

Religion in the Achaemenid Persian Empire

Edited by
DIANA EDELMAN,
ANNE FITZPATRICK-MCKINLEY,
and PHILIPPE GUILLAUME

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Emerging Judaisms and Trends

Edited by
Diana Edelman, Anne Fitzpatrick-McKinley
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Abbreviations

AP	COWLEY, Arthur Ernest. <i>Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.</i> Oxford: Clarendon 1923
BK	BRESCIANI, Edda, and KAMIL, Murad. “Le Lettere aramaiche di Hermopoli.” <i>Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei</i> . Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche. Memorie. Ser. VIII 12 (1966): 357–428
BM	British Museum
BMC	Greek Coins in the British Museum
CIG	<i>Corpus inscriptionum graecarum</i>
CIS	<i>Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum</i>
DB	Behistun Inscription of Darius I
DPe	Inscription of Darius at Persepolis
FGrH	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , ed. Felix Jacoby. Leiden: Brill, 1954–1964
KAI	DONNER, Herbert, and RÖLLIG, Wolfgang. <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> . 5 th ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002
OGIS	<i>Orientalis graeci inscriptiones selectae</i>
PAT	HILLERS, Delbert R., and CUSSINI, Eleonora. <i>Palmyrene Aramaic Texts</i> . Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996
PF	Persepolis Fortification Tablet
RTP	INGHOLT, Harald, SEYRIG, Henri, and STARCKY, Jean. <i>Recueil des tessères de Palmyre</i> . Paris: Geuthner, 1955
TAD	PORTEN, Bezalel, and YARDENI, Ada. <i>Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt</i> . Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999
Urk.	<i>Urkunde I: Old Kingdom Texts</i> . In SETHE, Kurt. <i>Ägyptische Lesestücke: Texte des Mittleren Reiches. Zum Gebrauch im akademischen Unterricht</i> . 2 nd ed. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1928 (repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983)

Introduction

The present volume grew out of a workshop held at the University of Sheffield in July, 2011 under the same title: Religion in the Persian Period: Emerging Judaisms and Other Trends. The papers by Philip Davies, Philippe Guillaume, Russell Hobson, Yannick Muller and Jason Silverman were delivered at the workshop. The paper by James Anderson was presented the previous year at a workshop in Dublin but fit the theme of this volume better and so was included here instead of being published with the papers now edited by Anne Fitzpatrick-McKinley in the volume entitled *Assessing Biblical and Classical Sources for the Reconstruction of Persian Influence, History and Culture* (Classica et Orientalia; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015). The Sheffield workshop was a follow-up to the workshop held the preceding year, in fulfillment of the terms of a modest Art and Humanities Research and Innovation grant from the University of Sheffield meant to build collaborative partnerships with other institutions and to encourage the active participation of young scholars in such workshops and help them build professional networks.

The remaining papers were commissioned for the volume, in order to present religious trends from various areas within the Empire and so gain a wider perspective. Unfortunately, some of the papers presented at the workshop were not able to be included in the present volume for various reasons, and I was unable to find willing authors for other papers on specific topics that were sought for inclusion. Nevertheless, the final collection presents readers with a stimulating set of papers that covers many aspects of religion within the wider Persian Empire, even if developments in the Achaemenid heartland concerning old Persian religion and Zoroastrianism remain regrettably underrepresented. Much work is underway on this topic, which precluded the acceptance of my invitations to write for the present volume, so interested readers will be able to access the current theories and trends in other venues.

The first six papers comprising Part I focus on aspects of emerging forms of Judaism in various parts of the Empire: Yehud, Egypt, Transjordan, and Babylonia. In “Creating Dialectical Tensions: Religious Developments in Persian-Period Yehud Reflected in Biblical Texts,” James Anderson explores how the Hebrew Bible transmits two contradictory portraits of Yahweh: as the only, universal god and as one god among many. The tension has generally been explained to derive from the composite nature of the texts, which overlay more recent traditions atop older ones. However, in light of the growing consensus that a Persian-period context provided the formative years for the writing and editing of the Hebrew Bible, a more tenable explanation understands the tension as the deliberate creation of a Yehudite dialectic on the part of scribal elites in Yehud. This dialectic created continuity as well as discontinuity with the past. In delineating the Yehudite dialectic, it is suggested that a Persian-period

context provides the most likely setting for its development, which ultimately sought to address an ideological debate by advancing Yahweh's takeover of the pantheon.

The contribution by Philip Davies, "Monotheism, Empire, and the Cult(s) of Yehud in the Persian Period," explores how "monotheism" in the ancient Near East seems to be a phenomenon generated by the replacement of native monarchy by Empire, creating a "king of kings" and correspondingly, a "god of gods". It is unnecessary to seek its origin within a particular society, such as Judah. But the high god of such cults may be identified, named, and worshipped in various ways, and under the Neo-Babylonian administration of Judah based in Mizpah, the royal god of Jerusalem and its Davidic dynasty was apparently identified with the "god of Israel," whose cult was prominent in the territory of Benjamin, as in Samaria. However, the Syrian profile of the high god was Ba'alshamem, and conflict between Yahweh and Ba'al configurations of the high god might be seen in the anti-Ba'al polemics of the book of Hosea and the Elijah-Elisha cycles, and possibly even between the cults of Gerizim and Samaria, though this remains conjectural.

Russell Hobson, "Were Persian-Period 'Israelites' Bound by Ethnicity or Religious Affiliation? The Case of the Southern Transjordan," examines the differing attitudes towards Otherness in the ideologies of Priestly and Deuteronomistic textual traditions. He argues that competing viewpoints in P and D reflect a shift over time in social attitudes towards Other Yahwists on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Evidence from archaeological surveys of southeastern Jordan shows a dramatic depopulation in southern Transjordan under the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Resettlement in the Persian period took place primarily in the central and southern Moabite highlands and left the southern mining districts of the Iron IIC largely abandoned. The growth of new settlements and new populations in the Moabite highlands during the Late Babylonian period is suggested as a viable historical context for the re-imagining of ethnic ties to the Transjordan found in the Pentateuch of the Persian period.

In his contribution, "Non-Violent Re-Readings of Israel's Foundational Traditions in the Persian Period (The Calendar System in P)," Philippe Guillaume reverses Mary Boyce's idea that Xerxes altered the Avestan calendar following the model of the "Semitic week". He argues instead that the seven-day week was a biblical innovation derived from the pseudo-weeks of the Zoroastrian calendar. The biblical week is thus presented as a most significant Zoroastrian legacy.

Lowell Handy argues that the Josiah of the biblical narratives is a Persian-era construct in "Josiah as Religious Peg for Persian-Period Jews and Judaism". This vision of Josiah pays little to no attention to the political aspects of kingship but rather, focuses on religious matters. The figure of Josiah was used to nudge the Jewish diaspora as well as the populace of Yehud toward consistent religious belief and sacral space orientation. Josiah is not presented as a founding pillar of the ethnic/religious group but as a peg upon which Judean group identity could be fixed. The events of the Josiah stories have relevance for a Persian-era Jewish readership.

In their contribution, "A Religious Revolution Devours Its Children: The Iconography of the Persian-Period Cuboid Incense Burners," Christian Frevel and Katharina Pyschny reject the proposal by Ephraim Stern that the cuboid incense burners found in the southern Levant in Late Iron II period, but not in Yehud in the Persian period,

reflect non-Yehudite cults that were deliberately avoided in Yehud because of a “monotheistic revolution”. They argue instead that both the iconography on the cuboid altars, which is predominantly non-religious, and their distribution pattern fit local traditions of the southern Levant. Their absence from Yehud is linked to the depressed regional economic situation of the province.

Part Two then has eight papers that explore aspects of religion in other parts of the Empire. Three are dedicated to aspects of Persian religion or religious policy, two to Phoenician religion, two to Egyptian religion, and one to Anatolian religion. Regrettably, the second Anatolian paper failed to materialize in the end.

Anne Fitzpatrick-McKinley challenges the common scholarly understanding that the Neo-Assyrians specialized in terror and intolerance but the Persians in tolerance in “Continuity between Assyrian and Persian Policies toward the Cults of Their Subjects”. She argues that neither imperial group fully deserves its reputation. Both could be the wielders of terror and destruction as well as sophisticated creators of diplomatic relations. In both scenarios, the gods of the conqueror and conquered were participants in all events, and in the self-representation of both Empires, we witness an appropriation of Babylonian ideals of kingship that the Persians may have accessed through the inscriptions of their predecessors, the Neo-Assyrians.

In “Was There an Achaemenid ‘Theology’ of Kingship? The Intersections of Mythology, Religion, and Imperial Religious Policy,” Jason M. Silverman focuses on how the Achaemenid kings conceptualized and portrayed their rule, noting that Achaemenid royal ideology evades even minimal scholarly consensus. Disparate evidence from the Persepolis archives, royal inscriptions, and various Iranian mythological traditions of kingship is explored, and then a preliminary synthesis is offered in which it is argued that the kings advocated an overarching theology of kingship. Finally, some implications are considered for understanding the history of pre-Islamic Iranian religions and Iranian influence on Second Temple Judaism.

Yannick Muller explores the meaning associated with the Persian practice of decapitation in the second contribution on Persian religion, “Religion, Empire and Mutilation: A Cross-Religious Perspective on Achaemenid Mutilation Practices”. Noting that Greek sources mention several cases of beheading committed by Achaemenid Persians, he focuses on two examples: the decapitation of Leonidas’ corpse after the battle of Thermopylae and the amputation of the head and right hand of Cyrus the Younger after the battle of Cunaxa. Often considered as acts of pure violence or as outrage against the defeated enemy, he argues that these post mortem mutilations have a symbolic dimension. A close look at Scythian, Parthian, and Sassanian practices suggest that they belong to victory rites. The ablation of an enemy’s head can also be related to the symbolism of this body part in the fight against Evil.

In my contribution, “Iconography on Double-Shekel Sidonian Coinage in the Persian Period: Is It a God or a King in the Chariot?,” I challenge the arguments of Josette and A. G. Elayi that the figure being driven in the chariot on the reverse side of the double-shekel coins in series 4 is a Sidonian god and that the small figure following behind carrying a deity symbol is the king of Sidon. Throughout its existence, Sidonian coinage featured imagery associated with the Persian king on the reverse side of its coins. I argue that the figure in the chariot is not a deity, but the Persian king con-

verted into a devout supporter of the local male deity of Sidon en route to honor him with the assistance of the main priest, who walks behind carrying the symbol of the deity. Religious iconography is present in the boat scene on the front side of the coins, where the symbols of one or more Sidonian deities are depicted.

The second paper dealing with Phoenician religion, by Mark Christian, is entitled “Whose Rites and Whose Wrongs? Religious Contributions of Contingents within the Persian Navy”. He discusses how the identity of Persian navy contingents and their religious practices is hindered by Herodotus’ tendency to ignore Persian deities, even when Persians perform the ritual. He notes, in addition, how deity mergers such as Melqart/Heracles and the Cyprian Aphrodite span large territories and so militate against the notion of the limited jurisdiction of divinities. Inscriptions on the “Egadi 3 ram” suggest a link between Poseidon/Neptune and the Phoenician Tanit. In concluding, he proposes explanations for the selective Greek coverage of Persian religious beliefs and practices and examines related rites such as throwing votives into the sea and supplication through ritual murder.

Turning to Egyptian religion after Persian control was established in this region, Damien Agut-Labordère examines how Persian rule in Egypt broke the balance of power between the crown and the temples to the benefit of the former in his contribution, “Beyond the Persian Tolerance Policy: Great Kings and Egyptian Gods during the Achaemenid Period”. The extant evidence indicates that Cambyses introduced long-standing changes in the local religious policy, which Darius I then continued but which Darius II modified to some degree. Overturning the situation of the Egyptian temples that prevailed when they first arrived in Egypt, the Persian Kings privileged the priesthoods of the temples of Memphis to the detriment of those of Thebes.

In his contribution, “Achaemenid Persian Patronage of Egyptian Cults and Religious Institutions in the 27th Dynasty: A Study of Political Acumen in the Ancient World,” Jared Krebsbach notes how the Achaemenid practice of allowing their subject peoples to carry on their native religious traditions unhindered is often seen as one of the defining aspects of their great Empire. His examination of primary sources from the 27th Persian Dynasty reveals that Cambyses and Darius I not only allowed Egyptian religion to continue as it did before their respective rules, but that they also took an active role in patronizing particular Egyptian religious cults and institutions. He concludes that ultimately, the Achaemenids possessed a keen sense of political acumen that helped them control Egypt through their influence on its religious cults and institutions.

The final contribution by Deniz Kaptan, entitled “Religious Practices and Seal Imagery in Achaemenid Hellespontine Phrygia,” looks at the impact of Persian control over this part of Anatolia. She notes that seals from excavated contexts in Anatolia constitute a rich and reliable source in the study of religion during the Achaemenid Empire period. A significant number of representations on the seal impressions from Daskyleion provide images and inscriptions as testimony to the identities of individuals who were associated with the satrapal center. A survey of a selected group of artifacts along with the seal impressions shows the presence of a myriad of cults and religious practices under Achaemenid rule.

The wide scope of the present set of essays has much to offer any reader interested in the impact that being a member of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, living either in a province or in a vassal polity, had on various aspects of native religion. It presents a buffet open for culinary delight, offering a range of dishes that can be enjoyed as small tasters, as main courses, or as a complete meal. It is meant specifically to help specialists who come to sample their familiar menu foods to enjoy the relevant options on offer but then to move out of their own areas of expertise and sample new treats, to see what was happening in other parts of the Empire. In this way, it is hoped the collected essays can help establish how the Persians responded differently to local needs and situations and yet to see if similar policies might have been employed in different regions or not, or if some policies worked well in some areas but failed in others. It encourages comparative thinking but not a reductionist approach that seeks to establish a single foreign Persian policy applied woodenly in all areas that came under Persian control. It encourages a focus on both specific regional details of “smaller pictures” and on the incorporation of the smaller regional studies into a “big picture” collage that helps contextualize them, bringing them better depth. Dialogue amongst those studying different regions of the vast Persian Empire should enhance cumulative understanding.

The final editing of this volume was completed during the 2014–2015 academic year as a member of the research project, *Local Dynamics of Globalization in the Pre-Modern Levant*, funded by the Centre for Advanced Study in Oslo, Norway. The full-time research environment and support from the staff of the Institute facilitated the completion of this task as part of the collective output of our grant team during our stay.

Oslo, February 2015

Diana V. Edelman

Part I

Trends in Emerging Judaisms

Creating Dialectical Tensions: Religious Developments in Persian-Period Yehud Reflected in Biblical Texts

James Anderson

Introduction

Recent years have seen a growing consensus among scholars that the formative years for the writing and editing of the Hebrew Bible was the Persian period, even if monarchic-era source material was used in some books. Examining the Hebrew Bible for what it can tell us about religious developments that transpired in the Persian province of Yehud in the southern Levant between 539 and 333 BCE, where it is believed most of the books were composed, will necessarily transcend the different books and genres in the collection; theological concerns permeate the entire corpus. Such an undertaking is also appropriate in light of the substantially different religious expression that eventuates during this period in comparison with what previously existed in the region in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah during the Iron Age II (ca. 950–586 BCE). It is hoped that such an examination will provide, however small, a better understanding of the development of monarchic-era Yahwism in Judah into early Judaisms in the Persian province of Beyond the River.¹

The incongruity between what essentially are two contradictory, mutually exclusive portrayals for Yahweh found in the Hebrew Bible should give one pause and needs be explained to understand better religious developments in Persian-period Yehud. On the one hand, Yahweh is depicted as the only god and therefore, by necessity, a universal one (Isaiah 45–46). And yet, on the other hand, Yahweh is at times conceived of as one among many, albeit usually as the head of these other deities that serve him and form his court and pantheon (e.g. 1 Kgs 22:19; Job 1:6).

This tension generally has been explained as a consequence of the composite nature of the texts, which overlay more recent traditions atop older ones, leaving traces of the evolutionary nature of the religious expressions of Israel, Judah, and Yehud within the pages of the Hebrew Bible. This explanation is meant to account for various dis-

¹ For another discussion of and approach to this vital but disputed topic, which situates dialogue and dialectic in a wider setting that includes Yehud, Benjamin, and Samaria, see the article in this volume by P. R. DAVIES, “Monotheism, Empire, and the Cult(s) of Yehud in the Persian Period,” pp. 24–35. For yet another view that sources were allowed to retain a broad range of views that now were placed in new contexts, thus forcing a re-reading of the old ideas of identity by applying them to a new setting, see R. HOBSON, “Were Persian-Period ‘Israelites’ Bound by Ethnicity or Religious Affiliation? The Case of the Southern Transjordan,” pp. 36–56 in this volume.

crepancies in the texts, particularly the enigmatic quandary over the two discordant viewpoints regarding Yahweh. However, perhaps other explanations for the presence of contradictory views are to be sought, especially in light of the growing consensus that the Persian period provided the formative years for the writing and editing of the Hebrew Bible. The aim of this paper is to propose and evaluate a second explanation for the existence of divergent views concerning Yahweh's status as the sole deity or one among many. I have designated it directional dialectic, which is more predominant in the texts than a second, related strategy I call paradoxical dialectic.

Monarchic-Era Religion and the Hebrew Bible

Textual and artifactual evidence has made it abundantly clear that in the monarchic period in Israel (ca. 985–721 BCE) and in Judah (ca. 975–586 BCE), corresponding largely with the Iron Age II period, all levels of society worshipped a pantheon headed by Yahweh and Asherah.² This can be observed in multiple texts found in the Hebrew Bible.³ These texts should be understood to reflect actual belief systems and practices during the monarchic period.

Psalm 82:1, which reads, “God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment,” offers a different understanding than Isa 45:5b, which states, “I am Yahweh, and there is no other; besides me there is no god.” Y. AMIT (2000: 28–29) has observed that Ps 96:4–5 encapsulates these competing positions or ideologies regarding Yahweh in two adjacent verses of a single composition: (4) “For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods. (5) For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens.” The presence of both understandings of the status and nature of Yahweh, side by side in these two examples, suggests contention over the ideological issue of Yahweh and the gods.

Y. AMIT (2000) shows that the existence of polemics presupposes the presence of different stances on ideological issues, usually contentious ones. Polemic would not

² Chapter 2 of ANDERSON 2011 pertaining to monotheism and Yahweh's appropriation of Baal examines the textual and artifactual evidence for a native pantheon in Israel and Judah. This evidence need not be rehashed here. Suffice it to say that evidence exists on many fronts and includes: the epigraphic finds from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom, the niche of the Arad temple, the Elephantine texts, the Judahite pillar figures, Assyrian-Akkadian finds, onomastics of both individual and place names garnered from biblical and extrabiblical evidence, and the Hebrew Bible itself. The Hebrew Bible admits to the worship of several deities by the inhabitants of Israel and Judah, and the prophets' polemics presuppose this and evince how widespread the practice was. Furthermore, the worship of a host of deities in the Jerusalemite Temple during the Iron Age that is depicted in the Hebrew Bible (see 2 Kgs 23:4–7), including Asherah for the vast majority of its existence, illustrates this point. For more on Iron-Age Yahwism and strategies found within the book of Kings to bridge the gap between it and emerging forms of Judaism, see the article in this volume by L. K. HANDY, “Josiah as Religious Peg for Persian-Period Jews and Judaism,” pp. 72–90.

³ See, for example, Gen 1:26; 3:22; Exod 15:11; Deut 32:8–9; 1 Kgs 22:19; Job 1:6; 2:1; Ps 82:89:6–9; Jer 23:18, and Zech 14:5.

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