

The Fall of Jerusalem and the Rise of the Torah

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

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Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

Second, as Jean Louis Ska suggests,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jerusalem and Judah 600–200 BCE

Implications for Understanding Pentateuchal Texts

Israel Finkelstein

Several decades ago archaeology played a major role in Pentateuchal research, mainly in attempts to locate the *Sitz im Leben* – the single historical period – for the Patriarchs.¹ The failure (and, one must say today, naiveté) of this endeavour, and the realization that the texts are multi-layered and do not represent a single period of authorship, left archaeology outside the modern Pentateuchal research arena. This was a mistake² because archaeology does have the capacity to shed light on the historical realities behind biblical texts; in the case of the Pentateuch, this means the historical background behind the authors rather than the historicity of the stories. In fact, archaeology can even help in identifying different layers of authorship. I therefore suggest that the future of research into the evolution of biblical texts be in the collaboration between specialists in text analysis and archaeology.³

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

The Data

The Iron IIB–C

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

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

² Already in THOMPSON, *Historicity*; VAN SETERS, *Abraham*.

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

⁴ For this see, e.g., STERN, *Archaeology*.

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

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

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

⁵ For all this see an updated discussion in FINKELSTEIN, “Migration”.

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

⁷ FINKELSTEIN *et al.*, “Mound on the Mount”.

⁸ See discussion in NA’AMAN, “Contribution”.

⁹ FINKELSTEIN, “Migration”.

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

¹¹ FINKELSTEIN / SILBERMAN, “Temple and Dynasty”.

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

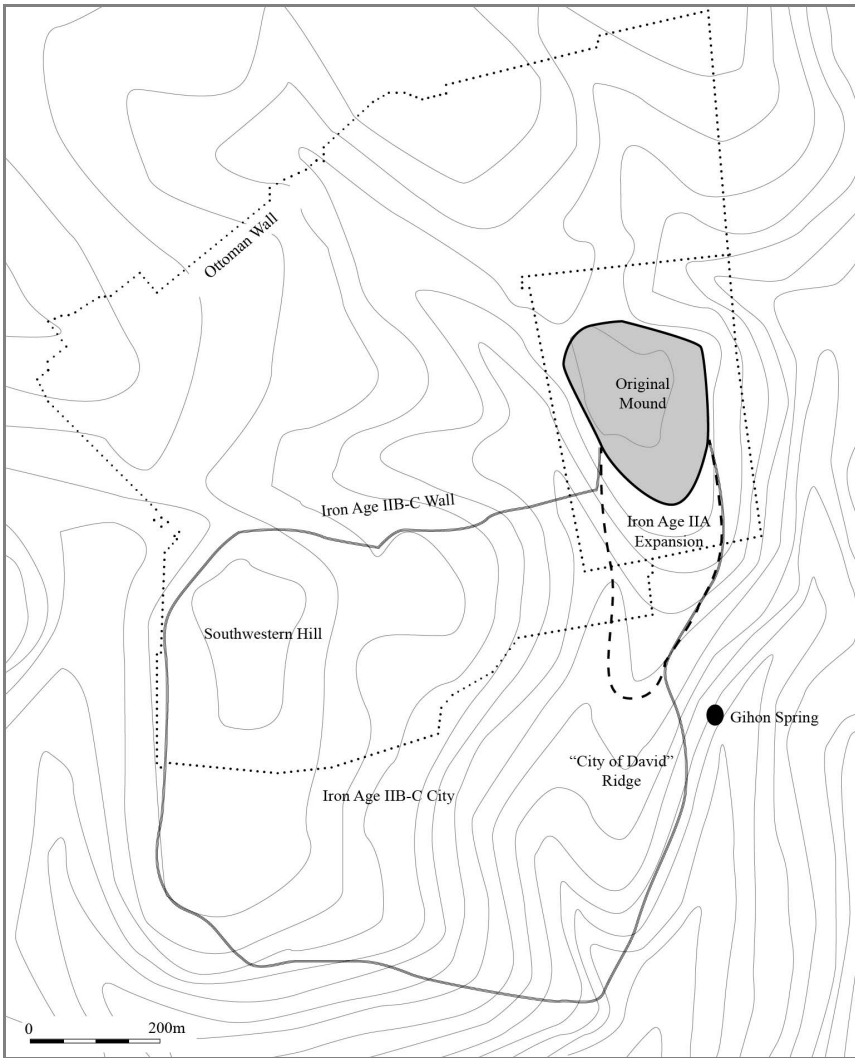


Fig. 1

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

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

¹⁴ NA’AMAN, “Dismissing the Myth”.

¹⁵ FINKELSTEIN, “Migration” (more below).

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

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

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

¹⁶ FINKELSTEIN / SASS, “West Semitic”.

¹⁷ SHARON *et al.*, “Report”; TOFFOLO *et al.*, “Absolute Chronology”.

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

¹⁹ E.g., AHITUV, *Echoes*.

²⁰ REICH *et al.*, “Recent Discoveries”.

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

²² FAIGENBAUM-GOLOVIN *et al.*, “Algorithmic Handwriting Analysis”.

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

The Babylonian, Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods

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

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

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

²⁴ GEVA / AVIGAD, “Area W”, 134, 155.

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

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

²⁷ BARKAY, “King’s Palace”, 27.

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

²⁹ In a seminar paper by my student Erin Hall.

This brings me to a site outside Yehud, but of great importance for the discussion here: Bethel. A few years ago Lily Singer-Avitz and I revisited the finds retrieved from this site – both from the published report and unpublished materials, in storage in Jerusalem and Pittsburg. The results of our investigation³⁰ indicated that the settlement history of the site was not continuous, as held by the excavators.³¹ Rather, it was characterized by oscillations, with three phases of strong activity – in the Iron I, Iron IIB and Hellenistic periods; two periods of decline – in the late Iron IIA and the Iron IIC; and two periods of probable abandonment in the early Iron IIA and, most significantly, in the Babylonian and Persian periods. This evidence cannot be brushed aside as stemming from deficiencies in the excavations, as significant sectors of the small mound – bigger than can be suggested at first glance – had been excavated (more below).

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

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

The territory of Persian period Yehud has traditionally been reconstructed according to the references to sub-districts of the province in Neh 3.³⁵ This, of course, is a circular argument because the background and date of this list is

³⁰ FINKELSTEIN / SINGER-AVITZ, “Bethel”.

³¹ KELSO, *Bethel*.

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

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

³⁴ FINKELSTEIN, “Wall of Nehemiah”.

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

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

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

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

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

³⁶ FINKELSTEIN, “List of Returnees”.

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

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

³⁹ Also FAUST, *Judah, contra*, e.g., BARSTAD, *Myth*.

⁴⁰ OFER, “Hill Country”, 106.

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

⁴² FINKELSTEIN, “Wilderness Narrative”.

⁴³ BIENKOWSKI, “New Evidence”.

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

Some Implications for Pentateuchal Studies

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

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

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

⁴⁴ KNAUF, “Bethel”, 319–322.

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

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

⁴⁷ FINKELSTEIN / SINGER-AVITZ, “Bethel”.

⁴⁸ DE PURY, “Cycle de Jacob”; BLUM, “Jacob Tradition”.

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