

Social Groups behind Biblical Traditions

Edited by
BENEDIKT HENSEL,
BARTOSZ ADAMCZEWSKI,
and DANY NOCQUET

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Identity Perspectives from Egypt, Transjordan,
Mesopotamia, and Israel in the Second Temple Period

Edited by

Benedikt Hensel, Bartosz Adamczewski,
and Dany Nocquet

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Preface

Is the Hebrew Bible purely a product of Jerusalem or were there various social groups who each played a role in its development during the Second Temple period? This is the guiding question of the present volume, which fills a crucial gap in recent research by combining current literary-historical, redactional and text-historical analysis of the Hebrew Bible with the latest results pertaining to the pluriform social and religious shape of early Judaism.

This volume's journey to publication began in the year 2017 with the joint meeting of EABS and ISBL in Berlin, during which the three editors of the present volume independently presented their findings on the Samaritans and their influence on the Hebrew Bible. This was followed in 2018 by a jointly organized conference in Montpellier, France on "Samaria and Diaspora in the Persian and Hellenistic Period: Influence, Significance and Contributions to the Pentateuch and the Prophets." There, the focus was deliberately limited to the possible influences by Samaritan groups on the biblical texts, since they were the most historically accessible at the time. The volume *Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible: Tracing Perspectives of Group Identity from Judah, Samaria, and the Diaspora in Biblical Traditions* (Mohr Siebeck, FAT II) published in 2020, presents the individual contributions from this conference while also already widening the perspective for subsequent publications that look not only at Samaria itself but to a broader perspective on the phenomenon of Yahwistic diversity. The present volume can thus be understood as a sequel to the aforementioned broadened view on Yahwistic diversity as a phenomenon. It takes into consideration perspectives not only of the Judeans and Samaritans but also the groups from Egypt, Transjordan, Babylonia and Persia, as well as "the Diaspora" in general.

More specifically, the volume is a result of a three-years research unit initiated and conducted by the three editors at the EABS conferences from 2019 through 2022. The volume is a collection of select contributions from the various research unit sessions, supplemented by some solicited contributions in order to cover the full panorama of currently known social groups of Yahwistic character and the impact of this phenomenon on the making of the Hebrew Bible – from the Persian period down to the time of Qumran.

As a result, this volume – for the first time in recent research history – addresses the phenomenon of religious plurality by bringing together archaeological, (religious-)historical, and literary-critical approaches. It goes without saying that this volume is not intended to be an exhaustive repository of all known

groups and their corresponding representations in the biblical texts. Rather, this volume seeks to enable a panoramic view on the (possible) influences by various social groups from various Yahwistic contexts on the genesis of the biblical texts and their theological and ideological profiles.

We would like to offer our thanks to all contributors to the volume for their excellent essays and further stimulating the conversation – be it during the sessions of the Research Unit or in discussion with the editors and contributors while writing and finalizing their papers. We also hope that this volume will encourage (the much needed) further discussion.

We wish to extend our gratitude towards the editors of this series, Corinna Körting, Konrad Schmid, Mark S. Smith und Andrew Teeter, for accepting the volume for publication. We want to express our sincere appreciation for the editorial staff at Mohr Siebeck for their help in preparing this volume, for their professionalism and for the support they have provided us. Finally, we want to thank my assistant to the chair of Hebrew Bible, in Oldenburg Dr. Jordan Davis, as well as my student assistants Maite Benn, Sophie Dierks, Julia Klose, and Miriam Ostermann for helping editing the volume.

Oldenburg, March 2023

Benedikt Hensel,
on behalf of the co-editors Bartosz Adamczewski and Dany Nocquet

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Introduction

Benedikt Hensel

The Persian and early Hellenistic periods are widely recognized as the so-called formative period for the Hebrew scriptures and emerging Judaism. This realization goes hand in hand with the latest research, which in its historical description of the periods in question highlights the religious diversity of this “early Judaism.”¹

Against this background, the question of which groups were responsible for bearing the different biblical traditions during this very period needs to be asked anew. There has been a long tradition in research of identifying biblical redactors and redactor groups as well as the groups of biblical tradents of this period with the social groups of Judea (and especially those of Jerusalem). This is also still the case for the majority of the biblical texts: the Hebrew Bible seems to be, in the end, clearly a Judean-dominated tradition. The historical aspect of the “Yahwistic diversity” is mostly ignored.

The present volume closes this research gap. The guiding question of this volume is: to what extent did the Yahwistic diversity of this period make its way into the formational processes of the Hebrew Bible? It seems clear that, even if most of the traditions at the surface of the text were shaped from a Judean perspective, this diversity is still reflected in certain biblical traditions or redactional material. In this regard, another question arises: which social groups or redactor groups (Judean as well as “non-Judean”) stand behind the processes that produced the Hebrew Bible? Are the various groups from not only Yehud and Samaria but also from Babylonia, Persia, Egypt, Idumea and Transjordan, all of which have up to now been well-known and well-documented, reflected within in the latest biblical traditions, and if so, how are these groups represented in the biblical texts?²

For the first time, the present volume will address these and related questions by bringing together different disciplines, thereby combining *archaeological*, (*religious-*)*historical*, *literary-critical*, *redaction-historical* and *textual-historical* approaches. This has resulted in a volume that aims at complete coverage of the phenomenon of Yahwistic diversity as it is known to us up to the present. It

¹ On this matter, see the research overview *in this volume*: Hensel, “Who Wrote the Bible?”

² On the different concepts and forms of representation of the various Yahwistic groups, see Hensel, “Who Wrote the Bible?” (*in this volume*).

is designed in such a way that the individual articles represent a panorama of the currently known social groups of Yahwistic character – from within “Israel” (i. e., Judah/Yehud and Samaria) as well as outside it (Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Transjordan). In terms of its *temporal range*, the phenomenon of Yahwistic diversity will be traced from the Persian period to the time of Qumran.

It goes without saying that this volume is not intended to be an all-encompassing description of all known groups and their possible representations in the biblical texts (this would call for a monograph; I am currently working on this and hope to be able to finish it in the relatively near future). Instead, this volume should enable a *panoramic view* on the (possible) influences by various social groups from various Yahwistic contexts on the genesis of the biblical texts and their theological and ideological profiles.

Yahwistic Diversity of the Hebrew Bible:

The “History” of the Present Volume within the Research Discussion

For the sake of better contextualization within the history of research, it may be best to mention here the extensive process of how this volume came to be. Its beginnings are in the 2017 Joint Meeting of EABS and ISBL in Berlin, during which the three editors of the present volume independently presented their findings on the Samaritans and their influence on the Hebrew Bible. This was followed in 2018 by a jointly organized conference in Montpellier, France on “Samaria and Diaspora in the Persian and Hellenistic Period: Influence, Significance and Contributions to the Pentateuch and the Prophets.” There, the focus was deliberately limited to the possible influences by Samaritan groups on the biblical texts, since they were the most historically accessible at the time. The volume *Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible: Tracing Perspectives of Group Identity from Judah, Samaria, and the Diaspora in Biblical Traditions*, published in 2020, presents the individual contributions from this conference while also already widening the perspective for subsequent publications that look not only at Samaria itself but to a broader perspective on the phenomenon of Yahwistic diversity.

The present volume can thus be understood as a sequel to the aforementioned *broadened view* on Yahwistic diversity as a phenomenon. It takes into consideration perspectives of not only the Judeans and Samaritans but also the groups from Egypt, Transjordan, Babylonia and Persia, as well as “the Diaspora” in general. In terms of its temporal range, *Charlotte Hempel’s* contribution now also traces the phenomenon to Qumran, filling a crucial gap in previous research.

The volume is also a result of a multiyear research unit initiated and conducted by the three editors at the EABS conferences through 2022. The volume is a collection of select contributions from the various research unit sessions and

is supplemented by solicited contributions from *C. L. Crouch* (Radboud University/University of Pretoria), *Dalit Regev* and *Uzi Greenfeld* (both affiliated with the Israel Antiquities Authority), *Ann-Kristin Wigand* (Humboldt University of Berlin) and *Vjatcheslav Dreier* (University of Heidelberg).

Structure of the Present Volume

The volume contains *thirteen essays* divided in three sections. The opening essay, “Who Wrote the Bible? Understanding Redactors and Social Groups behind Biblical Traditions in the Context of Plurality within Emerging Judaism,” is my own contribution, which is part of the first section entitled *Emerging Judaism, Yahwistic Plurality, and the Making of the Hebrew Bible: A Classification of the Phenomena in the Overall Context of Hebrew Bible Studies*. My essay discusses the different questions about the identification of redactor groups and social groups behind the biblical traditions in the so-called formative phase of Judaism. Here, I identify and detail two modes of representation of the different Yahwistic and especially Diaspora groups. This results in the observation that the different traditions and social groups behind the biblical texts establish differing concepts of a “biblical Israel” under the question of who does and who does not (anymore) belong. The formation of the biblical traditions thus comprises the counterpart to the historical processes of the formation of Judaism within the “canon” of the various Yahwistic groups.

Part II of the volume includes essays which explore social groups and perspectives of Yahwistic diversity from “inside the Land of Israel,” which broadly references the various Judean and Samaritan perspectives and voices represented in certain textual strata.

The opening article of this section is authored by *Yigal Levin*: One of the central issues in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah is that of the “intermarriage” of Judean men to “foreign” women. To the author of Ezra-Nehemiah, and presumably to the historical characters of Ezra the Scribe and of Nehemiah the Governor, such marriages were a grave sin against God, and in both stories, the main character brings about the “removal” of these women. Within modern scholarship, however, there is no consensus as to the specific nature of this grave sin, nor of the motivation of Ezra, Nehemiah or the author of the book in opposing such marriages. *Levin’s* essay first surveys the various proposals and then analyses the issue against the background of the information we have about the low level of the Judeans’ maintenance of “identity boundaries” in Babylonia, Elephantine, Idumea and other areas, proposing that Ezra-Nehemiah considered such boundaries to be crucial in the constitution and preservation of the identity of the Jews, as a minority group, in the early Second Temple Period.

Charlotte Hempel contributed the next essay, entitled “Yahwistic Diversity in the Land of Israel: The Contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls.” Her contribution argues that the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls offers important contributions to the scholarly debate on the question of Yahwistic diversity and group identity from Judah and Israel addressed in this volume. In particular, *Hempel* highlights the sizeable contribution of current research on the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran to our understanding and recovery of social and Yahwistic diversity in the land of Israel.

The article “The Persian Pottery from Salvage Excavations at Har Gerizim (2019–2021): Preliminary Findings,” authored by *Dalit Regev* and *Uzi Greenfeld*, presents preliminary results from the first three seasons of the renewed excavations on Mt. Gerizim. As indicated by the finds of the excavation, the town atop Mt. Gerizim, or at least the neighborhood of the town recently excavated on the northern slope, was quite humble in economic status. This may have been due to external circumstances and the economic difficulties caused by many years of war between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires or may have been due to the religious adherence of the local population, who avoided imported vessels.

In his contribution “1 Kgs 20 and 22, a Writing by a Prophetic Narrator? A Reconsideration,” *Dany Nocquet* deals with the intriguing question of a (possible) Samaritan redactional layer within the Book of Kings, thereby focusing on the war accounts of 1 Kgs 20 and 22. These war accounts tell about the violent death of King Ahab and are often interpreted as post-Deuteronomistic developments or as a late writing coming from a “prophetic narrator.” In continuity with this, the article points out the fact that the main goal of these stories focuses not on the punishment of the king but on the presence of a true prophet comparable to Jeremiah and living in Samaria. Enhancing the greatness and efficiency of the prophecy of Samaria already during the time of King Ahab, these texts could be understood as a contribution of the Samaritan community nuancing the Deuteronomistic History in the Persian period.

Magnar Kartveit’s study, entitled “The Attitude towards the Northerners in the Book of Chronicles,” brings into discussion a long-standing open question in traditional and modern scholarship. The attitude towards the Northerners in the book of Chronicles has been described by scholars in various ways. After Martin Noth’s influential 1943 theory of an anti-Samaritan polemic, scholars have reassessed the texts and found an inclusive or welcoming stance towards the North. In recent years, however, new material has emerged, which makes it necessary to take a fresh look at this question. The most important material is constituted by the results from the excavations on the summit of Mt. Gerizim and inscriptions found there. *Kartveit*’s article suggests that the idea of a purified land is central to Chronicles’ attitude to the North, and the kings Hezekiah and Josiah provide examples of how this status of the people and the land is obtained.

Bartosz Adamczewski's essay, "Othniel and the Unfaithful Concubine: Two Images of the Judean Yahwism from a Northern Perspective," explores possible Samaritan perspectives within the Book of Judges. The images of Judea and the Judean Yahwism in the Israelite book of Judges are highly variegated. In the stories of Othniel (Judg 3:8–11) and the unfaithful concubine (Judg 19:1–20:13c), the image of Judahite civil leadership, inasmuch as it is theocratic and oriented positively towards Ephraim, is positive (Judg 3:8–11; 19:3–9). On the other hand, the image of the rival, separatist sanctuary of Yahweh in Jerusalem is very negative (Judg 19:10–12). In order to analyze the variegated rhetorical impact of both stories, which in two different ways illustrate the same Deuteronomic blessing for Judah (Deut 33:7), this essay firstly explores their allusive features. Subsequently, it then analyzes the different functions of both accounts in the hypertextual rhetoric of the book of Judges. Finally, it investigates the extent to which Yahwistic diversity in the Hebrew Bible can be regarded as an intentionally shaped rhetorical phenomenon.

The final essay in the second section is authored by *Wolfgang Schütte*: "The 'Scroll of David' – a Samaritan Name of the Book of Samuel? 2 Sam 24 and the Text History of the Jewish Books of Samuel and Kings." The *Kitāb at-Tārīḥ* of Abū l-Faḥ̣ embeds 2 Sam 24 within a Persian-era narrative, a setting comparable to Jewish narratives from the Hasmonean period. Because of Abū l-Faḥ̣'s unusual reception of 2 Sam 24, this contribution traces the history of Samuel-Kings as books and the textual history of the biblical narrative. Behind the concern of the *kaige* recension, *Schütte* identifies a Torah-centric theological treatment, which he holds responsible for connecting the books of Samuel and Kings and the positioning of 2 Sam 24.

Part III of the volume is dedicated to a wide view of "diaspora perspectives," which includes social groups from Egypt, Babylonia, Persia and Transjordan.

This section opens with the article entitled "The Judean Group of Elephantine: Reading Aramaic Literature in the Service of Achaemenid Rule," authored by *Ann-Kristin Wigand*: In Elephantine, various ethnic groups lived and worked together in a very confined space during the Persian period. One of these groups called themselves "Judean" and venerated the God Yaho in a proper temple. For a long time, the Judeans of Elephantine were interpreted in view of the biblical image of Yahwism in time of Ezra-Nehemiah and thus served as an assumed representation of preexilic Yahwism. In her article, *Wigand* argues that this group is better understood within the close context of the multiethnic cohabitation in Egypt under Achaemenid rule. A closer look at the (Aramaic) literature available at Elephantine, especially the Aramaic Ahiqar composition, and its function in the Egyptian context elucidates this point.

"Gilead in 2 Samuel and the Discourse on Diaspora during the Persian Period" by *Stephen Germany* addresses the question of Transjordanian realities behind certain texts within the Book of Samuel. Although references to the

Transjordanian region of Gilead occur most frequently in biblical narratives set prior to the end of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE, there is good reason to conclude that many of the biblical texts relating to Gilead were written by Judean scribes long after the periods that they portray. This essay thus considers what could have motivated later Judean authors to write about a region that possibly had little historical connections to Judah at the time when many of the texts in question were composed. Through its analysis of two case studies from 2 Samuel (the site of Mahanaim and the figure of Barzillai the Gileadite), the study concludes that certain references to Gilead in 2 Samuel serve a symbolic function as part of a discourse on exile and life in the diaspora following the end of the kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE.

C. L. Crouch authored the following article, entitled “Involuntary Migration, Strategies of Identity Construction, and Religious Diversity after 586 BCE.” Here, *Crouch* discusses the consequences of Jerusalem’s destruction for the identity concerns of those who once lived there. The fall of the city to the Babylonians – not once, but twice – together with associated events left an indelible mark on Israelite and Judahite identity. Her article examines the construction of Israelite and Judahite identities in the wake of Judah’s downfall through the lens of involuntary migration, paying particular attention to the way that the reasons for this catastrophe were differently narrated by different involuntary migrant communities. *Crouch* investigates the refugee communities in both Egypt and Babylonia, from the perspective of the prophetic books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah. She concludes that both of these migrant communities identify the cause of their displacement as a matter of cultural practice, arguing that the disasters they have experienced occurred because a defining practice of the group was abandoned. The practices they identify as essential, however, are diametrically opposed: whereas Ezekiel identifies exclusive Yahwism as the core of Israelite cultural identity, the community in Egypt views it as an aberrant deviation from Judah’s older cultural traditions.

In his essay “Leviticus 26 and the Pro-Babylonian-Golah and Pro-Diaspora Redactions in the Context of Identity Formation and Conflict of Yahwistic Groups in the Persian Period,” *Kishiya Hidaka* demonstrates that one of the main stimuli for the literary developments in Lev 26* and Ezek 37*; 34* can be seen in the concerns for the identity and theological pre-eminence between the groups of the Babylonian Golah and the Diaspora. Close analysis of Lev 26* reveals the existence of two different conceptions toward the Babylonian Golah. *Hidaka* shows that the pro-Diaspora redaction in Ezek 34* receives several influences from Lev 26* and the pro-Babylonian Golah redaction in Ezek 37*. This approach can cast further light on the link between the formation of the Pentateuch and the developments of the group identities in the Persian period.

In *Vjatscheslav Dreier*’s contribution, “The Theological Profile of the Masoretic Book of Esther in the Context of Diverse Yhwh Communities,” *Dreier*

presents certain aspects of his PhD thesis tracing the theological profile of the Masoretic version of the book of Esther in terms of the historical context in which it originated. An initial task, therefore, is to provide such an historical reconstruction. *Dreier* shows that Esther should be understood as a narrative composed in dialogue with alternative visions advocated by differing groups of the time, each of which produced their own literature. This interpretation provides the best model for situating the book of Esther within the complex context of the diverse (Diaspora) Yhwh communities of the period.

Part I

Emerging Judaism, Yahwistic Plurality,
and the Making of the Hebrew Bible:
A Classification of the Phenomena
in the Overall Context of Hebrew Bible Studies

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