defined Judahite sites (Stern 1982: 202-13; 2001: 545-51). Given the fact that Early/Late Persian as well as the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic contexts are rarely defined stratigraphically in Judah, attempts to differentiate between early and late types of stamped seal impressions were normally based on paleography of the script. Recently Vanderhooft and Lipschits proposed a new chronological framework for studying the stamped seal impressions of Judah. They distinguish ‘Early’ (late sixth–fifth centuries BCE), ‘Middle’ (fourth–third centuries BCE) and ‘Late’ (second century BCE) groups, whose dates are also based primarily on paleographic evidence. Quantification of these the stamped seal impressions show predominance (some 53%) for the ‘Middle Types’ (cf. Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2007: 80-84 ['Middle Types’]; Vanderhooft and Lipschits 2007: 25-29 ['The Middle Group: Types 13-15']) (fig. 8). Given the hundreds of standardized stamped seal impressions and their sites of circulation, it is logical to assume that fourth century BCE Judah underwent an administrative reorganization, oriented towards the Achaemenid empire, on the one hand, and its internal cultic needs (i.e., its temple), on the other (above). Although the function of the storage jars with stamped handles is debated (cf., e.g., Stern 2007: 205-206; Ariel and Shoham 2000: 138-39), the sites that have yielded the majority of stamped seal impressions (Jerusalem and Ramat Ra‘el) were likely administrative centers that served as centers of production and especially distribution. The stamps may have served as marks for official
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(provincial), local, priestly or more likely priestly-authorized consumption, as well as for quality, purity and fixed volume of standards for liquids (wine and/or oil) and possibly grains (wheat and barely). Yet their widespread appearance in comparison to the preceding period (late sixth–fifth centuries BCE), should be understood against the re-organization of imperial policy on the newly established frontier.¹⁹

The same holds true for a few thousand Aramaic ostraca (e.g., Lemaire 1996; 2002; Eph‘al and Naveh 1996; Yardeni 2011, all with further bibliography), dated to the last three quarters of the fourth century BCE (the earliest is apparently dated to year 33 of Artaxerxes II = 372/1 BCE or year 40 = 366/5 BCE). All are allegedly from the site of Khirbet el-Kom and its immediate environs in the Judean foothills (Edom), but there is no clear evidence that all the ostraca came from a single source and it is possible

19. It remains to be seen if the exceptional phenomenon of stamped seal impressions in Judah—that is the longue durée attested for the practice of stamping handles of locally-made storage jars prior to firing, with various motifs of official meanings, from the late eighth through the mid-first centuries BCE—is directly connected to the economic activities of the Temple and its priests (closely supervised by the royal administration at the time of the monarchy). Linking this practice with cultic needs and method of income, that is the priestly verification of the purity of goods whether used in the Temple or by the members of the Jewish community in Judah, seems to be the most logical assumption.

Figure 8. Yhd stamped seal impressions of the ‘Middle Group’ (after Vanderhooft and Lipschits 2007: 33).
that the they were looted from several Edomite sites given their resemblance to provenance material such as those from Beersheba and Maresha/Marisa (fig. 9). It thus seems that southern Palestine experienced a significant transformation in its political organization in the first half of the fourth century BCE. This transformation suggests a higher level of direct imperial involvement in the local administration. What one can observe here is a completely different level of Achaemenid involvement in local affairs that most likely included a fixed arrangement of district boundaries, garrisoning of the frontiers, and, most of all, tight Achaemenid control and investment, witnessed by the unprecedented construction at the sites in southern Palestine briefly and selectively described below.

*A New Architectural Landscape*

Given the scarcity of Persian-period remains in Jerusalem and their almost exclusive appearance in sections of the City of David (Geva 2003: 521-24; Finkelstein 2008), we may reasonably assume that Jerusalem, as the capital of Yehud, was more confined to its temple community and religious functions, while the administration of the province was centered at nearby Ramat Raḥel (Weinberg 1992). Na’aman has argued that the site served an Assyrian and

20. It should be noted that contrary to Weinberg, the governor of the citizen–temple community in Jerusalem and the governor of the province of Yehud should not be considered the same; that is at no time was the Jerusalemite citizen–temple community identical with the whole province, neither demographically nor territorially. On the other hand, although many premises of Weinberg’s theory were thoroughly and appropriately criticized, we tend to agree with Ska, according to whom many of the critical voices
Persian administrative centre and that imperial officials, with their staff and
 guard, lived there (2001). In our opinion the meager architectural remains
discovered at Ramat Rahel (Stratum IVB), which include the sections of a
‘massive wall’ (1.2 m thick) in the eastern part of the excavated area following
the course of an earlier Iron-Age citadel’s outer wall, may well have formed
part of a residency that was established by the Achaemenid representatives
during the fourth century BCE and not before. The renewed excavations at
Ramat Rahel lend support to our argument. According to the excavators, the
site’s Third Building Phase dates to the Persian period (late sixth–late fourth
centuries BCE). To this phase they also assign the remains of a large building
(about 20 × 30 m), rectangular in shape, built on the northwestern side of the
palace complex from the Second Phase. It appears that the building was not
planned as an independent structure but rather as a new wing of an existing
complex, i.e., as a northward expansion of the fortress tower that extends
west of the line of the palace. The only stratigraphically secured pottery
assemblage related to this building phase, however, includes three jars and a
jug on a floor level that can be dated to the fourth century BCE (Lipschits et
al. 2010: 36, fig. 38a-b).

The most impressive building that can be dated with certainty to the Persian
period on the southeast border of the province of Yehud was discovered at ‘En
Gedi on the western shore of the Dead Sea. The edifice (‘Building 234’, c. 23.5
× 22 m) is of an (irregular) open courtyard type with several rooms flanked
around central courtyard/s and assigned to Stratum IV (fig. 10). According to
the excavators, Building 234 was in use during the last three quarters of the
‘tend to undervalue the importance of one essential fact about postexilic Judah, namely,
that the temple was the only important indigenous institution after the return from the
exile, since the monarchy could not be restored’. That is to say, the postexilic community
was rebuilt around the temple and not around the royal palace (Ska 2001: 174-76, with
extensive literature).

21. Albeit Aharoni based his dating of this ‘massive wall’ on pottery of unsecured
stratigraphic contexts which he defined as pottery-types of a transitional phase between
the Persian and Hellenistic period (Aharoni 1964: 18-19, figs. 2, 12-15 [Locus 484]).
However, while studying the local and imported pottery from Aharoni’s excavations at
the site we found out that Locus 484 (which was partially published) is an accumulation
of piled material from the site with pottery-types that date from the 7th through the 2nd/
early 1st centuries BCE. The material was assembled against the east side of the ‘massive
wall’ for reasons unknown—it has no bearing whatsoever on its dating. In fact all the
Persian and Hellenistic pottery retrieved from Aharoni’s excavations at the site came
from unsecured and/or unstratified loci. The pottery as found, documented and reported
cannot help us in establishing relation between certain architectural features and Persian
and Hellenistic periods of occupation. Still, the considerable amounts of Late Persian
pottery types from the site discovered in Aharoni’s excavations do suggest that the site
was active at the time. What its status and role were in the layout of the ruling bodies is
open to speculation.
fifth century BCE and was destroyed in c. 400 BCE. Moreover, judging from the distribution of Attic ware within Building 234, the excavators conclude that the western part of the building was cleared of debris and reused as a dwelling by the surviving inhabitants of the site for half a century or more (the first half of the fourth century BCE) until this too was destroyed by nomadic (possibly Nabatean) raiders (Mazar and Dunayevsky 1967: esp. 134-40). The final publication of the building suggests a different interpretation, however. Acknowledging the difficulty in distinguishing typological developments in common and semi-fine wares of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, the excavators rightfully deemed the Attic imports to be the best chronological anchor (Stern 2007, 193-270, passim). Like other governmental Achaemenid sites, ‘En Gedi yields fairly numerous Attic pottery-types that are mostly confined to the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE.22 These finds have been found in many of the rooms of the building, and the assumption of the excavators of a destruction c. 400 BCE is not supported by the published final report.23 In any case, the excavators are convinced that surviving inhabitants reused the building (or parts of it) until about the middle of the fourth century BCE. They base their conclusion on the finds allegedly retrieved on top of the ‘destruction’ level, though no such level is apparent. This is not the place to discuss the foundation date of Building 234 or to criticize the dates given to the Attic pottery types. However, the dated finds seem to suggest that the building maintained its character throughout its existence until about the middle of the fourth century BCE. Moreover, Attic pottery types, which can securely be dated to the first half of the fourth century BCE, were found on the building’s ‘late floors’ as well as glass pendants in the shape of human heads; they point to the administrative nature the building (Stern 2007: 228-40, passim).

Another administrative site located on the far southern border of the province of Yehud is Beth-Zur. According to Neh. 3.16, the site formed the capital of half a district governed by Nehemiah ben Azbuk. Architectural remains from the Persian, and especially from the Hellenistic periods,

22. Stern 2007: 230-40, esp. fig. 5.4.1. According to Stern, most of the Attic sherds found in the site and in particular in Building 234 belong to the second half and especially the end of the fifth century BCE, others belong in part to the second quarter of the fifth century BCE and in part to the first half or the middle of the fourth century BCE. The photographs presented in the final publication, as well as the lack of drawings and/or well-dated comparanda to the Attic pottery types retrieved, make these observations uncertain.

23. Stern 2007: 193-97. There is no indication whether the destruction of the floor relates to about 400 BCE, 350 BCE or possibly a later stage. Moreover, fig. 5.1.2 on p. 196, which provides a detailed plan of Building 234 shows that the only alteration within Stratum IV occurred in the north (W218) and west (W219) walls of a small room (252), hence the destruction in about 400 BCE seems highly speculative.
Figure 10. 'En Gedi, Building 234 (after Stern 2007: fig. 5.1.2).
are substantial and represent most of the excavated features at the site. Architectural remains on the tell originate from various periods. The walls were robbed and eroded to the extent that the total accumulation did not exceed one meter. In addition, the foundations of the buildings of the upper stratum, which were better preserved, had penetrated the earlier strata. For these reasons, the excavators were unable to attribute the architectural remains to a specific period and therefore published a general plan in which all the remains appear together. At the center of the tell is a fortress, and in some of its walls, we can discern three occupation phases. Solid walls (some 1.5 m thick) surrounded the fortress (41 × 33 m) in the east, south and west (fig. 11). Whether the first phase of the fortress should be assigned to the Persian period (and especially to the fourth century BCE) is disputed among scholars. The issue cannot yet be resolved due to the method of publication,
which prevents one from seeing the stratigraphic relation among the occupational layers. However, dated Persian-period finds from the site, and especially of the fourth century BCE (e.g., Philistine and Judahite coins, seals and seal impressions) point to its administrative function at the time (Sellers et al. 1968; Tal 2006: 150-52).

To this list of sites we may add the recently excavated site of Khirbet Qeiyafa, located on the west border of the province, in the western Judahite foothills (Garfinkel and Ganor 2009). So far, the site has attracted considerable attention mainly due to its Iron Age occupation, while the significance of its later, fourth-century BCE phase has been neglected. In our opinion, the Persian-period remains from Khirbet Qeiyafa should be viewed in the context of new developments discussed above. As in the case of Lachish Level I, here too, the refurbishing of the Iron Age gate and fortifications, as well as the construction of new buildings, should be assigned, on the basis of already published pottery and coins (Garfinkel and Ganor 2009: Chapter 12), to the first decades of the fourth century BCE. Although the excavators assign most of the pottery to the Early Hellenistic period, we can date its appearance to the early fourth century BCE if we take into consideration the published prototypes and relevant comparanda. In this regard, the early silver coins from the site are of special significance, since they exhibit a meeting point of two Persian-period minting authorities (that of Philistia and that of Judah) rarely documented in other Palestinian sites.24

A series of administrative sites was documented in the southern Coastal Plain and in the Persian-period province of Edom.

Tell Jemmeh in the southeastern Coastal Plain should be considered another example of Achaemenid governmental presence. The site, located some 10 km south of Gaza, was excavated during the 1920s, first by W.J. Phythian-Adams (1923) and, more thoroughly, by W.M.F. Petrie (1928). In accordance with Stern’s thorough analysis of Petrie’s stratigraphic conclusions (1982: 22-25), Persian remains at the site should be divided

24. Garfinkel and Ganor 2009: Chapter 13; see Gitler and Tal 2006: 50-51. Indeed, the same meeting point of two Persian-period minting authorities is also apparent in yet another ‘border’ site, Beth-Zur (above), where four Philistian coins are documented along with one Judahite coin (yúṣqy hptíḥ), and all are dated to the fourth century BCE. The meeting of indigenous southern Palestinian minting authorities of the fourth century BCE seems to be characteristic of ‘border’ administrative centers given their political status as ‘bridging’ authorities. Thus it is no surprise that coins from the yet unpublished 2010 season at Khirbet Qeiyafa yielded a much larger variety of issues from the mints of Philistia and Judah (Y. Farhi, pers. comm.), which yet again support our predating of the ‘Early Hellenistic’ occupation at the site to the early fourth century BCE. Not less important is the finding of another type of early silver (indigenous) coin that was recently suggested as belonging to the mint of fourth century BCE Edom based on its circulation; cf. Gitler, Tal and van Alfen 2007.
into three stratigraphic phases: the first, probably of mid-fifth-century BCE date—Building A—a central courtyard fortress with dimensions of c. 38 × 29 m; the second, probably of late-fifth/early-fourth-century BCE date—Building B—a Residency (or ‘Palace’) composed of two separate units of the central courtyard house type; and the third, probably of late-fourth- to third-century BCE date—storehouse and granaries—scattered on the mound (fig. 12). This theory may be strengthened by the limited number of published Attic fragments and vessels from Petrie’s excavations (1928: pl. 46; but see also Iliffe 1933: nos. 8-11, 13-14, 16-19, 21, 23, 25-27, 29-31, 33-36, and relevant plates; and Shefton 2000: 76 n. 4). It would, however, be extremely intriguing to recheck these data in light of the recent excavations carried out at the site (cf. Van Beek 1983; 1993; NEAEHL 2.667-74).

Persian remains at Tel Sera‘ are quite similar to those discovered at Tell Jemmeh. The site is located in the western Negev desert on Nahal Gerar, some 20 km to the east of Tell Jemmeh. Judging from the short report published by the excavator, Persian-period Tel Sera‘ (Stratum III) consisted of the same elements discovered at Tell Jemmeh: a brick-lined granary (c. 5 m in diameter) in Area A on the south part of the mound and the remains of a citadel and courtyard building in Area D on the north part of the mound (NEAEHL 4.1334).

The same applies to the remains discovered at Tel Haror located in the western Negev desert on Nahal Gerar, located midway between Tell Jemmeh and Tel Sera‘. The excavator’s brief report concludes that there are one or two Persian-period settlement phases at the site (i.e., Stratum G1), represented in Area G on the southern part of the upper mound by a large building, cobbled floors, and grain and refuse pits (NEAEHL 2.584). It is thus tempting to see

25. It is worth quoting some of Van Beek’s observations regarding the date of the Persian remains at Tell Jemmeh: ‘Petrie’s historical biases led to strange interpretations as, for example, his haste to have granaries built by 457 BCE so that they might serve as grain depots to feed a Persian army during its invasion of Egypt in 455 BCE. The key evidence here is the large Red-Figured lekythos in the Rockefeller Museum, which was found beneath one of the granaries [Petrie 1928: pl. 46: 4]. This lekythos was reluctantly dated to 460 BCE by Gardiner, as against his preferred date of 450 BCE; but for Petrie, a date of 450 was seven years too late to get it under a granary. Indeed, the lekythos may well have been in situ in the pre-granary layers, rather than having been thrown in the foundation hole just prior to construction of the granary, as Petrie assumed. According to Beazley, the lekythos is by the Phiale Painter, a pupil of the Achilles Painter, both of whom were active between 450 and 420 BCE. On this evidence alone, the granaries could hardly be dated much before the end of the 5th or early 4th centuries BCE. Thus, Petrie’s lack of interest in late periods and his historical biases led to a cavalier treatment of archaeological deposits from the granary periods’ (Van Beek 1993: 577-78, with earlier references). Bearing in mind this quotation, Tufnell’s comparisons with dated pottery from other sites, chiefly with Tell Jemmeh’s 457 BCE dating (Tufnell 1953: 135; above, n. 6), further undermines her dating of the Residency.
From Judah to Judaea

Figure 12. Tell Jemmeh, Building A and Building B (after Petrie 1928).
both Tel Sera‘ and Tel Haror in a similar stratigraphic context to the one suggested in Tell Jemmeh, since both sites not only share similar architectural elements but also yielded numerous Greek ware fragments, Aramaic ostraca, and other finds that may point to a governmental role.

To the above sites, we are inclined to add Tel Ḥalif, located some 15 km to the east of Tel Sera‘. Excavations in Stratum V, which, according to the excavators, belongs to the Persian period, uncovered elements of a large building with walls one meter thick in Field II and pits and bins scattered in Fields I and III and Area F6 (NEAEHL 2.558). Furthermore, the excavators of Tell el Ḥesi, some 20 km to the north of Tel Sera‘, conclude that the Persian-period settlement at this site ceased to exist by the end of the fifth century BCE (Bennett and Blakely 1989). Therefore, one may presume a southward shift in the settlement process of the western Negev desert region at this time. Needless to say, without the full analysis and publication of the finds from these sites, our argument is largely theoretical. However, the architectural elements discovered in the excavations of Tell Jemmeh, Tel Haror, Tel Sera‘, and Tel Ḥalif, as well as their location along the same latitude line and their placement at somewhat fixed intervals of 10–15 km on the southernmost inhabited Lowlands regions of southwestern Palestine, doubtless had an Egyptian-oriented raison d’être.

The location of governmental sites in the Highlands (the central mountain ridge) was dictated by other factors, among which topography and the immediate environs seem to have played a significant role.26

There is certainly an extensive amount of site hierarchy among the above-mentioned governmental sites, and a few suspected others that are beyond the scope of this study. In our opinion, however, Lachish ranked fairly high on our proposed hierarchical ladder.

With the above outline of the southern governmental Palestinian sites of the inhabited land in mind, we can now briefly address the question of the Negev desert fortresses (and suspected fortresses), which yield some indications of Persian-period occupation. Among them are Ḥorvat Rogem (Cohen and Cohen-Amin 2004: 160-72); Ḥorvat Ritma (Meshel 1977; Cohen and Cohen-Amin 2004: 185), Meṣaṣd Naḥal HaRo’a (Cohen 1980: 71-72; 1986: 112-13; Cohen and Cohen-Amin 2004: 176-85), Ḥorvat Mesora (Cohen 1980: 70; 1986: 113; Cohen and Cohen-Amin 2004: 172-75), as well as the suspected

26. It seems that Rehoboam’s list of fortified cities, which appears only in 2 Chron. 11.5-12, should be attributed to the time-period discussed as well (see already Zadok 1998b: 245). The issue remains controversial in the scholarly literature, with options of dating the list to the time of Rehoboam, Hezekiah or Josiah. Most recently, it has been even suggested that the list reflects a Hasmonean reality (Finkelstein 2011). We tend to believe, however, that the list should be connected to the reorganization of the region during the first half of the fourth century BCE.
fortresses located at Arad (Aharoni 1981: 8; Herzog 1997: 245-49; *NEAEHL* 1.85), Beer-sheba (Aharoni 1973: 7-8; *NEAEHL* 1.172), and perhaps also at Tell el Far‘ah (S), where tombs with varied finds of the period were excavated (Stern 1982: 75-76) (fig. 13). Surprisingly, the location of these fortresses on the same latitude line suggests a linear setting. We have Ḥorvat Rogem, Arad, Beer-sheba, and possibly Tell el Far‘ah (S) arranged in linear fashion on the edge of the inhabited territory and Meṣad Nahal HaRo‘a, Ḥorvat Ritma, and Ḥorvat Mesora in another somewhat linear pattern some 30 km to the

*Figure 13. The fortresses of Ḥorvat Rogem (left), Meṣad Nahal HaRo‘a (right) and Ḥorvat Mesora (bottom) (after Cohen and Cohen-Amin 2004: figs. 98, 105, 108).*
south of the former. We further suggest that Kadesh-barnea (Cohen 1980: 72-74, 78; but esp. 1983: 12-13) and ‘En Ḥazeva (biblical Tamar; Cohen and Yisrael 1996; but see Na’aman 1997, who suggests that the Stratum 4 fortress is of Persian date) were the southernmost defensive line against the south (i.e., Egypt), although Persian finds at Kadesh-barnea were attributed by the excavator to an unwalled domestic settlement and at ‘En Ḥazeva are merely absent. Evidently, all suspected fortresses were located on main routes, with the aim of protecting the southern Arabian trade and alerting the Persians to an approaching Egyptian army (fig. 14). The preliminary form of some publications on these fortresses and suspected fortresses as well as the reported character of the finds make it difficult to reach a conclusion on the precise date within the Persian period for each foundation—the more so, because the finds shown in the recent final publication of the Negev highlands Persian-period fortresses (namely Ḥorvat Rogem, Ḥorvat Ritma, Meṣad Nahal HaRo’a, and Ḥorvat Mesora; Cohen and Cohen-Amin 2004: 159-201) point to a late Persian rather than an early Persian date, although the finds are quite scant and the quantity of imported ware is very small. One thing is clear, however: the careful pattern of their arrangement indicates that most (if not all) were contemporaneous with each other. What is the best explanation for this new settlement pattern?

**The Rationale behind the Achaemenid Imperial Policy at the Southern Frontier of the Fifth Satrapy**

What occurred in the region that triggered the Achaemenid authorities to act in the way they did? A broader look, beyond the borders of southern Palestine, shows that in 404–400/398? BCE Persian domination over Egypt, in effect since 525 BCE (almost continuously), came to an end.\(^{27}\) It seems that the end of Persian domination in Egypt and the establishment of the

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\(^{27}\) Due to the fact that one of the documents in the Elephantine archive, from September 400 BCE, refers to Year 5 of King Amyrtaeus (most likely a grandson of Amyrtaeus I), he must have been proclaimed Pharaoh during 404 BCE. On the basis of the Elephantine documents, it may be safely assumed that, though between 404 and 400 BCE Upper Egypt still remained under Persian control, Amyrtaeus had already dominated all or part of the Delta (Briant 2002: 619, 987, with earlier references). Although Artaxerxes II was still recognized at Elephantine as late as January 401 BCE while recognition of Amyrtaeus there does not appear until his fifth regnal year (June 400 BCE), already around 401/400 BCE it has been obvious for all parties involved that Egypt was effectively lost for the Achaemenids. The general unrest throughout the Empire following the accession of Artaxerxes II, which made an immediate re-conquest of Egypt unlikely, and the fact that already after the battle of Cunaxa (early August 401 BCE), Greek mercenaries have considered offering their services to Artaxerxes II in order to campaign against Egypt (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.1.14), point in the same direction.
Figure 14. Sites and suggested routes in Persian period Palestine (after Tal 2005: fig. 1).
fortified administrative center at Lachish, both around 400 BCE, as well as the establishment of other Persian centers in southern Palestine at that time and shortly thereafter are not just coincidental. In this case, the establishment of Persian fortified administrative centers at Lachish, Tell Jemmeh, Tel Haror, Tel Sera and Tel Ḥalif, Beth-Zur, Ramat Raḥel, and ‘En Gedi must be seen, not just as a response to the changes occurring in the region during the fifth century BCE, but mainly as a response to a new political reality: Egypt is no longer a part of the Persian Empire or subject to Achaemenid rule. Graf’s suggestion that garrisons strung between Gaza and the southern end of the Dead Sea protecting the southern frontier during the period of Egypt’s independence between 404 and 343 BCE (1993: 160) may fit well with such a reconstruction, especially when one observes the linear arrangement of the fortresses listed above. Needless to say these fortresses possessed multiple purposes, providing first and foremost security and necessary stops for refreshment and replenishment along the main routs for Arabian trade with its terminus at Gaza (Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001).

Lowering the dating of the establishment of the Residency at Lachish and of the many other administrative sites in southern Palestine to around 400 BCE and shortly thereafter may have additional significance. Almost two decades ago, Hoglund proposed that the Inarus Rebellion in c. 464–454 BCE was an extremely significant event due to Delian League involvement, affecting immensely the modes of Achaemenid imperial control of Syria–Palestine. He argued that this is the reason for the establishing of a network of Persian fortresses of a distinctive type (central courtyard) in Palestine, dating to the mid-fifth century BCE (Hoglund 1992: 137-205). This theory was adopted in another extensive summary published by Carter (1999) and gained wide acceptance among many scholars (e.g., Petersen 1995: 19-20; Brett 2000; Greifenhagen 2002: 229-30; Betlyon 2004; Min 2004: 92-94; Pakkala 2004: 295). In all cases, the c. 450 BCE date is seen as a clear-cut line in the history of Persian-period Palestine. Tufnell’s dating of the Residency at Lachish to c. 450 BCE may have served as key evidence for both Hoglund and Carter. Based on Hoglund’s work, Carter suggests a new subdivision for the Persian period: Persian Period I lasts from 538 to 450 BCE and Persian Period II from 450 to 332 BCE. Those reconstructions, however, find no echoes in the archaeological record and the major premises of Hoglund’s and Carter’s theory were effectively refuted by a number of scholars (e.g., Janzen 2002: 104, 149-50; Sapin 2004: 112-24; Fantalkin and Tal 2006: 187-88). In fact, not a single site in Hoglund’s list of fortresses can be dated with any degree of certainty to around 450 BCE. The same holds true for Hoglund’s list of sites in Transjordan. From the data presented above, it is clear that both Hoglund’s and Carter’s theories must be rejected.

28. Thus, Hoglund amends Pritchard’s date of 420 BCE for Tell es-Sa‘idiyeh’s Persian-
The Inarus Rebellion was just another event in a series of upheavals in the long period of Persian rule over Palestine and Egypt (cf., e.g., Tal 1999: table 4.13, with relevance to the southern Sharon Plain). This event, with no trace of rebellion anywhere but in the Nile Delta, was not significant enough to motivate a new policy regarding the political reorganization of Palestine.29 The events that had followed the year 404 BCE, on the other hand, seem to be on a completely different scale. We believe that the situation in Egypt and the new reality in southern Palestine triggered the Persian authorities to establish a new policy with regard to the southern frontier of the Fifth Satrapy. The establishment of the Residency was accompanied by additional architectural features (see above) and reflected a new political reality that apparently demanded a new ‘imperial landscape’ (cf. DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle 1996). We have to realize that, for the first time in more than a century of Persian rule, southern Palestine became the frontier of the Persian Empire. Frontiers of empires are usually ideal places to study how identities of dependent populations are born,

period building, placing it in the mid-fifth century BCE. However, the recent excavations at Tell es-Sa‘idiyeh have demonstrated that Pritchard’s Stratum III square building must be seen as the climax of a renovation process above a number of earlier levels of a courtyard building that started sometime in the Persian period or even earlier (Tubb and Dorrell 1994: 52-59). Therefore, as Bienkowski points out, ‘these earlier levels may not fit into Hoglund’s suggested chronology, or his proposed construction specification for a garrison’ (2001: 358). Moreover, Bienkowski offers an additional example of a Persian-period administrative building discovered at al-‘Umayri (cf. Herr 1993), which continues from the Neo-Babylonian period, ‘suggesting that such administrative buildings simply reused existing structures’ (Bienkowski 2001: 358).

29. Indeed, it has been generally conceived that Inaros Rebellion was just another event in a series of upheavals in the long period of Persian domination over Palestine and Egypt, with no trace of rebellion anywhere but in the Nile Delta (e.g., Gomme 1959: 306; Briant 2002: 575-77, 973; Green 2006: 141 n. 274). Recently, however, Kahn (2008) suggested that for some period Inaros, with the Athenians, controlled Egypt almost entirely. His reconstruction, which uncritically accepts a number of Greek sources, basically on the basis of the occurrence of the name of Inaros on the dated ostracon (463/462 BCE) from Ein Manawir in the Kharga Oasis, where he is labeled as ‘Chief of the rebels’ or as ‘Chief of the Bakalu tribe’ of Lybian descent (Chauveau 2004; Winnicki 2006). As Rhodes pointed out, however, ‘this does suggest that early in the revolt Inaros was gaining power (or at any rate somebody thought that he would gain power) in Upper Egypt as well as the delta, but it is equally consistent with a scenario in which by the time he brought in the Athenians Inaros controlled the delta but did not control Upper Egypt’ (Rhodes 2009: 358). In any event, even if the initial achievements of the Inaros Rebellion were indeed underestimated in the current scholarship, the fact remains that from the archaeological point of view the rebellion was not significant enough to motivate a new Achaemenid policy in its Fifth Satrapy.
This frontier was an extremely sensitive one, not only bordering on recently rebellious Egypt, but also subject to external influences from the west (Berquist 1996). It is no longer plausible to speculate that, after the Persian conquest, Egyptian civilization continued just as before, virtually unaffected. New discoveries have shown that Egypt was an integrated and extremely important part of the Achaemenid Empire (Briant 2001, with earlier references). One has to recognize the significance of this new situation for both Persian and Egyptian affairs, especially during the first half of the fourth century BCE (Briant 2002: 664-66, 991-92). From an archaeological point of view, it looks as though the Persian authorities expended significant energy organizing their newly created buffer zone with Egypt c. 400 BCE. We are suggesting that only after this date should one look for established boundaries for the provinces of Yehud or Edom (Idumea). Likewise, the increase in the number of sites in the fourth century BCE reflects the demographic changes on the regional level (Lipschits and Tal 2007; Faust 2007). It seems that before this date, during the fifth century BCE, the Persian authorities deliberately permitted a certain degree of independence with regard to the resettlement of the area: first they let the newly established rural communities organize themselves and, thereafter, they included them within a rigid taxation system. The organization and spatial distribution of these newly established rural communities may be seen as an internal creation, due to the ‘self-organization process’, and without strict imperial intervention at any time during the fifth century BCE.

30. Cf., e.g., Hall 2009; Naum 2010; for comparative longue durée perspective, concerning the shifting fate (significance versus neglect) of the Middle Euphrates frontier between the Levant and the Orient, see Liverani 2007.

31. For a definition and theoretical framework for the ‘self-organization’ paradigm, see Nicolis and Prigogine 1977; Prigogine and Stengers 1984; Haken 1985; McGlade and van der Leeuw 1997. For methodological implications, see Allen 1982; 1997; cf. also Schloen 2001: 57-58. In terms of the ‘self-organization’ approach, the arrival of the Golah returnees, who may be considered a ‘Charter Group’ (see Kessler 2006), doubtless created a new paradigm. This new pattern suggests that the Golah returnees may be identified as creating an ‘order parameter’ that ‘enslaved’ a previous unsteady system and brought it into a new steady state. This transformation took place during the fifth century BCE as a result of ‘self-organization’ and without strict Achaemenid intervention. However, the imperial Achaemenid authority doubtless stood behind the initial decision-making, that is, in letting the groups of people return. In this regard one should look for a delicate combination of the so-called ‘positive–pull factors’ and the ‘negative–push factors’ that make any migration possible (cf. Antony 1990; Burmeister 2000).

32. Perhaps with the exception of Stratum IVb at Ramat Rahel, which may be considered the sole center of Persian government during the fifth century BCE. However, even this attribution is uncertain due to the fact that none of the published finds from the excavations at Ramat Rahel attests to an exclusive fifth-century BCE date (see above).
From an imperial point of view and on the basis of the archaeological record, it seems that during the fifth century BCE, the rather undeveloped inland mountainous region of Palestine was considered strategically insignificant, hardly worthy of large-scale imperial investment or monitoring.33 This state of affairs is understandable as long as Egypt remained an integral part of the Achaemenid Empire.

In contrast, with southern Palestine becoming the southwestern frontier of the Persian Empire in the first part of the fourth century BCE, the region needed to be organized differently, especially in view of Achaemenid preparations for the re-conquest of Egypt. The ethnic diversity in the area discussed—Judeans, Idumeans, Samaritans, descendants of the Philistines, which included a strong Phoenician element and even Greeks (cf. Eph’al 1998)—may be seen as an additional component that triggered the immediate need for the intervention of imperial authority in the newly established frontier, resulting in roads,34 fortresses, and royal residences.35 All in all, the most striking consequence of our archaeologically based historical reconstruction implies that the Persian domination over southern Palestine became particularly prominent during the first half of the fourth century BCE.36

33. Here, some reference should be given to Edelman’s thesis (2005), according to which a master plan to incorporate Yehud into the Persian road, postal and military systems was instituted by Artaxerxes I. In our opinion, however, this theory, which also postulates that the temple of Jerusalem was completed only in the days of Artaxerxes I, can neither be corroborated by Edelman’s challenging textual analysis nor by the archaeological finds from the fifth century BCE in the area discussed.

34. For the political reasoning behind the construction and maintenance of formal road systems, see Earle 1991. For the social complexity inherent in the establishment of a road system, see Hassig 1991.

35. For somewhat similar cases of organizing a frontier, see Smith 1999; 2000 (for Urartu); and Parker 1997; 2001; 2002; Gitin 1997 (for Neo-Assyria). For suggested reorganization of the Achaemenid Cilician frontier at the beginning of the fourth century BCE, see Casabonne 1999.

36. This is in contrast to Nihan’s recent suggestion, according to which ‘the end of the Persian period (from 400 BCE) shows a growing and rapid decline of the influence of the Achaemenid administration in the entire Levant after the loss of Egypt which, in the case of Yehud, appears to have significantly strengthened the control of the Jerusalem temple over the local administration, as the epigraphic record suggests’ (Nihan 2010 [citing Lemaire 2007]); for a not dissimilar approach, according to which the Persian imperial control of the vast empire was gradually disintegrating during the fourth century BCE, see also Greifenhagen 2002: 232. Lemaire’s interpretation of some recently discovered epigraphic and numismatic material from the fourth century BCE cited by Nihan provides however even more support for our reconstruction and certainly cannot be taken as evidence for the decline of Achaemenid influence in the Levant after the loss of Egypt. For a rejection of the notion of Achaemenid imperial decline in the fourth century BCE, see especially Wiesehöfer 2007b. As Ray (1987: 84) clarifies, ‘the entire history of Egypt in the fourth century was dominated, and perhaps even determined, by the
The Effects of the Achaemenid Reconquest of Egypt on Southern Palestine

Persian domination over Egypt was reestablished for a short period, between 343 and 332 BCE, prior to the Macedonian conquest. As a result, the frontier shifted once more, leaving Palestine deep in Achaemenid territory. It is thus tempting to connect the 343 BCE date with the archaeologically attested abandonment of the Residency, which was then reused by local inhabitants during the late years of Persian rule. In this context, for levels attributed to the Late Persian Period, it is abandonment rather than destruction that we are witnessing in the above-listed governmental sites of southern Palestine, with the exception of the alleged destruction at ‘En Gedi. Some of these sites were never resettled after this abandonment, while others were occupied during the Hellenistic period, a few of which preserved the governmental character of their Achaemenid predecessors.

The Canonization of the Pentateuch as a Reflection of the Major Transformation in the First Half of the Fourth Century BCE?

Traditionally, the canonization of the Pentateuch is associated with the ‘mission’ of Ezra, who, according to the book of Ezra–Nehemiah (hereafter: EN), presented the Torah of Moses to the inhabitants of Judah gathered in Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. Although the account is located in Nehemiah 8, the majority of modern scholars consider it an integral part of the Ezra traditions, originally placed between Ezra 8 and 9. In what follows, we assume the independence of the Chronicler from presence of Persia, a power which doubtless never recognized Egyptian independence, and which was always anxious to reverse the insult it had received from its rebellious province”. Taking into consideration a number of unsuccessful Persian attempts to reconquer Egypt until the mission had been accomplished by Artaxerxes III in 343/342 BCE (Briant 2002: 685-88, with earlier references; or in 340/339 BCE if one accepts Depuydt’s [2010] modified chronology), it is obvious that preparations for these invasions required tight imperial control in the newly created buffer-zone from where the campaigns were launched (see also Redford 2011).

37. Here, some reference must be made to the Tennes Rebellion. It was Barag (1966) who first suggested that destruction (and abandonment) evident in more than a few sites in Palestine, the Coastal Plain, Galilee, and Judah, including Lachish and En Gedi (1966: 11 n. 31) are the result of this event. Stern on the other hand partially relates this event to several sites along the coast of Palestine (1982: 243; 1995: 274). The extent of this rebellion and its exact dating are still questionable (Elayi 1990: 182-84; Briant 2002: 683-84, 1004). Our reconstruction tends to support Stern’s view and other minimalists.

38. In fact, already Jerome around 400 BCE admits, of course without questioning the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, that Ezra gave it its final form (Contra Helvidium, ed. Vallars, II, 212). Although there is little doubt that Nehemiah 8 was heavily edited
EN, and concur with the view that, chronologically speaking, the earliest material from EN predates the Chronicler’s work (Williamson 1987: 55-69; Japhet 1991). The historicity of Ezra as the promulgator of the Law, however, has been doubted on some occasions. Be it as it may, Römer fittingly states that whether this tradition has any historical basis or not, ‘it is quite likely that the gathering of different law codes and narratives into one ‘book’ with five parts, the Pentateuch, goes back indeed to the time of Ezra’s mission in Jerusalem’ (2005: 179). Although attempts of creating a single literary unit of what later will be known as the Pentateuch may have begun already during the second half of the fifth century BCE (if not earlier), this activity should not be confused with the attempts of establishing the canonical version of the Torah, which corresponds to the time of Ezra’s mission. But the question remains: When did this mission take place?

One of the most puzzling questions with regard to the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah concerns their chronology. Justifiably or not, Nehemiah’s journey to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I (445 BCE) is considered by the vast majority of scholars as a reliable historical event. The arrival of Ezra, on the other hand, remains a subject of debate. Among the positions defended thus far, only two hypotheses seem to have survived as tenable options:

1. According to the traditional view, if both Ezra and Nehemiah were active under Artaxerxes I, then Ezra would have arrived at Jerusalem in 458 BCE, Nehemiah in 445 BCE;
2. The most common alternative to this view places Ezra’s mission at the time of Artaxerxes II and his arrival in Jerusalem in the seventh year of this king, 398 BCE.

Although any certainty in these matters is probably unattainable, it seems that the majority of modern scholars favor the second hypothesis. In what throughout the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods, we tend to agree with Pakkala (2004: 177-79, 301), according to whom the account in Neh. 8.1-3, 9-10, 12a belongs, most probably, to the oldest stratum in Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 8 (contra Wright 2004: 319-40, according to whom Neh. 8.1-12 belongs to the latest compositional layer of Nehemiah 1–13, which most probably should be dated to the Hellenistic period).

39. As it is evident from a number of references in Chronicles, which include the intentional modification of the Chronicler’s sources, by the time of the composition of Chronicles the Torah of Moses (most probably the Pentateuch) was already canonized (Talshir 2001: 386-403).


41. The literature on this subject is limitless; for summarizing major pros and cons concerning the contested theories, see, e.g., Williamson 1987: 37-46; Blenkinsopp 1988: 139-44; Miller and Hayes 1986: 468-69; Lemaire 1995: 51-61; Burt 2009: 176-99.
follows, we adopt the year 398 BCE as the most plausible date and offer some additional observations in favor of its reliability.

Current views on the formation of the Pentateuch tend to abandon the major premises of the Documentary Hypothesis (e.g., Rendtorff 1990; Otto 2000; 2009; Kratz 2000; Gertz 2000; Achenbach 2003; Schmid 2010; Albertz 2010; for recent collection of papers, see Knoppers and Levinson 2007). In its place, many opt for a model in which independent narrative units—the primeval history, the patriarchal stories and the Exodus traditions—stand on their own and were combined only at a very late stage, with Numbers being perhaps the latest book of the Torah.\(^4\) In any event, the canonization of the Torah—or better, the proto-canonication under the authority of Ezra and his circle—should not be considered as the final redaction of the Torah that miraculously survived to these days, but rather as an initial attempt of canonization, with certain modifications made after Ezra’s time.

For that reason, we are focused on the beginning of the process of canonization rather than its end. Notwithstanding, the move toward canonization, i.e., the initial attempt to assemble such a great number of various traditions into a single unit, requires an explanation. Why did it happen in (or shortly after) 398 BCE, in keeping with the Low Chronology? Could it have begun already in the fifth century BCE, as the traditional view assumes? With the aid of the archaeological and historical evidence discussed above, we suggest that the most compelling explanation for the inception of Torah-canonization should be viewed as a conscious response by Judahite Priestly circles to a new geopolitical reality that characterized the first half of the fourth century BCE, when Egypt was no longer a part of the Achaemenid Empire. To be clear: the date 398 BCE serves only as a general point of reference, a plausible terminus post quem. However, even without accepting the historicity of the Ezra traditions, it seems that the geopolitical conditions of the first half of the fourth century BCE, as described in the preceding pages, represent the most reasonable framework for the canonization of the Pentateuch.

Some may question the possibility of determining the specific historical circumstances that triggered the canonization of such a complicated literary and theological work as the Torah. Admittedly, the creation of the units that composed the Pentateuch and their compilation/redaction into a unified whole represents a lengthy and complex process. However, what concerns us here is the initial impetus for canonization. We do not deny that certain

\(^{42}\) Römer (2008a) considers Numbers as a ‘livre-pont’, bridging between Genesis–Leviticus and Deuteronomy, in order to create the Pentateuch; and see already Noth 1966; for discussion concerning additional redactional revision in Numbers, the so-called theokratische Bearbeitung, which probably took place in the first half of the fourth century BCE, see Achenbach 2003.
redactions and modifications to the Pentateuch were made subsequently (e.g., Otto 2004: 31 n. 69; Schmid 2007; Achenbach 2007). Yet as Goody pointed out (1998), canonization constitutes a deliberate process of selection, where certain traditions were purposely included while others were consciously excluded. That is to say, we are justified in our effort to investigate the connection between contemporary geopolitical dynamics and the proto-canonization of the Pentateuch. As we argue, the rebellion of the Egyptian province provoked the establishment of a new buffer zone, accompanied by Achaemenid imperial investment and monitoring. This was without a doubt a watershed moment in the history of the postexilic community of Yehud. It required significant ideological rethinking, and it resulted, we suggest, in the initial attempt of compiling, redacting and canonizing the constituent literary blocks of what would become the Torah. In placing the proto-canonization of the Torah into the broad geopolitical conditions of a newly created southern frontier of the Fifth Satrapy, we are not subscribing to the theories of Persian ‘imperial authorization’ of the Torah, as advocated by Frei (1996) and others. As demonstrated by many scholars, the idea of Reichsautorisierung, according to which the canonized Pentateuch functioned as an instrument of imperial control, is difficult to maintain. We tend to...

43. According to Pakkala (2004: 157), one should consider that some parts of the Pentateuch (e.g., Deut. 31.9-13) could be dependent on Nehemiah 8 and not vice versa; for apparent early Hellenistic insertions (e.g., Exod. 4.6-7), which should be understood as a ‘counter history’ that reacts against anti-Jewish Egyptian Hellenistic polemic describing Moses as a man affected with leprosy, see Römer 2008b.

44. For a cross-cultural perspective, including the notion that specific incidents and geo-political circumstances may be considered as social catalysts for beginning the process of canonization see, e.g., Stordalen 2007.

45. As has amply been demonstrated by many contributions collected in Watts 2001. During recent years there has been no shortage of possible scenarios regarding the notion that canonization and promulgation of the Pentateuch relates in some way to the Persian imperial goals. For instance, according to Berquist’s analysis (1996), although due to its inconstancies the Judahite canon should not be considered a truly imperial artifact, the imperial canonization was imposed on colonized Judah during the reign of Darius I, with the goal of functioning as an expression of imperial power. This view, however, suffers from inner contradictions and finds little echo in the archaeological/historical reality of the early fifth century BCE. Zlotnick-Sivan on the other hand (2004), has suggested that the redaction of Exodus 1f should be set between 530 and 525 BCE, mirroring Persian anti-Egyptian propaganda. In her reconstruction, by creating the story of the Exodus out of Egyptian bondage, Judahite elites provided ideological justification for Egyptian conquest by the Persian empire. We find this reconstruction quite implausible, and not only because of such a narrow chronological limits for the redaction of Exodus 1f. It is simply hard to believe that the Persian authorities would need any ideological justification for their westward expansion from Judahite subjects (among many others), not to mention the improbability of such a complicated hidden message (written in Hebrew) being correctly understood and deciphered on the Persian side.
believe, however, that rather than being the product of an imposed imperial authorization, the canonization of the Torah should be considered as a conscious response by Judahite Priestly circles (most probably under the guidance of Ezra) to a new geopolitical reality. Canonizing such a vast variety of traditions within a single literary unit, whose basic premises were shared by the Priestly school and the Deuteronomists, both in the Land and in the Diaspora, had a high potential of crystallizing a collective Jewish identity—a great desideratum for the survival of the postexilic community.46 The renegotiation of new corporate identity vis-à-vis both the Persian authorities and local non-Judahite populations, underscored the right, from time immemorial, of a “divinely chosen people” to possess a territory. From the point of view of the ruling Persian administration, the possibility of monitoring this people via a written law would have been appealing—and not necessarily only for the reason of economic exploitation or logistical assistance to Persian armies. In the context of intercultural translatability of deities, where ‘people in one culture, most commonly at a highly elite level, explicitly recognize that the deities of other cultures are as real as its own’ (M. Smith 2008: 6), it would have been an advantage to have on your side a people whose God (at least according to their own claims) defeated the gods of Egypt.

But there is much more at stake here. As Bruns suggested (1984: 464), ‘the whole point of canonization is to underwrite the authority of a text, not merely with respect to its origin as against competitors in the field—this, technically, would simply be a question of authenticity—but with respect to the present and future in which it will reign or govern as a binding text’. The very purpose of canonization, in Bruns’s opinion, is to distinguish between texts that are powerful in a given situation and those that are not. In other words, it is always an issue of authority and power. What authority and power could be gained by the postexilic community and its leaders by

46. Cf. Ska 2001: 161-82. Bringing ‘all the people’ under the binding authority of the Torah should be definitely emphasized (Knoppers 2009). In this respect, the role of Moses in the construction of Diaspora identity is of paramount importance. Römer (2008b), for instance, points out that the tradition about Moses’ Ethiopian wife, with its aim of legitimating intermarriages, most probably originated in a Diaspora context. If so, Ezra’s prohibitions of intermarriages should be seen as a midrashic interpretation of Diaspora-oriented tradition, addressed specifically to the local community of followers. In other words, for the sake of the preservation of the Yehud indigenous community and the power of its elites, authorized by the existence of the temple at Jerusalem, what is allowed hesitantly abroad is not tolerated on a local level. In this regard, if the account presented in Nehemiah 8 indeed originally bridged Ezra 8 and 9, it would come as a little surprise that the midrashic interpretation that forbids intermarriages on the local level follows the presentation of the pan-Judahite oriented Torah of Moses to the people of Jerusalem.
canonizing the Pentateuch? On the other hand, how would the canonization have benefited the Persian crown? The complexity and inner contradictions of the Pentateuch, which continue to preoccupy the current generation of biblical scholars, became an invaluable asset for the postexilic Judahite community. The Persian authorities could not possibly comprehend the intricacies of Judahite laws and foundation myths, not even if they had been written in Aramaic. In imperial eyes, what might have been most important is the central message(s) carried by the proclaimed canonical version of the Pentateuch. That is to say, redacting and canonizing blocks of traditions in the form of the Pentateuch guaranteed a connection to the past and empowered interpreters (J. Smith 1982). The latter consisted to a great extent of Priestly circles who responded to new geopolitical realities. As long as the interpreters were responsible for transmitting the meaning of the text (manipulations are not excluded), they were capable of communicating different messages to different audiences (i.e., to the local Judahite population and its neighbors, to the Diaspora or to the Persian authorities). The most powerful message of the Pentateuch identifies the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah at Sinai as a charter myth of the nation of Israel. The Torah was transmitted by Moses, who is described as a prophet in a category by himself, with no successor like him.

By canonizing selected parts from the available materials, Judahite scribes (and leaders) who originated at the center of the Persian empire reveal a deep understanding of Persian imperial ideology and rhetoric. As already stated, the current opinions on the genesis of the Pentateuch tend to operate on the assumption of the existence of separate complex blocks of material, where smaller units (e.g., the primeval history, the patriarchal stories, the Exodus traditions, etc.) gradually crystallized into larger literary units before they were modified and compiled by Deuteronomistic and Priestly redactors.47 If there is any validity to the Hexateuch thesis, Otto’s analysis (2000; 2009), according to which the scribal redactors formed the Hexateuch in the fifth century BCE (in the period of Nehemiah’s activity in Jerusalem),48 makes a lot of sense in the context our reconstruction. As we already discussed above, the settlement patterns attested in the region of Judah during the fifth century BCE, suggest that the Persian authorities deliberately permitted a certain degree of

47. According to Russell’s analysis of the traditions about Egypt and the Exodus in the Hebrew Bible, initially there were at least three different regional traditions concerning the episode (Russell 2009; cf. also van der Toorn 2001; see, however, Berner 2010).

48. See also Achenbach 2003; Knauf 2002; Römer and Brettler 2000. Although in Van Seters’s (2003: 955) opinion: ‘the Hexateuch is a scholarly fantasy and all the redactors invented to support it are likewise mere fantasies of scholarly ingenuity’, we find it difficult to accept this approach, which is based on the invention of the so-called ‘Yahwist historian’ who is later than the Deuteronomist, and rejects the notion of Pentateuchal or any other redactor (e.g., Van Seters 1992; 1999).
independence with regard to the resettlement of the area: First they allowed the newly established rural communities to organize, and thereafter included them within a rigid taxation system. The organization and spatial distribution of these communities may be explained therefore as an internal creation (‘self-organization process’), without strict imperial monitoring during the fifth century BCE. The aspirations for territorial expansion, reflected in the Book of Joshua, fit the absence of tight imperial control in the hill country of Judah during this period and strengthen the notion that the Hexateuch redaction was central to Nehemiah’s circle.49 One may assume that what triggered the concerns of Judah’s neighbors, as expressed in Neh. 2.10-20, was less the act of repairing the ramparts of Jerusalem, but rather the expansionist agenda of the Hexateuch redactors.50 In the same vein, Otto’s hypothesizing of an additional Priestly redaction of the Pentateuch around 400 BCE, which included Fortschreibung and Ergänzungen and the omission of the Book of Joshua,51 provides an additional corroboration for our archaeologically–historically oriented scenario. Indeed, in the period of consolidated imperial rule in the Fifth Satrapy, following the Persian withdrawal from Egypt, the story of military conquest by the Israelites would have met with disapproval on the side of the imperial authorities. Hence, the Exodus became the central national myth.

As demonstrated by Cohn (1981) and others, Israel’s journey from Egypt mirrors, on the whole, Van Gennep’s famous tripartite structure of the rites of passage.52 The separation stage (rites de séparation) is marked by a final break at the crossing of the Red Sea; the liminal stage (rites de marge or limen) concerns the period of wandering in the wilderness; and the last, reincorporation stage (rites d’agrégation), occurs at the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest. This scheme fits the Hexateuch’s narrative perfectly. However,

49. We disagree with the theories, according to which the conquest stories narrated in the book of Joshua were invented in the Persian period, as a sort of ‘a utopian manifesto, intended to support a project of return that never took place in such terms’ (Liverani 2005: 272). These stories, utopian as they are, have a much earlier pedigree in the context of biblical historiography (Na’aman 2002).
50. From an archaeological perspective, we have no conclusive evidence of a city-wall dated to the Persian period, although the area of the city in Persian times has been intensively excavated (Finkelstein 2008). Presenting the act of repairing the city-wall of Jerusalem as the main trigger for a joint opposition to Nehemiah’s activity (Neh. 2.10-20) may be a later reinterpretation of events, belonging most probably to the Hasmonean period (cf. Wright 2004: 67-127, passim). It should be noted that according to Nihan (2007), the separation of the Pentateuch from the Former Prophets accounts for the fact that the Torah of Moses was intended to be accepted by both Judahites and Samaritans. In this regard, Knoppers’s nuanced analysis (2006) of major contacts between Yehud and Samaria is particularly revealing.
51. Note that Achenbach’s (2003) dates for HexRed and PentRed are slightly different.
52. For basic studies on this topic, see, e.g., Van Gennep 1960; Turner 1969; 1974.
in the context of what eventually became canonical Pentateuchal tradition, the reincorporation stage appears as a vague concept, since the conquest and the settlement narrative is missing. Nevertheless, one of the most important aims of reincorporation (i.e., Israel’s disengagement from Egypt and what it symbolizes) remains manifestly visible already during the separation stage. In the final act of separation, Yahweh splits the chaotic sea into two. When the Israelites advance toward the world of heavenly inspired order (Promised Land), they leave the world of chaos (Egypt) behind. It seems that an ancient Canaanite/Israelite tradition (Cross 1973; Kloos 1986; Anderson 1987) suddenly evolved into a forceful and relevant metaphor, extremely useful from the point of view of the postexilic community of Yehud.

Following the Egyptian ‘reckless’ disengagement from Achaemenid control, the canonization of such a tradition signaled to imperial authorities that the Judahites viewed Egypt as a world of chaos, an antithesis to the world of cosmic order so central to Persian imperial self-understanding. The Persian empire, as the successor of the neo-Assyrian and neo-Babylonian empires, possessed and promoted the same imperial ideology and system of values, with its aspiration to rule the entire universe (see, e.g., Liverani 1979; Tadmor 1981; Machinist 1986; Zaccagnini 1987; Horowitz 1998; Vanderhooft 1999; Kuhrt 2002). The basic element of this ideology is the notion that a correct relationship between divine and human levels can be obtained only under a firm authority of one kingdom, whose ruler is authorized by the gods. The cosmic order can be sustained only within the confines of a divinely chosen empire. The image projected by the empire was intended to assure the loyalty of its subjects: They should be grateful for being included within the limits of the oikumene. Those who live beyond the borders of the divine order live in chaos, and it is the duty of the empire to bring them into submission by expanding the realm of order. Subjugated peoples did not always realize the benefits of submitting to the yoke of the empire. Therefore, their resistance had to be eliminated—through both force and ideological propaganda. Operating within the same tradition of imperial ideology and rhetoric, the Persian empire developed the notion of imperial order that maintains the ultimate ‘order/truth’ (arta) in opposition to those who fall into the trap of ‘lie/falsehood’ (drauga). According to the inscription on the tomb of Darius I, Ahura-Mazda conferred kingship on him because the earth ‘was in commotion (yaudati-)’. Like other rulers, Darius was divinely chosen to be the deity’s instrument in quelling the chaos that ravaged the world and in bringing harmony, which required obedience to the Persian king and Ahura-Mazda (see, e.g., Kuhrt 2001; Briant 2002: 165-203).

53. The parallels between this act and Marduk splitting the watery Tiamat into two, in order to produce order out of chaos, are striking (see, e.g., Dozeman 2009: 298-300; Smith and Pitard 2009: 255-57).
Similarly, the Exodus story implies the impossibility of the worship of Yahweh in a land of chaos. Instead, Israel needed to resettle in the realm of the cosmic order, which lay within the borders of the later Persian Empire.

The consolidation of imperial power in the southern frontier of the Fifth Satrapy during the first half of the fourth century BCE provided an occasion for Judahite priesthood to present a canonized version of the Pentateuch (cf. Achenbach 2010). The essential materials had already been compiled in the form of the Hexateuch. The pentateuchal redaction, however, which conferred canonicity on a fundamentally anti-Egyptian book anticipated imperial expectations and effectively prevented the imposition of what might have been unfavorable imperial obligations on Judahite subjects. The power over the province of Judah was left in the hands of the priests. Thanks to skillfully emphasized anti-Egyptian stances in the canonized version of the Pentateuch, the very act of belonging to Judah may have signaled to the Persian authorities that they were dealing with loyal and law-obeying subjects. The issue of loyalty was acute. After the Egyptian fiasco, many at the Achaemenid court would have feared additional rebellions in which

54. For Egyptian concept of cosmic order, the Ma’at, that should be maintained by a legitimate and righteous ruler, see Assmann 1990.

55. One might consider a notion of ‘inclusive monotheism’ (Thompson 1995). Following this, it has been suggested that Yahweh’s identification with the God of the heaven (אליהו השמים) can be taken as a local manifestation of Ahura-Mazda (e.g., Bolin 1995; Trotter 2001: 151-53). This view, however, remains highly speculative.

56. Cf., e.g., Assmann 1997. On the other hand, one should consider an intended appeal of the certain parts of the Pentateuch to the Diaspora element, anticipated by Moses’ death outside the Promised Land. For certain parts of the pan-Judahite community the importance of the ‘Joseph cycle’, where Egypt is portrayed rather favorably, made its exclusion probably impossible. However, as properly emphasized by Greifenhagen (2002: 35-49, passim), these traditions were subverted by the dominant voice of the central anti-Egyptian narrative. Besides, since the anti-Egyptian stance appears only after a new king arose over Egypt, the one who did not know Joseph (Exod. 1.8), there is no contradiction to our scenario, since the allegory between the arising of a new evil king and the Egyptian rebellion against the Persian rule is detectable. The inclusion of Joseph story within the Pentateuchal corpus, however, may also reflect a much later reality, where an old tale apparently receives a new meaning. Scholars who consider the Josephgeschichte as an independent literary composition have offered a variety of often contradictory views concerning its date, origin and purpose. The literature on this topic is rather extensive; e.g., de Hoop 1999: 366-450, passim; Levin 2004: 223-41. Without embarking on a lengthy discussion, all we can say in the framework of the present endeavor is that one should consider the possibility that the Josephgeschichte was added to the proto-canonized version of the Pentateuch at the beginning of the Ptolemaic rule, with the aim of justifying the renewed flourishing of the Jewish community in Egypt.

57. This point is also communicated in the money that represented the Achaemenid king (Gitler 2011: 105-19).
the Fifth Satrapy would cooperate with the Egyptians. Indeed, throughout the centuries Judah and its neighbors relied on Egyptian support against the incursions of Mesopotamian rule. Egypt was not only considered a natural ally in any conspiracy against neo-Assyrian or neo-Babylonian rule; it also provided a place of refuge in times of danger (Galvin 2009). One may interpret the anti-Egyptian message of the Pentateuch against this backdrop, and the Persian authorities likely appreciated the point. The anti-Egyptian narrative of course could not completely prevent Judahite participation in anti-Persian alliances. Yet the fact remains that during this period Judah appears to have avoided any participation in Egyptian orchestrated anti-Persian coalitions. Furthermore, during the preliminary stages of Alexander the Great’s campaign, Judah remained faithful to Darius III even after he fled back to Persia (after the Battle of Issus; and see Josephus, Ant. 11.317-19).

Finally, we may consider the possibility that the canonization of the Former Prophets, which was well under way already during the third century BCE, can be associated with the geopolitical transformations Palestine underwent under Ptolemaic rule. It seems that at a certain point during the Early Hellenistic period, significant changes could not be made to the canonical structure of the Pentateuch. Starting the process of canonization, the Former Prophets, with its more nuanced approaches toward Egypt, may be considered perhaps as an initial attempt to justify the presence of Judahite communities in Egypt. The process stands in connection with a large body of apologetic literature that was written either as a way of defending the persistence of these Egyptian–Jewish communities while an independent Jewish life existed under the Hasmonean kingdom or in dispute with Greek or Egyptian authors on the ancient roots of the Jewish nation and its place in Egyptian history (Bar-Kochva 1996; Gruen 1998). It stands to reason that the Syrian Wars and especially those of the first half of the third century BCE (First and Second Syrian Wars), when

58. The existence of the networks of spies, employed by the neo-Assyrian court to communicate with provincial officials during the eighth and the seventh centuries BCE, was recently surveyed in detail; see Dubovský 2006. It is plausible to assume that the neo-Babylonian court took advantage of the accumulated intelligence as well, and that the Persian court possessed enough information concerning unfaithful behavior of local subjects who crafted conspiracies with Egypt in the past.

59. Greifenhagen’s thoughtful analysis of Egypt portrayed on the Pentateuch’s ideological map, which emphasizes Jewish loyalty to the Persian government over its political challenger, is close in certain aspects to our reconstruction. However, Greifenhagen’s thesis is flawed by historical reconstruction of mistakenly interpreted archaeological material, as discussed above. This resulted in too broad a date, c. 450–350 BCE, suggested by him for canonization of the Pentateuch (Greifenhagen 2002: 224).

60. Although it has been alleged that the Tennes rebellion around the middle of the fourth century BCE was of great importance for Judah (Barag 1966), this view has been rightly challenged (Grabbe 2004: 346-49).
Palestine and Judah were under direct Ptolemaic domination, reoriented Judahite and Jerusalemite attention to Egypt. It is worth noting that Jerusalem was virtually the only mint that continued to strike silver fractions on the Attic weight standard under the Diadochi and especially under Ptolemy I and II (Ronen 2003–2006: 30-31), while the Lagid kings were promoting the use of bronze coinage with a similar range of values. These silver coins most probably served as temple-money like their Late Persian-period predecessors. More interesting is the fact that Jerusalem was apparently deprived of minting rights once the coastal cities of Ptolemais, Iopé and Gaza were granted these rights in Ptolemy II’s 25th regnal year (261/260 BCE). The reasons for this change are not clear. It may be related to the strategic organization of the Second Syrian War (260–253 BCE), as can be inferred from the major administrative reforms Ptolemy II initiated in the region in the same year (261/260 BCE). These reforms include the ‘re-foundation’ of the coastal cities of Ptolemais, Iopé and Gaza, as well as the establishment of inland centers such as Beth-Shean (renamed Scythopolis), Beth-Yerah (renamed Philoteria, after his sister), and Rabbat-Ammon (renamed Philadelphia after Ptolemy II’s pseudonym). It is possible that Jerusalem’s forfeiture of minting rights in 261/260 BCE, which cut a major source of income to the priestly class and called for the reorganization of the temple ‘moneyed-economy’ may be seen as additional trigger for the canonization of the Prophets, while Jerusalemites strived to regain minting (and probably other) rights by displaying a more sympathetic attitude towards Egypt and the Ptolemaic kingdom. This attitude is reflected in a number of the narratives of the Former Prophets, especially in the Books of Kings.

Summing up the major points of the current endeavor, on the basis of our modified chronology for a number of archaeological sites in southern Palestine, we suggested that the Persian domination over southern Palestine

61. After the Greco-Macedonian conquest the weight standard of the provincial coinage of Judah changed, when the grh and half-grh were replaced by fractions of the obol on the Attic weight standard with a modal weight of 0.19 g for the quarter-obol.

62. These issues show a clear Ptolemaic iconographic influence, and see, e.g., Meshorer 2001: nos. 29-35; Gitler and Lorber 2006: Group 5, dated from circa 301–261/260 BCE.

63. For the sake of our argument his first regnal year started in 285/284 BCE, although it is known that he inherited the throne only in 282 BCE but later backdated his regnal count to 285/284 BCE, while he was co-regent with his father Ptolemy I.

64. This seems to be the case only if one accepts Gitler and Lorber’s (2006) revised chronology for the Ptolemaic Yehud coinage, which is based on justified stylistic considerations. On the ‘foundations/re-foundations’ and their meaning, see Tal 2011.

65. For example, Galvin 2009: 111-46. This issue is beyond the scope of the current endeavor and should be dealt with thoroughly elsewhere. The possibility that the Josephgeschichte was added to the proto-canonized Pentateuch only in the early Hellenistic period (above), in order to justify the maintenance of the prosperous Jewish community in Egypt, should be taken into consideration.
became particularly prominent during the first half of the fourth century BCE. During the fifth century BCE, and despite a number of Egyptian uprisings, southern Palestine was a rather undeveloped, strategically insignificant area, hardly worthy of large-scale imperial investment. In contrast, following the Egyptian rebellion of 404–400 BCE, for the first time in more than a century of Achaemenid rule southern Palestine became an extremely sensitive frontier of the Persian Empire. The close interaction between the crown and the local administration points to a completely different level of Achaemenid involvement in local affairs that included a fixed arrangement of district boundaries, garrisoning and tight imperial investment, as is witnessed by the construction works at many sites in southern Palestine. Likewise, the introduction of a moneyed economy and the massive use of standardized stamp-seal impressions on Judean storage-jars suggest a significant transformation in the administrative organization of the Province of Judah. It should not be viewed as a coincidence that the canonization of the Pentateuch took place in the framework of this sudden geopolitical change. Indeed, major theological reforms, be it the reforms of Josiah or the reforms of Luther, were most often undertaken in response to macro changes. The canonization of the Pentateuch in the first half of the fourth century BCE should be seen as an essential tool in re-shaping the identity of Judahite postexilic communities in response to a new Persian Empire that no longer included Egypt in its realm. This new political reality demanded an immediate renegotiation and reshaping of local identities versus a re-arranged new imperial order. The canonization of the essentially anti-Egyptian version of the Torah in the early fourth century BCE should not be seen therefore solely as a result of inner-societal compromises between different Judahite groups in the Persian period, but rather as a sophisticated response of Jerusalem’s priestly circles to this new reality.

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