

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament 60

Daniel R. Schwartz

Studies  
in the Jewish Background  
of Christianity



**Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament**

**Begründet von Joachim Jeremias und Otto Michel  
Herausgegeben von  
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius**

**60**



# Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity

by

Daniel R. Schwartz



J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen

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*To my Friends and Students  
in Jerusalem*



## Preface

The studies in this volume have, in general, three foci. The first focus is upon the development of Judaism during the Second Temple period, and especially during its final, Roman, century: the passage, due to internal developments and external influences and pressures, from a religion oriented around Temple and priesthood – i.e., a religion bound up with a state, and which therefore competed with Rome – to one which could separate sanctity from birth and place.

The second focus is upon Josephus, and the history of Provincia Judaea, for which he is the major source in this period. On the one hand, Josephus' historiography and apologetics illustrate well the problematics of the relationship of religion and state. On the other hand, examination of his use of sources and the arrangement of his work, frequently using chronological problems as the analytical scalpel, can help us overcome various chronological problems and misunderstandings and also gain a greater appreciation of Jewish historiography, including lost historiography, in this crucial century. At times, furthermore, as in connection with the appointment and the suspension of Pontius Pilate, the study of such Josephan and chronological problems which have to do with Roman rule in Judaea lead us to a better understanding of the religion-state issues as well.

The third focus, finally, is upon modern historiography. In several of these studies, we argue that various consensuses of assertion or denial have to do more with the religious or national needs of modern Jews or Christians than with the evidence from antiquity. In several others, the scholarly misconceptions seem rather to have stemmed from processes more internal to the academic world. Repeatedly, we find unwillingness to deal with new data or theories and also its opposite, head-over-heels acceptance of them, as well as uncritical dependence upon past authorities and its opposite, the baby and bathwater syndrome – rejection of a good theory because someone incorporated it into a bad one. Understanding these processes in the life of historical study can be interesting and is certainly humbling.

At the conclusion of the introduction to the first volume of his collected studies, *Hellenismus und Urchristentum* (1990), H. D. Betz notes (p. 9) that due to his *Lebensweg* some of the essays were originally published in German



and some in English; similarly, due to my *Lebensweg*, some of my studies have been published in Hebrew and some in English. It is unfortunate, however, that I cannot echo Betz when he next notes that there is no need to translate the former since “die heutige neutestamentliche Wissenschaft ist international und bewegt sich in verschiedenen Sprachgebieten.” For lamentable reasons, and with lamentable consequences, Hebrew sources and publications remain off-limits to too many New Testament scholars, for whom the requisite *Sprachgebiete* do not include the one sacred to Jesus and the apostles. Therefore, I have taken advantage of Professor Martin Hengel’s gracious invitation to publish a volume of studies, and have provided here, along with five new pieces, translations of ten essays which have already appeared in Hebrew, and of one which soon will. The need to translate these pieces gave me an opportunity to revise, correct and coordinate them, to some extent, and also to bring them somewhat up to date. I should emphasize, however, that I have not been able to respond to more than a fraction of all which has appeared, since the original publications (over the past decade), in all the fields addressed. My thanks to the Israeli publishers, listed on pp. 283–284, for the permission to publish these English versions here.

Much of the work of completing this volume was done during a six-month visit at the University of Basel. I would like to express my thanks to the librarians of Basel’s Universitätsbibliothek, especially the inter-library loan librarians, who couldn’t have been nicer or more efficient.

These studies are dedicated to my friends and students in Jerusalem, who have been the sounding-boards and critics of much of its contents. May God bring us all peace.

Basel, February 1991

D. R. S.

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## Abbreviations

<i>Agrippa I</i>	D. R. Schwartz, <i>Agrippa I: The Last King of Judaea</i> (1990)
<i>Ann.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Annales</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i> ( <i>Jewish Antiquities</i> )
<i>BJ</i>	Josephus, <i>Bellum Judaicum</i> ( <i>Jewish War</i> )
<i>BT</i>	Babylonian Talmud
<i>C. Ap.</i>	Josephus, <i>Contra Apionem</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CD</i>	Cassius Dio, <i>Roman History</i>
Feldman	<i>Josephus</i> , IX (LCL; ed. and trans. L. H. Feldman: 1965)
<i>GLA</i>	M. Stern, <i>Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism</i> , I–III (1974–1984)
Haenchen	E. Haenchen, <i>The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary</i> (based on 14th German edition [1965]; 1971)
<i>Hist.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Historiae</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> ( <i>Church History</i> )
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>INJ</i>	<i>Israel Numismatic Journal</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	Philo, <i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (edd. H.G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. St. Jones; 1940 <sup>9</sup> )
m.	Mishnah
<i>MGWJ</i>	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> , I–II (ed. W. Dittenberger; 1903–1905)
<i>PT</i>	Palestinian Talmud
<i>PWRE</i>	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (edd. G. Wissowa et al.; 1893–), cited by series and half-volume
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RSV</i>	Revised Standard Version

Smallwood, <i>Jews</i>	E. M. Smallwood, <i>The Jews Under Roman Rule, From Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations</i> (corrected ed.; 1981)
SVM	E. Schürer, <i>The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ</i> , I–III (new English ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar et al.; 1973–1987)
Tos.	Tosephta
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## Introduction

### On the Jewish Background of Christianity\*

Christianity appeared in the first century C.E., centered around three major figures, all of whom were Jewish. John the Baptist summoned his countrymen to repentance; Jesus of Nazareth was among those who answered John's call, but his own circle of disciples and followers soon grew as well; and Paul, after the execution of John and Jesus, formulated a new religion which, due to his own efforts and those of his colleagues and disciples, and even to those of his competitors, spread widely throughout the Graeco-Roman world.

Of these three figures, it is most difficult, for the historian, to speak of Jesus. The evidence is simply too treacherous. Jesus left no writings of his own; Christian traditions about him, in the Gospels and elsewhere, are notoriously so divergent and infused with later concerns that it is often quite impossible to claim any reasonable degree of certainty regarding him; and the only potentially usable early account of him and his movement by an outside observer (Josephus' "Testimonium Flavianum" – *Ant.* 18.63–64) is either totally a Christian interpolation or so edited by Christian copyists as to be hardly retrievable.<sup>1</sup>

John the Baptist and Paul are much more accessible, on one or more of the above counts. Namely while Paul, as Jesus, was very central to the early Church, several of his epistles remain to show us, firsthand, what his thoughts and beliefs were, and Luke's Acts of the Apostles give us an account of his career. Whatever the difficulties of interpreting these works, and whatever

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\* An unpublished lecture first presented at the New York Theological Seminary in the winter of 1985/86. Given its popular nature, no attempt has been made to document it fully, although now and then I have added references to sources and literature. In particular, I have added cross-references to more detailed discussions in the present volume of some of the points broached, so that this essay may also serve as something of an introduction for the volume, especially its first half. For the understanding and perspectives, such as they are, I should especially thank the priests who participated in the courses on the Jewish Background of Christianity which I gave at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Jerusalem, 1981–1988.

<sup>1</sup> Although there are perennial attempts either to reconstruct it or to demonstrate its basic authenticity. See below, p. 187, n. 23.

the difficulties in distinguishing between Paul's history and Luke's *Heilsgeschichte*, here, at least, the historian finds himself on familiar ground, with materials he can hope to manage with the aid of the usual tools of philology and historical criticism. As for John the Baptist, while he left no writings, he was not of central interest to the New Testament writers, the materials concerning him are, in comparison to the Jesus traditions, relatively unretouched, and the polemic concerns which guided the Christian editors are sufficiently clear as to allow, generally speaking, for their neutralization.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, as opposed to the *Testimonium Flavianum*, Josephus' account of John (*Ant.* 18.116–119) seems basically to be authentic.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, while “the quest for the historical Jesus” seems as doubtful as it ever was, the quest for what in fact constitutes his major significance for the historian – that to which he responded, on the one hand, and that version of his import which, on the other, in a short while came to claim the allegiance of the Western world – is much more promising.<sup>4</sup>

We must emphasize at the outset, however, that any historical study of religion has its bounds: there are data, at times very important ones for a religion, which historians must leave untouched. Christianity is based upon one such datum: the perceived resurrection of Jesus, without which the movement would certainly have disappeared along with the movements following other charismatic figures in first-century Judaism. But resurrection is not susceptible to historical verification, analysis or explanation. Similarly, calls from heaven, such as that to Paul on the way to Damascus, are not susceptible to historical verification, analysis or explanation. Resurrection, calls from heaven and the like can figure in historical studies only as perceptions which, as such, functioned and entered into chains of causation.

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<sup>2</sup> For this standpoint concerning the Baptist, see, inter alia, O. Böcher, in *Rechtfertigung, Realismus, Universalismus in biblischer Sicht: Festschrift für Adolf Köberle zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. G. Müller; 1978), pp. 45–68, and, most recently, J. Murphy O'Connor, *NTS* 36 (1990), pp. 359–374. See also my essay cited below, n. 5.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 191, n. 39.

<sup>4</sup> This contrast between scholarship on John and that on Jesus was pointed out by W. Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (1968), pp. ix–x, who himself preferred to study another, equally legitimate, topic: John's function in the New Testament. The latter is also the major focus of the most recent (?) compendium: J. Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation – Geschichte – Wirkungsgeschichte* (1989). Nevertheless, it affords detailed information about John's history. For the record, note that D. Flusser's *Johannes der Täufer*, which Wink (p. ix: “1964”) and Ernst (p. 394: “1963”) both cite, has not yet appeared. When it does, it will, presumably, be oriented more toward the historical John and his Qumran background. In the meantime, see his study of Johannine and Qumran baptism in *Essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Memory of E. L. Sukenik* (edd. C. Rabin and Y. Yadin; 1961), pp. 209–238 (in Hebrew), along with his *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (1988), p. 713 (Index, s.v. John the Baptist); on p. xix, he characterizes his 1961 essay as showing that “John the Baptist was surely a non-orthodox Essene.”

The sincerity of these perceptions needs no more proof than the numerous martyrdoms which literally testified to them.

In other words, the historian of the Jewish background of Christianity can hope to explain only how the Jewish world in which Christianity arose allowed for or encouraged that to occur. He cannot attempt to explain the most significant specific events which, according to Christian belief, set the new religion on its way, and he cannot, given the sources, hope to say anything very specific about Jesus. Even regarding John and Paul, moreover, we will not try to deal with them as individuals, although that can fruitfully be done to some extent. Rather, we will attempt only to suggest that the Jewish world at the time was ripe for the appearance of a movement such as the one which formed around this triumvirate, and to analyze the options they chose in light of those taken by their Jewish predecessors and contemporaries.

Finally, we should stress that this is only a sketch, of some of the main lines as they appear to me after a few years of study.

## I. On John the Baptist and Paul

It is quite fascinating, for a student of ancient Judaism, to see figures from extremely disparate parts of the Jewish world participating in the formation of one and the same religion. Whether or not John spent any time at Qumran, it is clear that this ascetic community by the Dead Sea shows us the setting according to which he is to be understood.<sup>5</sup> Note, among other points, the fact that they shared the same desert (Luke 1:80; Mark 1:4–5 parr.) and a special interest in Isaiah 40:3 in connection with it; asceticism and a concern for ritual purity and immersion (“baptism”); priestly background (Luke 1:5); a call for sharing of property (Luke 3:11); and a special sensitivity to incest (Mark 6:17–18 parr.).<sup>6</sup> As for Paul, whatever one makes of his alleged Pharisaism and studies with Rabban Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Philippians 3:5; Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:5), it is clear that his primary background is in the Hellenistic Jewish Diaspora — as is indicated by his birth in Tarsus, his dependence upon the

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<sup>5</sup> The classic statement is that by W. Brownlee, in *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (ed. K. Stendahl; 1957), pp. 33–353, 252–256. My own contribution to the topic is in *Mémorial Jean Carmignac (Revue de Qumran 13)*, edd. F. García Martínez and E. Puech; 1988), pp. 635–646; further literature is listed *ibid.*, p. 644, n. 30. For Flusser, see above, n. 4.

<sup>6</sup> For the preceding, it is enough to cite some parallels from the Qumran *Manual of Discipline*: 8:13–14, 9:19–20 (Isaiah 40:3); 3:4–5 (purity and immersion); 5:1–3, 21–22; 8:1; 9:7; etc. (priestly authority — cf. below, n. 46); 3:2, 5:2, 6:19–22 (common property). As for incest, note that all three cardinal sins denounced in the *Damascus Document* 4:17–18 and explained thereafter turn out to be of a sexual nature (bigamy, improper separation from impure women, and incest).



Septuagint, and the quality of his Greek; Philo of Alexandria is the best-documented non-Christian analogue.<sup>7</sup>

These two Jewish settings are quite disparate. It is difficult to imagine that there would be much in common between monks of the desert and cosmopolitan Jews of the Hellenistic metropolis. If Philo were to meet a contemporary Qumranite, or if Paul would have met John the Baptist, they probably would have thought each other's clothes and habits quaint, or reprehensible, and it may be doubted that either would be able to say more than a few words in the other's habitual language.<sup>8</sup>

One might be tempted, therefore, to suspect that their cooperation in the foundation of Christianity is a fluke, or, perhaps, only a *post factum* rewriting of history by the winners, who, faced with the ineluctable fact of John having baptized Jesus, remade John in the image of later Christianity. However, while there was some rewriting along those lines, it seems mostly to have regarded the specific issues of the personal relationship between John and Jesus: the evangelists were concerned to make John recognize Jesus as his superior, as the one whose coming he had preached, as the one even whose shoelace John considered himself unworthy to tie, etc.<sup>9</sup> With regard to the main points of John's message, in contrast, there is less reason to assume Christianizing rewriting.<sup>10</sup>

Turning, then, to the comparison of the Baptist and Paul, we note, to begin with, that both agree on the lack of importance of Jewish descent: John claims (Luke 3:8; Matthew 3:9) that God can make even stones into sons of Abraham (the obvious reflection of Hebrew wordplay [*avanim/banim*] argues strongly for authenticity), and Paul, in Romans 4 and Galatians 3, argues that anyone, through faith, can become a true son of Abraham. Second, Paul explicitly undercut and made irrelevant the Temple of Jerusalem, teaching that the home of the Holy Spirit, hence the true Temple, is rather the Christian individual or community (I Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19; II Corinthians 6:16; cf. Ephesians 2:18), and that Christian life is the true “sacrifice” (Romans 12:1).

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<sup>7</sup> On Paul and Philo, see below, p. 41, n. 33. Note that the most notable modern defense of the thesis that Jerusalem, not Tarsus, was “the city of Paul's youth,” that by W. C. van Unnik (*Sparsa Collecta*, I [1973], pp. 259–327), does not deny the basically Hellenistic nature of Paul's teachings; he merely denies that that came directly out of a childhood in Tarsus. Rather, he suspects Paul picked it up during his travels in Syria and Asia Minor after his conversion (see p. 305). Similarly, depending upon one's notion of Hellenism in first-century Jerusalem, he could have picked it up there; cf. below, p. 40, n. 31.

<sup>8</sup> On Philo's minimal knowledge of Hebrew, see D. Rokeah, *JTS* n.s. 19 (1968), pp. 70–82. As for the much-debated question of the extent of the knowledge of Greek in ancient Palestine, see below, p. 40, n. 31. John the Baptist would seem to be one of those least at home in the cosmopolitan circles where such knowledge was most likely found.

<sup>9</sup> See above, n. 4.

<sup>10</sup> On John's preaching, see Ernst's summary (above, n. 4), pp. 300–319.

A similar subrogation of the Temple is implied by John's teaching of repentance and purification in the wilderness, of all places, to which people came out from the cities (Mark 1:5 parr.); traditionally, repentance was supposed to be completed, and purity achieved, in the Temple and via its sacrificial and purificatory rites, while the desert was rather a godless and frightening place.<sup>11</sup> Finally, on the positive side, John and Paul focused upon sin and atonement. John views the problem in an eschatological context (repent before its too late), and Paul views it existentially (the human condition and salvation from it), but both make it the central point of their messages.

## II. Who is a Jew?

John and Paul, in other words, espoused – whatever their differences – similar positions vis à vis Jewish descent, the Temple, and sin. More generally, given the fact that the Temple was considered the holiest place in the Holy Land, and that sin is violation of the law, we may say that they espoused similar positions vis à vis people, land and law. These three factors just happen to be the ones at issue whenever the notorious “Who is a Jew?” question arises.

The postulates linking Jews to Abraham, to the land of Israel, and to the beliefs and especially the practices mandated by Jewish law (religion), always coexist in Jewish literature. Nevertheless, in some periods and circumstances, as in the thought of various individuals, one or the other criterion is at times more prominent.<sup>12</sup> A review of a few successive periods of ancient Jewish history will demonstrate this, and pave the way for an approach which, “in the fulness of time,” would leave all three aside.

In the period of the Monarchy,<sup>13</sup> it appears that the territorial principle was

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<sup>11</sup> See S. Talmon in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations* (ed. A. Altmann; 1966), pp. 31–63.

<sup>12</sup> Today, given the large Diaspora and the large non-Jewish population in the state of Israel, it is not surprising that one hardly hears of territory as a determining factor. The “Who is a Jew?” disputes which perennially threaten to bring down Israeli governments and split American Jewry have to do with the coordination of descent and law: problems concerning apostates (descent without law) and proselytes (law without descent). Cf. e.g. S. Z. Abramov, *Perpetual Dilemma: Jewish Religion in the Jewish State* (1976), pp. 270–320, also the symposium on patrilineal descent in *Judaism* 34 (1985), pp. 3–135.

<sup>13</sup> The term “First Temple Period” is inappropriate (formed in the image of “Second Temple Period”) precisely because not the Temple, but rather the Monarchy, constituted the central institution. See M. Weinfeld, *Zion* 49 (1984), pp. 126–127 (in Hebrew). For a good example of the difference between an earlier focus on the Monarchy and a Second Temple period focus on the Temple and its cult, compare the accounts of Abiah in I Kings 15:1–8 and

most salient.<sup>14</sup> David, according to I Samuel 26:19, complained that Saul, by forcing him to flee Judaea, had caused him to sever his ties to “God’s inheritance,” as if to say “Go worship other gods;” in the next verse, correspondingly, David expresses the fear that he would die away from the presence of the Lord. That is, the in-group, Israel, is defined – as always – as party to a covenant with the God of Israel, but the latter is conceived of as a territorial sovereign. Just as one who is forced from one country into another must follow the laws of the host country although he yearns to be back in his homeland, so too, according to this conception, an exile from Judaea is no longer subject to the laws of the Sovereign of Israel. On the other hand, this same conception makes for the rule that all, whether native-born Israelites or immigrants, must follow the same law (Exodus 12:49; Numbers 15:16); the law is the law of the land. Similarly, this is the period when a Syrian general, after being cured by the waters of the Jordan River, is said to have concluded that “there is no God in the whole world apart from Israel” (II Kings 5:15), and when foreigners settled in Samaria quickly learned that they must worship “the Lord of the land” if they did not wish to feel His wrath (II Kings 17). Correspondingly, the ten tribes exiled from Israel lost their original identity – just as the children or grandchildren of emigrés usually lose their ties with the old homeland. On the other hand, the fact that the Assyrian army which conquered the north failed, miraculously (it seemed), to take Jerusalem (II Kings 19) certainly enhanced confidence in the belief that “This is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord” (Jeremiah 7:4) and, therefore, the impregnable capital of His land.

One need not suppose that all the traditions which assume a transcendent God who could reveal Himself to the patriarchs in Mesopotamia or to Moses in Egypt and in the desert were totally unknown. We must, however, realize that a theologoumenon like that, even if documented by ancient traditions, was of only theoretical importance. In an age with Israelite territorial sovereignty and without a diaspora, it made sense to identify “us” as the people of the land, so “our” covenant with God made Him lord of the land. Thus, while some Israelites in this period may well have admitted that God could be active or worshipped elsewhere, most could live their lives without having to give that notion much attention.

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II Chronicles 13; the cultic focus of II Chronicles (vv. 8–12) is entirely absent from I Kings. While Chronicles’ material *may* reflect some earlier source – see v. 7 and v. 22, respectively – the fact remains that what Kings ignored Chronicles considered important enough to transmit at length.

<sup>14</sup> For our present purposes, the dates at which the biblical passages cited below were composed or edited matter little. Whether or not contemporary, they show an understanding of the Monarchy period quite different from that of the Second Temple period, and thus serve to highlight the latter – which is all we need here.

In the end, however, Jeremiah was right, the “temple of the Lord, temple of the Lord” believers were wrong, and the south followed the north into exile. The earliest evidence we have concerning responses to that simply shows the logical conclusion from the territorial conception of Israel, the same conclusion drawn (consciously or only practically) by the Ten Tribes: when the Temple singers, in Babylonian captivity, were asked to sing “the songs of Zion,” they responded with a plaintive “How can we sing God’s songs in a foreign land?” (Ps. 137). This includes some measure of “We don’t feel like it,” but also “It doesn’t make sense.” It would be like raising a foreign flag. Indeed, the very substitution of “God’s songs” for “songs of Zion” makes the same point: God, and His songs, are limited to Zion. Similarly, when Babylon was overthrown and Cyrus allowed his Jewish subjects to return to Judaea and rebuild the Temple, the canonical memory of his decree was phrased according to the territorial conception: Cyrus allowed the Jews to rebuild the Temple “of that God who is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:3).

Nevertheless, things could not stay the same, for neither condition of the territorial conception obtained. In contrast to the Monarchy period, when there was territorial sovereignty and there was no diaspora, now there was no territorial sovereignty, and there was a diaspora. Jews in great numbers had discovered that they could sing God’s songs in a foreign land, and found it meaningful to do so. Some, indeed, such as those represented by the best-known among the exiles, even proclaimed the fighting words that “Heaven is my stool and the earth is My footstool, what house would you build for Me and what is the place of My rest?!” (Isaiah 66:1). And probably many more, without engaging in such polemics against the territorial conception, came to prefer – even in such “Zionist” contexts as Cyrus’ proclamation (Ezra 1:2) and Nehemiah’s lament over Jerusalem’s rundown situation (Nehemiah 1:4, 5) – to think of God as “the God of heaven,” a characterization which virtually first appears in the Persian period, and then very frequently.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In the Bible, this term for God is found in Daniel (twelve times, in Aramaic), Ezra 1:2, Nehemiah 1:4–5, 2:4, 20, II Chronicles 36:23, Psalm 136:26, Jonah 1:9 and Genesis 24:3, 7. Even without entering into the dating of the last three items, it is clear that the weight of the evidence is for the Persian period. (On the term in Genesis, note that it appears here along with “and of earth” [in 24:7 only in Septuagint], which changes the nuance.) Other clear evidence for the Persian period is supplied by the Elephantine papyri, where the epithet occurs frequently (as in Cowley nrs. 30–32, 38); and a Persian dating for the Book of Judith, where it appears in 5:8, 6:19 and 11:17, has often been suggested (but remains controversial). On this term and its implications, cf. A. Vincent, *La religion des Judéo-Araméens d’Éléphantine* (1937), ch. 3, esp. pp. 100–105, and D. K. Andrews, in *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of T. J. Meek* (ed. W. S. McCullough; 1964), pp. 45–57. Andrews, who realized that the term is suited to an international *Sitz im Leben*, suggests that it is especially to be located in diplomacy; it seems, however, that that is only one aspect of the Diaspora situation which fostered the term.

What, then, if not territory, could define such a collective? The answer is clear: descent. To begin with, in the Persian period, descent was simply an index of territory: those who descended from Judaeans were Jews. This stage of development is clearly indicated by the list purporting to name those who returned following Cyrus' decrees (Ezra 2 = Nehemiah 7), for many of those who returned are identified simply by the Judaeian town to which they traced their family. Moreover, even later in the period the understanding of "Jew" as "from Judaea" continues to function, such as in Esther 2:5–6, where the identification of Mordechai as a "Jew" requires the author to explain how he happened to be in Persia, and in Clearchus of Soli's report that Aristotle explained that *Ioudaios* is the term used for Judaeans.<sup>16</sup> However, all the Diaspora communities needed was to define those who were members of the group by birth, and, in time, the territorial import could be forgotten.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the list of returning exiles already includes groups defined by family instead of by Judaeian origin, and, indeed, the whole list is organized according to genealogical categories (priests, Levites, etc.); it concludes, correspondingly, with those who could not demonstrate their identity as priests because they could not prove their pedigrees (Ezra 2:61–63//Nehemiah 7:63–65). Again, when the Book of Ezra introduces its central character, it does so by listing fifteen generations of his ancestors (Ezra 7:1–5), something quite unparalleled in biblical narrative (as opposed to genealogical excurses), and the list of those who returned with Ezra (ch. 8), more than a century after the exile, has, in contrast to the list in ch. 2, only familial identifications. Again, the book climaxes with a movement of repentance occasioned by the fact that "the people of Israel and the priests and the Levites" (9:1) – (not just "the Jews" – differing pedigrees are important!) had intermarried with "Canaanites and Hittites and Perizzites and Jebusites and Amonites and Moabites and Egyptians and Emorites" (not just "Gentiles" – ditto), a phenomenon which brought about pollution of "the holy seed" (9:2). The solution to this problem was the only one possible, given a racial definition of Jews. There could be no thought of conversion, for seed cannot be converted. Rather, the book ends with a list of those who expelled their non-Jewish wives and children, and this list too is divided up among priests (10:18–22), Levites (vv. 23–24) and Israel (vv. 25–43). The same problem was dealt with similarly in the days of Nehemiah as well (Nehemiah 9–10), just as the conception of the Jews as a group defined by its "seed" is the predominant one of the Book of Esther (6:13; 9:28, 31; 10:3) and also supported by the Book of

<sup>16</sup> See below, p. 125, n. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Compare the *Landmannschaften* of Jewish immigrants in New York, organized according to the eastern European city or town from which the members came; within a generation or two they largely disappeared, and all one remembers, or cares about, is which families are Jewish.

Chronicles (I 16:13; II 20:7); Malachi too, yet another witness of the Persian period, considers the Jews to be “God’s seed” (2:15).

Hand in hand with the Diaspora and the lack of sovereignty, another factor made for the ascent of descent in the Persian period: the rise of the priesthood. The return to Judaea under Cyrus was led by scions of the Davidic and Aaronite lines, but the former (Zerubbabel), who became the focus for hopes of the restoration of an independent monarchy (Haggai 2:20 ff.; Zechariah 4), soon disappeared. However that happened, it is in the nature of things that in a vassal Temple-state, in which the civil administration was in the hands of a Persian satrap, the most important Jewish figure would be the head of the Temple – the high priest.<sup>18</sup> But the latter was defined by his descent: he was an Aaronite, a member of the clan of Zadok.<sup>19</sup> Next to him, in importance, were the other priests; but they too were defined by their descent from Aaron. Non-Aaronite members of the same tribe formed the next echelon, the Levites. But high-priests and priests were the most important people in Israel in this period. This was, for example, the period when a prophet would claim that the priest is God’s “angel” (*malach*) and God’s Torah is in his mouth (Malachi 2:6–7), and when, indeed, the same prophet would omit all reference to a messiah in his vision of the coming day of the Lord (chs. 3–4); by the end of the period, a Gentile observer would come away with the impression, presumably given by some Jewish informant, that the Jews never had kings, but rather invested all authority in the priests and the high-priest, who was held to be God’s *aggelos*.<sup>20</sup> Much more evidence for the centrality of the priests and high priests in this period may be assembled. But if the most important individual and classes of Jewish society were defined by their descent, it follows that descent is highly significant – and should also, therefore, be the basis of the next distinction, that between Jews and non-Jews. Thus, the primacy of the priesthood was at once a result of the political circumstances of the Persian period and a reinforcement of the racial definition of Jews which they engendered.

Before moving on we must note, however, that the territorial conception did not disappear. Given the existence of the Temple, God’s house, there was no way it could. *The central problem of the Second Temple period was the contradiction between the existence of the Temple in Jerusalem, which seemed*

<sup>18</sup> For Judaea in the Persian period as a Temple state, see Weinfeld (above, n. 13) and J. W. Doeve, in *La littérature juive entre Tenach et Mischna: Quelques problèmes* (ed. W. C. van Unnik; 1974), esp. pp. 118–127.

<sup>19</sup> It is clear that this was assumed to be so; the question of the historical truth of these assumptions (J. R. Bartlett, *JTS* n.s. 19 [1968], pp. 1–18) is of only antiquarian interest.

<sup>20</sup> On Hecataeus of Abdera, apud Diodorus Siculus 40.3.4–5 (*GLA* I, nr. 11), see F. R. Walton, *HTR* 48 (1955), pp. 255–257, and D. Mendels, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 95 (1983), pp. 96–110.

to be the palace of a sovereign in the capital of his state, and the fact of foreign sovereignty. This was a problem which could be resolved only by overcoming foreign sovereignty (which happened during the Hasmonean period, when, accordingly, high priests were to run the state), or by destroying the Temple (which would happen at the end of the period), or, apart from either extreme, either by making small compromises to avoid the problem (as would happen throughout the early Roman period) or by spiritualizing the notion of God's sovereignty so as to make it "not of this world" and therefore avoid conflict.<sup>21</sup> In the Persian period, however, as far as our meager sources go it seems that the fact of foreign rule was not very salient, and many Judaeans may have gone through most of their lives under the impression that they really lived in or near "Jerusalem Under the High Priests."<sup>22</sup> Rather than causing difficulties with the foreign overlords, therefore, the territorial conception in this period worked hand in hand with the racial one so as to reinforce priestly hegemony: after all, what made the priests so important was their monopoly on access to the most holy place. The flip-side of this conjunction of holy race and holy place was the schism with the Samaritans, which has its roots in this period. Jewish complaints about the Samaritans, namely, had to do not with dogmas or practice, but rather with the Jewish claims that the Samaritans were of foreign descent (II Kings 17) and localized the divinity at the wrong mountain.

With the advent of Alexander the Great and the introduction of the Jews into the orbit of Hellenistic culture, things would again change. Jews of the Diaspora would soon find themselves in surroundings where Greek language and Hellenistic culture were regnant and encompassing, while the Jews of Judaea would find themselves ruled by governments whose presence – be it administrative or military – was felt much more than had previously been the case. New responses were forthcoming.

First and most profoundly, the impact of Hellenism must be underlined. What was most important about Hellenism was its last three letters: it is an *ism*. While it is derived from the same root which supplied "Hellas" and "Hellene," the term "Hellenism" means that one can truly be a Greek without any connection to Greece or Greek blood, if only he adopts their characteristic

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. below, pp. 40–43, also, on the fiction which allowed peace-seeking Jews to sacrifice for Rome in Jerusalem, pp. 102–116.

<sup>22</sup> To borrow a classic title (E. R. Bevan, *Jerusalem Under the High-Priests* [1904]). See also Döve (above, n. 18), pp. 122–123, who portrays Jerusalem of the Persian and early Hellenistic period more or less as an autonomous vassal state ruled by the high priest. We do hear of some Persian governors, however, so this is going too far; also, it seems that the Josephan notion of high-priestly *prostasia* corresponds more to the realities of Diaspora Judaism of his own day than to anything formal in Jerusalem of the Second Temple period; see *Scripta Classica Israelica* 7 (1983/84), esp. pp. 43–52. In general, however, "under the high priests" seems best to fit the evidence.

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