

LENA-SOFIA TIEMEYER

# Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage

*Forschungen*  
*zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe*  
19

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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19





Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer

# Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage

Post-Exilic Prophetic Critique  
of the Priesthood

Mohr Siebeck

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## Preface

This book began as a doctoral thesis, written at Oxford University under the supervision of Prof. H.G.M. Williamson at the Oriental Institute. I have subsequently completely revised my thesis and added substantial amounts of material. Hence, the present work is in many respects a very different work than my original thesis.

Neither a doctoral thesis nor a book is written in a vacuum. Therefore, there are many people who have participated in the creation of this work and whose help I have treasured.

My greatest thanks go to my former doctoral supervisor Prof. H.G.M. Williamson who guided the thesis from which this book has sprung, from its very small beginning to its complete form. His comments and help, both with the research and with the writing of the final form of the thesis, have been an invaluable source of support and knowledge. I am also indebted to my present colleague Dr Joachim Schaper who read through the final draft of the book and who drew my attention to several articles related to my research.

In order to write a doctoral thesis, economic support is very important. I wish to thank the Theology Faculty at Oxford University and St Hugh's College that together gave me a complete scholarship during my years in Oxford. Money, however, is not everything in life. It is also significant to be able to study in a friendly and comfortable environment. For that, the librarians in the Theology Faculty library, in the Oriental Institute and in the Lower Camera provided much help and, especially in the first case, also laughter. Thanks also go to the librarians at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, who, while I was transforming my thesis into a book, never tired of ordering yet another inter-library loan.

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Finally, a congenial home environment is priceless. My husband Andreas, who by now knows much more about post-exilic prophecy than he previously thought was necessary for a fulfilling life, both encouraged me in my work and cooked wonderful meals to sustain me. This book is dedicated to him.

Aberdeen, Scotland, July 2006

Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer

# Table of Contents

Preface.....	V
Table of Contents.....	VII
Abbreviations .....	XV
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: History of Research.....	5
1. Introduction: a divided Judah.....	5
2. Isaiah 56–66.....	6
2.1. A division between the returned exiles and the Samaritans .....	6
2.2. A division between the Pharisees and the Sadducees .....	6
2.3. A division between the prophets' followers and the priests.....	8
2.4. A division between parties .....	9
2.4.1. Critique of Hanson's theory .....	10
3. Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 .....	13
4. Proposal.....	15
Chapter 2: Defining the Borders of the Passages Dealing with the Priesthood .....	16
1. Introduction .....	16
2. Malachi.....	17
2.1 Malachi 1:6–2:9.....	18
2.2 Malachi 2:10–16.....	18
2.2.1. References to the altar, the temple and its personnel.....	19
2.2.2. Inter-textual links to Malachi 1:6–2:9.....	21
2.2.3. Priestly terminology.....	22
2.2.4. Links with other texts where the priests might be addressed .....	22
2.2.5. Conclusion .....	23
2.3. A priestly audience throughout Malachi 2:17–3:4 .....	23
2.3.1. The redaction history of Malachi 2:17–3:4 .....	23

2.3.2. Malachi 3:1 – References to the temple .....	25
2.3.3. Malachi 3:2–4 – Cleaning of the priesthood .....	25
2.3.4. Similarities with other that probably address the priests.....	25
2.4. Malachi 3:6ff. ....	26
2.5. Conclusion .....	27
3. Haggai .....	27
3.1. Lack of continuity between Haggai 2:14 and 15 .....	27
3.2. The redactional character of Haggai 2:18 .....	29
4. Zechariah 1–8 .....	30
4.1. The secondary character of Zechariah 3:8b and 10 .....	30
4.2. The integral character of Zechariah 3:6–7 .....	33
4.3. Zechariah 7:1–8:24 .....	34
5. Isaiah 56–66.....	35
5.1. Isaiah 56:9–59:21 .....	36
5.1.1. Isaiah 56:9–57:21 – One continuous literary composition.....	37
5.1.2. No division between Isaiah 56:9–57:13 and 57:14–21 .....	38
5.1.3. No division between Isaiah 57:2 and 3 .....	39
5.1.4. The integral character of Isaiah 57:5 .....	40
5.1.5. The textual unity of Isaiah 57:14–21 .....	41
5.1.6. The original character of Isaiah 57:20–21.....	41
5.1.7. Conclusion .....	42
5.2. Isaiah 58–59 .....	43
5.2.1. The literary unity of Isaiah 58:1–4 .....	43
5.2.2. The literary unity of Isaiah 58 and 59 .....	45
5.2.3. The literary unity of all of Isaiah 56:9–59:21.....	46
5.2.4. Conclusion .....	47
5.3. Isaiah 65:1–66:17 .....	48
5.3.1. The literary unity of Isaiah 66:1–6 .....	48
5.3.1.1. Claim: Isaiah 66:1–2 and 3–4 stem from two different authors .....	48
5.3.1.2. Claim: Isaiah 66:5 is an isolated element .....	51
5.3.1.3. Claim: Isaiah 66:5–6 is redactional .....	51
5.3.1.4. Response: The extended textual unity of Isaiah 66:1–6.....	52
5.3.2. The textual unity of Isaiah 65:1–66:17 .....	53
5.3.2.1. The textual unity of Isaiah 65 .....	53
5.3.2.2. Isaiah 66:1ff. is the original continuation of Isaiah 65 .....	54
5.3.2.3. Isaiah 65:1–66:17 is one extended literary unity.....	55
5.3.3. The relationship between Isaiah 56:9–59:21 and Isaiah 65:1–66:17 .....	56
5.4. Isaiah 63:7–64:11 .....	57
5.4.1. The literary unity of Isaiah 63:7–64:11 .....	57
5.4.2. The <i>Sitz-im-Leben</i> of Isaiah 63:7–64:11 .....	58
5.4.3. The relationship between Isaiah 63:7–64:11 and Isaiah 65:1–66:17 .....	60
5.4.3.1. Two independent texts or one text written to respond to the other? 60	

5.4.3.2. A positive or a negative response? .....	63
5.4.3.2.1. The lamenting people are among the pious.....	63
5.4.3.2.2. The lamenting people are among the sinners .....	64
5.4.3.3. The place of Isaiah 63:7–64:11 in the book of Isaiah.....	65
5.4.3.4. Conclusion .....	65
5.5. Isaiah 60–62.....	66
5.5.1. The unity of Isaiah 60–62 .....	66
5.5.2. Isaiah 60:7 .....	67
5.5.3. Isaiah 60:10 .....	68
5.5.4. Isaiah 61:5–6 .....	69
5.5.5. Conclusion .....	70
5.6. Isaiah 56:1–8 and 66:18–24 .....	70
6. Conclusion .....	72

### Chapter 3: Dating of the Relevant Texts..... 73

1. Introduction .....	73
2. Isaiah 56–66.....	74
2.1. Isaiah 60–62 .....	74
2.2. Isaiah 56:9–59:21 and 65:1–66:17.....	75
2.2.1. Isaiah 66:1, 6 – The reference to the temple .....	76
2.2.2. Isaiah 58 – Ruins, fasting and social injustice .....	78
2.3. Isaiah 63:7–64:11 .....	78
2.4. Isaiah 56:1–8 and Isaiah 66:18–24 .....	79
3. Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 .....	80
4. Malachi.....	82
5. Conclusion .....	84

### Chapter 4: God’s Injustice and the Priests’ Claim to Righteousness..... 86

1. Introduction and historical background.....	86
2. Isaiah 57:12 – The priests’ professed righteousness .....	87
3. Isaiah 58:1–3a – Further claims to be righteousness.....	89
3.1. The identity of the people asking the Lord .....	90
3.2. The significance of a <i>waw</i> .....	91
3.3. Isaiah 58:2b–3a – The disparate understandings of the prophet and the priests.....	93
3.4. Understanding Zechariah 7:4–7 in the context of Isaiah 58.....	94
3.4.1. The identity of the target audience .....	94
3.4.2. The interpretation of Zechariah 7:4–7 .....	95
3.4.3. Interpreting Zechariah 7:4–7 through Isaiah 58 .....	96
4. Isaiah 65:5 – The priests’ professed holiness.....	97
4.1. Identity of the target audience of Isaiah 65:5.....	97
4.2. Interpretation of Isaiah 65:5.....	98

4.3. Conclusion .....	99
5. Isaiah 63:7–64:11 – The priests’ lament.....	100
5.1. Isaiah 63:11, 15, 19b–64:2, 6, and 11 – God’s absence .....	100
5.2. Isaiah 63:17, 19b; 64:4–5 – God’s unjust treatment of Judah .....	102
5.2.1. Exegetical considerations of Isaiah 64:4 .....	103
5.2.1.1. The expression פגעת את-שש .....	103
5.2.1.2. The syntactic relation between ונחטא and הן-אתה קצפת .....	104
5.2.1.3. The expression בזהם עולם ונושע and the exegesis Isaiah 64:5 .....	106
5.2.2. Exegetical considerations of Isaiah 64:5 .....	108
5.3. Conclusion .....	108
6. Malachi.....	109
6.1. Malachi 1:6–12 – Disdain for God and His altar .....	109
6.2. Malachi 2:13–14 – Wailing and weeping because of God’s rejection .....	110
6.3. Malachi 2:17 – Questioning the divine justice .....	111
6.4. Summary .....	112
7. Conclusion .....	112

## Chapter 5: The Priests’ Lack of Knowledge and their Failure to Teach ... 113

1. Introduction .....	113
2. The command given to the priests to provide instruction .....	114
3. Pre-exilic critique of the priests’ teaching .....	115
3.1. Hosea 4:6 and Jeremiah 2:8 – Lack of knowledge and teaching ability .....	116
3.2. Micah 3:11 and Jeremiah 5:31 – Wrong teaching .....	119
3.3. Summary .....	122
4. Isaiah 56:9–12 – The priests’ failure to understand .....	122
4.1. The identification of the leaders.....	123
4.2. Exegesis and comparison of Isaiah 56:9–12 .....	126
5. Malachi 2:1–9 – The ideal and the real priest.....	127
5.1. Malachi 2:1–9 – The identity of Levi and God’s covenant with him .....	127
5.2. The idyllic priestly teaching.....	131
5.3. Malachi 2:8–9 – The priests’ failure to live up to the expectations.....	132
6. Conclusion.....	135

## Chapter 6: Social Injustice..... 137

1. Introduction .....	137
2. Pre-exilic criticism – Amos 2:8 .....	137
3. Isaiah 58:3–5 – Business on a day of rest .....	139
4. Zechariah 5:1–4 – A flying scroll .....	143
5. Malachi 3:5 – Perjury and oppression .....	146
6. Nehemiah 5 – The social injustice committed by the post-exilic leadership .....	147
7. Conclusion.....	148

Chapter 7: Unorthodox Rites.....	149
1. Introduction .....	149
2. Pre-exilic critique – Hosea 4:10–14 .....	150
3. Isaiah 57:6–8 – Orthodoxy and unorthodoxy.....	150
3.1. Isaiah 57:6 – Ancestral worship and temple sacrifices .....	151
3.2. Isaiah 57:7–8 – Unorthodox rites in God’s temple.....	153
3.2.1. Identification of the mountain in 57:7 .....	153
3.2.2. The activities carried out upon the “high and lofty mountain” .....	157
3.3. Conclusion .....	159
4. Isaiah 65:3–4 – Illicit sacrifices and forbidden food .....	160
4.1. Isaiah 65:3 – Sacrificing in gardens (זבחים בגנות) .....	161
4.2. Isaiah 65:3 – Illegitimate sacrifices of incense (מקטרים על-הלבנים) .....	161
4.3. Isaiah 65:4 – Sitting among graves (הישיבים בקברים) .....	162
4.4. Isaiah 65:4 – Sleeping in guarded places (בנצורים ילינו) .....	162
4.5. Isaiah 65:4 – Eating of pork (מאכלים בשר החזיר) .....	163
4.6. Conclusion .....	164
5. Isaiah 66:3 – Syncretism and critique of sacrificial cult.....	164
5.1 Syntactical issues.....	165
5.1.1. A comparative reading .....	165
5.1.1.1. The place of sacrificing is not the right one .....	166
5.1.1.2. The temple worship has no independent value .....	167
5.1.1.3. The legitimate worship of YHWH is an idolatrous act.....	168
5.1.2. A subject-predicate reading .....	168
5.2. The priestly identity of the people in Isaiah 66:3 .....	169
5.3. The interpretation of the rituals .....	171
5.3.1. מכה-איש .....	172
5.3.2. ערף כלב .....	173
5.3.3. דם-חזיר .....	174
5.3.4. מברך און .....	175
5.3.5. גם-המה בחרו בדרכיהם ובשקוציהם נפשם חפצה .....	176
5.3.6. Conclusion .....	176
6. Conclusion .....	177
Chapter 8: Priestly Intermarriages.....	178
1. Introduction .....	178
2. Intermarriages in the Old Testament .....	179
3. Ezra-Nehemiah – The crisis of the priestly intermarriages.....	180
3.1. The lists in Ezra 10:18–22 and in Nehemiah 10:1–8 .....	181
3.2. Ezra 9:1–15 – Intermarriages and idolatry/unorthodoxy.....	183
3.2.1. Who were these priests and whom did they marry?.....	184
3.2.1.1. The insiders’ name .....	185

3.2.2. The ancient nations .....	185
3.2.3. How is the expression זרע הקדש והתערבו to be understood? .....	187
3.3. Nehemiah 6 and 13 – Intermarriages cause disloyalty .....	189
3.3.1. Nehemiah 6 .....	190
3.3.2. Nehemiah 13 .....	191
3.4. Conclusion .....	193
4. Malachi 2:10–16 – Intermarriage or unorthodoxy .....	193
5. The relation between Ezra-Nehemiah and Malachi .....	195
6. Post-Biblical connections .....	196
7. Conclusion .....	198
 Chapter 9: Foreign Alliances .....	 199
1. Introduction .....	199
2. The understanding of the verb תשרי .....	199
3. The understanding of the word מלך .....	201
3.1. The envoys to Sheol .....	202
4. Conclusion .....	205
 Chapter 10: The Priests' Cultic Neglect .....	 207
1. Introduction .....	207
2. Texts relating to the pre-exilic period .....	207
2.1. 1 Samuel 2:12–17 .....	208
2.2. Hosea 4:8 .....	209
2.3. Hosea 8:11–13 .....	209
2.4. Conclusion .....	210
3. Malachi .....	211
3.1. Malachi 1:6–7, 12 – The priests' attitude .....	211
3.2. Malachi 1:8, 13ab–14a – Faulty animals .....	212
4. Malachi 1:13 and Isaiah 61:8 .....	215
5. Conclusion .....	217
 Chapter 11: The Priests' Impurity .....	 218
1. Introduction .....	218
2. Pre-exilic criticism – Zephaniah 3:4 .....	218
3. Haggai 2:10–14 .....	220
3.1. <i>Sitz-im-Leben</i> – The reason for the inquiry .....	221
3.1.1. The absence of Joshua .....	223
3.2. The inquiry – Holy versus impure .....	223
3.2.1. The priestly duty of separating between purity and impurity .....	223
3.2.2. Secondary touch .....	224
3.3. The message of Haggai 2:14 .....	226

3.3.1. The identity of הגוי הזה and העם הזה.....	226
3.3.2. The reason for the impurity of the Judahites in Haggai 2:14 .....	228
3.3.2.1. Failure to live a moral life .....	228
3.3.2.2. Failure to build the temple .....	230
3.3.2.3. Failure of the people and their leaders to keep pure .....	232
3.4. The relation between Haggai 2:10–14 and Isaiah 56–66 .....	237
3.5. Conclusion .....	238
4. Zechariah .....	239
5. Malachi.....	241
5.1. Cursing their blessing .....	242
5.2. Rebuking the seed.....	243
5.3. Spreading filth.....	246
5.4. Conclusion .....	247
6. Conclusion.....	247
 Chapter 12: The dream of a Cleansed Priesthood .....	248
1. Introduction .....	248
2. A cleansed priesthood – Zechariah .....	248
2.1. The celebration of the Day of Atonement.....	249
2.2. Tasks and Privileges .....	251
2.3. Zechariah 6:9–15 – The newly cleansed priests’ additional tasks .....	255
3. A cleansed priesthood – Malachi .....	256
3.1. Who will do the cleansing? .....	257
3.2. The method of cleansing .....	258
3.3. The result of the cleansing .....	258
3.4. Conclusion .....	259
4. The alternative vision – Malachi 1:10–11 .....	259
5. Conclusion.....	263
 Chapter 13: The Vision of the Priests’ Destruction .....	264
1. Introduction .....	264
2. Isaiah 66:1–2 – Rejection of the temple builders .....	264
3. Isaiah 66:5 – The identity of the “brothers” .....	267
3.1. Syntactical concerns .....	267
3.2. Information about the “brothers” based on Isaiah 66:5.....	268
3.3. The identification of the “brothers” with the priesthood in Jerusalem .....	270
4. Isaiah 66:6 – The judgement in the temple .....	271
5. Isaiah 66:1–6 and the prophecies of Haggai .....	271
6. Conclusion .....	272

Chapter 14 – The Original Vision and its Modification .....	274
1. Introduction .....	274
2. The definition and understanding of the key words .....	274
2.1. Isaiah 60–62 .....	275
2.2. Isaiah 56:1–8 .....	276
2.3. Isaiah 56:1–8 and Isaiah 60–62 – An inter-textual comparison .....	279
2.3.1. The expression בן נכר .....	279
2.3.2. The expressions עולתיהם וזבחייהם לרצון על-מזבחי and יעלו על-רצון מזבחי .....	280
2.3.3. The root שרת .....	280
2.3.4. The root קבץ .....	280
2.3.5. The interpretation of Isaiah 56:1–8 as a corrective of Isaiah 60–62 .....	281
3. Isaiah 66:2–21 – The vision of the future priesthood .....	281
3.1. Isaiah 66:20–21 and the rest of Isaiah 56–66 .....	282
3.1.1. Isaiah 66:20 and Isaiah 60:7 – An inter-textual comparison .....	282
3.1.2. Isaiah 66:20 and Isaiah 65:1–66:17 .....	283
4. Three revolutionary views of the priesthood .....	284
4.1. Isaiah 61:6 – The democratization of the priesthood for all Judahites .....	284
4.2. Isaiah 56:1–8 – The participation of proselytes in the priesthood .....	285
4.3. Isaiah 66:21 – The globalization of the priesthood .....	285
5. Conclusion .....	286
Concluding Remarks .....	287
Bibliography .....	291
Source Index .....	301
Author Index .....	315
Subject Index .....	317

## Abbreviations

AASF	Annales Academiæ Scientiarum Fennicæ. Ser. B
AB	The Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
AnOr	Analecta orientalia
AR	<i>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</i>
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AUS	American University Studies
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Studies</i>
BBC	Broadman Bible Commentary
BibLeb	<i>Bibel und Leben</i>
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BM	<i>Beth Miqra</i>
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BSt	Biblische Studien
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BWAT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAT	Commentaire de l'ancien testament
CB	Century Bible
CBC	The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DDD	Dictionary of Deities and Demons
EBib	Études bibliques
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRANT	Forschungen zur Religion des Alten und Neuen Testament
GHAT	Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the OT

HSAT	Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monograph
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IB	The Interpreter's Bible
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBLMS	Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
JNES	<i>Journal of Near East Studies</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS ns	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> new series
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KeHbAT	Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
KHAT	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
KKANT	Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTM	Oxford Theological Monographs
RTR	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
RQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
SB	Sources bibliques
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBT	Studien zu den Bogazköy-Texten
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SOFS	Symbolae Osloenses Fasc. supplet
SSN	Studia Semitica Nederlandica
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah

<i>TA</i>	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
TAPS	Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, new series
TBC	Torch Bible Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TB</i>	Tyndale Bulletin
TBC	Tyndale Biblical Commentary
UCOP	University of Cambridge Oriental Publications
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
UUA	Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift
VAKMF	Veröffentlichungen der Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WeBC	Westminster Bible Companion
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZBK	Züricher Bibelkommentare



## Introduction

### Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage

At some stage in the late sixth or early fifth century BC, a prophet named Malachi criticized the Jerusalem priesthood. He proclaimed that the priests, rather than giving God the respect He deserved, were deriding Him by their unworthy sacrifices (1:6ff.). Besides this, their teaching was not guiding the people to worship God but instead was causing them to stumble (2:5–8). As a result of this, God promised to come to His temple and purify the priests (called “the sons of Levi”) in order to enable them once again to bring sacrifices to Him (3:1ff.). He would testify in court against the sorcerers, the adulterers and the perjurers who did not fear Him and against those who cheated their workers and who mistreated those least protected in society.

Malachi’s severe accusations against the priesthood in Jerusalem might appear to lack background, yet during the period described in the book of Malach it is obvious that the priests were already well versed in their disregard for God. This situation thus prompts the question, when did it all start? When did the priests *begin* to show God disrespect? When did their teaching *begin* to cause the people to stumble? Moreover, is there a precedent to their purification which in the past enabled them to renew their sacrificial service to God? As this study will show, the sentiments expressed by Malachi were not novel: they had been voiced before by the authors of Haggai, Zechariah 1–8 and Isaiah 56–66. In fact, as shall become apparent throughout this study, a position critical of the priesthood is a characteristic shared by *all* post-exilic prophecy. Thus, we should not regard these accusations as unique to the post-exilic period but rather as an integral part of the whole prophetic tradition. As I shall demonstrate in this book, nearly all types of criticism may be found in the whole of the pre-exilic prophetic material, although not to the same extent as that found in the period of the present study.

With its origin firmly anchored in pre-exilic Israel and Judah, the prophetic critique of the priesthood reached its peak in the post-exilic period. The prophets and the priests together formed the religious leadership. Sometimes, the concerns for Israel’s cult placed the priests and the prophets side by side. In fact, there are cases recorded where the identity of the prophet and the priest coincide: the exilic Ezekiel is the

most well-known example of a prophet of priestly descent, but there are strong reasons to suspect that Jeremiah, Zechariah and Malachi also belong in this category. At other times, their different understanding of God and His cult made them each other's opponents. The Biblical texts tell us that, throughout the recorded history of Israel and Judah, the prophets and the priests sometimes disagreed about the way in which God should be worshipped. In this dispute, the opinions of the prophets are transmitted to us more fully: as recorded in the prophetic books and also in the Deuteronomistic history, the prophets are reported to have cried out against what they perceived to be the priests' failings.

The increase in prophetic criticism of the priestly parties is likely to have been triggered by the historical circumstances of early post-exilic Judah, and we must therefore seek to comprehend it against this particular background. The early post-exilic period was in many respects a time of soul-searching for the people of Judah. The majestic promises of Isa 40–55, of a mighty return from exile, accompanied by lavish blessings upon Judah, were not yet fulfilled. It was a delay which caused the people of the period to look for an explanation. The prophetic literature left to us from this era bears witness to the various attempts to find such reasons for the setback. Did God tarry because the people of Judah had sinned? Did the Judahites' attitude towards God constitute an obstacle to the execution of God's plans? In the present work, I will demonstrate that the shared factor of most of the explanations posited is the *idea of a culpable priesthood*. The reasons given are varied, ranging from the priests' performance of their ritual duties to their attitudes and personal behaviour. Among other things, the priests are accused of failing to function well as leaders and of having neglected their obligation to teach the people about God's law. The prophets deemed the priests' performance of the sacrifice to be unsatisfactory and they regarded the priests' worship of God as unorthodox. The priests are accused of being haughty, taking pride in their own righteousness, and of committing acts of social injustice. Finally, their intermarriages with the surrounding people were frowned upon.

When reading these accusations, we must bear in mind that we are dealing with subjective views of the situation. In practical terms, this means that while the result of our inquiry will tell us a lot about how the priests were perceived by the prophetic writers, we shall learn significantly less about the actual behaviour of the priests in this era. In other words, given the polemic nature of the speeches of the authors of Isa 56–66, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, we should hesitate at drawing definite conclusions about the historical situation in post-exilic Judah. In addition, we have to consider the theological aspects of the situation. The Biblical text represents almost exclusively the prophets' attempts to explain the

absence of God's blessings in Judah, and remains mainly silent about the priests' viewpoint. In view of this unequal representation, there is a real possibility that the priests endorsed alternative interpretations of the situation, and advocated different solutions concerning how best to ensure God's blessings.

Furthermore, it would be incorrect to see the prophetic critique of the priesthood as a sign that the priests and the prophets were incompatible with each other, or that the prophets sought to discredit and discard the temple cult.<sup>1</sup> Rather, what we have often are attempts at reform: the prophets desired to bring the priesthood closer to what the prophets perceived to be the ideal; priests that excelled in teaching, that provided social justice, that worshipped YHWH alone and whose performance of the cult satisfied the most rigorous cultic demands.

The explicit aim of this study is to explore the criticism of the priests found in the post-exilic prophetic corpus, here limited to Isaiah 56–66; Haggai, Zechariah 1–8 and Malachi.<sup>2</sup> From time to time, I shall also look at the contemporary Ezra-Nehemiah when it has bearing on the issues discussed. These texts attest to a comparable critical disposition towards the priesthood and voice some of the same sentiments. As we shall see, each prophet speaks with his own distinct voice and focuses on distinct aspects of the priests' manners of conduct. At the same time, some concerns of the clergy's behaviour were shared by them all.

The book is structured as follows. There are two main parts. In the first part, consisting of chapters 1–3, I discuss *general* aspects relating to the question at hand: the first chapter gives an overview of past research, and the following two chapters deal with matters of literary and rhetorical criticism. Their dual purpose is to determine the outer limits of the relevant textual units where the priests form the main target audience and to date

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<sup>1</sup> In this regard, I agree with Z. Zevit, "The Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis: Its History and Origin", *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets, and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets* (eds. L.L. Grabbe and A.O. Bellis, JSOTS 408, London, New York, 2004), pp. 189–217, who argues that the earlier viewpoint of placing the prophets and the priests in opposing camps receives little support from the Biblical texts. At the same time, Zevit's claim that there is only "prophet-priest cooperation" in the post-exilic period cannot be accepted, as it derives from too brief a reading of Hag 2:10–14; Zech 3; 6:9–15 and 7:4 (pp. 207–8), passages that will be discussed in detail further below. Furthermore, Zevit's investigation suffers from the fact that he only looks at passages where the Hebrew word כהן occurs, thus omitting the evidence from Isa 56–66.

<sup>2</sup> While it is likely that other prophetic books also come from this period, e.g. the books of Joel and Zechariah 9–14, I have chosen not to include this material in the present discussion due to their uncertain dating and their lack of explicit references to a critical disposition towards the priesthood.

these units. These two chapters serve as a reference point for the rest of the book, and should be consulted accordingly. The second part opens with chapter 4, which explores the priests' point of view. The remaining chapters (5–14) discuss the various types of prophetic critique of the priesthood. They are structured so that the different accusations against the priesthood appear type by type, beginning with a brief analysis of the pre-exilic examples followed by a more detailed discussion of the post-exilic examples. Rather than discussing each individual author and his various critiques towards the priests separately, similar kinds of criticism will be discussed and evaluated together. When the same type of criticism is found in more than one place in the writings of a particular author, these instances will be discussed together. This structure serves to show that the sentiments expressed against the priesthood do not reflect the individual opinion of merely one particular writer but instead mirror the shared position held by most of the prophetic voices of that time. In addition, they also stand firmly in the tradition of their pre-exilic predecessors. In this way, I aim to show that a critical disposition towards the priesthood is not a *marginal* phenomenon, limited to scattered remarks here and there, but rather represents a *consistent trend*, attested throughout the post-exilic prophetic corpus and with its roots in pre-exilic prophecy.

## Chapter One

# History of Research: A Divided Society

### 1. Introduction

The goal of the present study is to demonstrate how the different groups of people castigated by the post-exilic prophetic writers can all be identified with the priesthood. Most prophetic texts stemming from the post-exilic period bear witness to a divided society, in which the prophets pitched themselves against opposing groups of people. The prophets claimed that their *own* way of worshipping God was the only way and they condemned their opponents' practices. In some of these texts, such as Haggai and Zechariah 1–8, there are mere traces of such criticism. In others, most notably Isaiah 56–66 and Malachi, the references to the conflict are more blatant.

A key problem is the identification of this *other group*. Who were the people that the prophets railed against and criticized so severely? In some cases, notably in the book of Malachi, the prophets' opponents are clearly identified as the priesthood. In other cases, an identification of the prophets' opponents is less than straightforward. As a result of this uncertainty, the quest for the identity/identities of these people has been the topic of several studies, but while various suggestions have been presented, a definitive interpretation has yet to be found. In this chapter, I shall provide a brief outline of the past research of the issue and conclude with my own proposition that, contrary to the commonly held opinion, the authors of Isaiah 56–66, Haggai, Zechariah 1–8 and Malachi all opposed the same group of people, i.e. the priests.

In view of the particular difficulty of identifying the opponents within the different sections of Isaiah 56–66, the larger part of this chapter will be devoted to past interpretations of the conflict found in the Isaianic material. Following on from this, I shall provide an overview of the ways in which scholars have understood this material to relate to Haggai, Zechariah 1–8 and Malachi.

## 2. Isaiah 56–66

The identification of the unnamed enemy in Isa 56–66 has been the focal point of more than one study and remains a hotly debated issue. Since it is also an important aspect of the present work, it is appropriate to begin this overview by outlining the different theories concerning the schism in Isa 56–66, and the ensuing identification of the prophet's opponents. The following discussion is arranged both topically and chronologically, beginning with the earlier scholarly attempt to identify the prophets' opponent, and proceeding to more recent proposals. As shall become apparent, some identifications achieved popularity at different times, but have now mostly been abandoned on the basis of advances made in the understanding of post-exilic Judah. Others, especially those presented in Rofé's and Hanson's works, while being rejected by several scholars, deserve to be re-examined and reassessed.

### 2.1. *A division between the returned exiles and the Samaritans*

Several scholars identify the prophetic protagonist with the returning exiles and their antagonists with either the Samaritans or the people who had remained in Judah during the exile.<sup>1</sup> This view is based primarily on Ezra 4:1–5, a text that tells of the exilic leadership's rejection of the Samaritans' request to participate in the rebuilding of the temple; a rejection which led to the Samaritans opposing bitterly those in exile. The more contemporary Haggai and Zech 1–8, however, bear little evidence for a division along such lines. Thus, it is probable that the attitudes displayed in Ezra 4, written a long period after the events themselves, reflect the issues facing the writers rather than those of the time described. Furthermore, there are no identifiable allusions to the Samaritans within Isa 56–66. For these reasons, this interpretation is not widely accepted today.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2. *A division between the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Holtmann, Mantel and Beckwith)*

Others interpret Isa 56–66 as an early witness to the later split between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, written from a proto-Pharisean point of view.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen, 1922), p. 423, K. Marti, *Das Buch Jesaja* (KHAT, Tübingen, 1900), p. 367.

<sup>2</sup> See also P.A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah, The Structure, Growth and Authorship of Isaiah 56–66* (VTSup 62, Leiden, 1996), p. 190, who provides a concise summary of some of the reasons put forward for arguing that the tension between the exiles and the people who had remained in the land was not as strong as previously supposed.

Holtzmann, for example, traces the origin of the division between the Sadducees and the Pharisees to Malachi. Dating Malachi to the time of the first *Diadochen*, he identifies the Pharisees with the 'יראי ה' ("those who fear YHWH") in Malachi and suggests that the meeting of the 'יראי ה' described in Mal 3:16 is a reference to the Great assembly.<sup>3</sup>

Favouring a slightly earlier dating, Mantel and Beckwith link the controversy between the Sadducees and the Pharisees to the time of Ezra.<sup>4</sup> In Mantel's view, Ezra's standpoint was at complete variance with those of the high priest. Mantel notes that the latter is not listed as present during the reading of the Torah in Neh 8, and further regards him as responsible for the denial of the tithes to the Levites (Neh 13:10). In addition, the fact that the high priest did not sign the document cited in Neh 10, in contrast to "our priests" (כהנינו), points in Mantel's opinion to two groups of priests.<sup>5</sup> Compared with the group around Ezra and Nehemiah who stressed personal piety rather than cultic behaviour and who claimed that the Torah was a universal obligation for every Israelite, together with the belief that it had a deeper meaning than the literal one, the high priest represented a more traditional and literalist group, which regarded the sacrificial cult to be their supreme duty. As such, Mantel argues that Ezra and Nehemiah stood in the tradition of the prophet who condemned the priests' teaching (cf. Ezek 22:26; Mal 2:8).<sup>6</sup> Mantel concludes that the high priest and his priestly followers developed into the Sadducees while their opponents became the Pharisees.<sup>7</sup>

Along similar lines, Beckwith claims that the Pharisees are the heirs of Ezra in their manner of biblical exegesis and in their stand against assimilation with the people around them. Due to the exogamous marriages of the high priestly families in the time of Ezra (Ezra 10:18–19; Neh 13:4–9, 28–29) and the negligence of the priesthood (Mal 1:6–14; 2:1–9), Beckwith argues that the teaching of the law begun by Ezra threatened to come to an end after the death of Nehemiah. This priestly apostasy caused the lay elders, being followers of Ezra, to supplant the priests as the upholders of the Law. The priesthood subsequently drew further away from the path of Ezra, a development culminating around 330 BC when Manasseh, the brother of the high priest Jaddua, married a Samaritan

<sup>3</sup> O. Holtzmann, "Der Prophet Maleachi und der Ursprung des Pharisäerbundes", *AR* 29 (1931), pp. 14–15, 21.

<sup>4</sup> H. Mantel, "The Dichotomy of Judaism during the Second Temple", *HUCA* 44 (1973), p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Mantel, "Dichotomy", pp. 64, 74.

<sup>6</sup> Mantel, "Dichotomy", pp. 78–81.

<sup>7</sup> Mantel, "Dichotomy", p. 84.

princess.<sup>8</sup> In conclusion, Beckwith argues that while the high priestly family at the time of Ezra should not be identified with the not yet existing Sadducees, they were already a force opposing the Pharisaic movement.<sup>9</sup>

### *2.3. A division between the prophets' followers and the priests (Smart, Rofé and Blenkinsopp)*

The theories of Holtzmann, Mantel and Beckwith have not been widely accepted, yet this neglect is not altogether justified. The biblical material in Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah, supported by Mal 1:6–2:9, does allude to a tension between the two main characters and the Judahite priesthood. The intermarriages of the latter, together with their general attitude of negligence and perhaps even idolatry, caused other people in Judah to oppose their leadership. There is evidence, therefore, of a rift between the priests on the one side and Ezra and Nehemiah on the other. Even so, it is doubtful if the later split between the Sadducees and the Pharisees can be traced to this time. Hence, a modified picture of the division between the priests and the people criticizing them is needed. Moreover, there are hints within Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah, especially in Neh 5, that a division between the people and the leaders of the community existed before this time.

This gives rise to the question of whether the origin of this rift can be sought even earlier than 450 BC. This question is partly dealt with by Smart and Rofé who trace the origin of the later split between the Sadducees and the Pharisees to Isa 56–66 and especially to 66:1–6. In Smart's view, the author of Isa 66:1–6, together with his followers, underwent persecution at the hands of the Judahite authorities, thus attesting to a rift between conservative forces who favoured organized religion and a "deeply spiritual group [...] passionately devoted to the prophetic ideals".<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Rofé argues that Isa 66:3–4 targets the priesthood.<sup>11</sup> According to him, Isa 56–66, Malachi and Ezra-Nehemiah all testify to an opposition to the aristocracy and the priestly supremacy in Jerusalem. While this polemic has a social background (cf. Isa 58 and Neh 5), "at the heart of the matter lies a religious antagonism as the priestly

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<sup>8</sup> R.T. Beckwith, "The Pre-History and Relationships of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes: A Tentative Reconstruction", *RQ* 41 (1982), pp. 17–24. See also Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11, 8, 2:306–9.

<sup>9</sup> Beckwith, "Pre-History", pp. 25, 32.

<sup>10</sup> J.D. Smart, "A New Interpretation of Isaiah lxvi 1–6", *ExpTim* 46 (1934–35), pp. 423–24.

<sup>11</sup> A. Rofé, "Isaiah 66:1–4: Judean Sects in the Persian Period as Viewed by Trito-Isaiah", *Biblical and Related Studies Presented To Samuel Iwry* (eds. A. Kort and S. Morschauer, Winona Lake, 1985), pp. 205–17.

aristocratic party is repeatedly charged with its idolatrous practices (Isa 66:3; cf. 65:3–5) and intermarriage (Mal 2:10–12; Ezra 9, 10; Neh 13:23–28).<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Blenkinsopp, searching for the identity of the opponents in Isa 56–66, focuses on Isa 66:5. Acknowledging that “the brothers” in Isa 66:5 include the temple authority, identical to the priests referred to in 66:3–4 and addressed in 57:1–10; 65:1–16 and 66:17,<sup>13</sup> he concludes that “the conditions favoring the emergence of sectarianism were present from the beginning of the Second Commonwealth”.<sup>14</sup>

As noted, Smart’s theory concentrates primarily on Isa 66:1–6, while Rofé’s and Blenkinsopp’s interpretations include other parts of Isa 56–66. This raises the question of whether there are allusions to a critical disposition towards the priests *throughout* Isa 56–66 rather than in very limited sections only. Furthermore, in view of the textual history of Isa 56–66, it must be asked if there are differences between the different authors of Isa 56–66 and/or if an inner development of the critique can be traced.

#### 2.4. A division between parties (*Plöger and Hanson*)

Plöger may be cited as one of the first scholars who held the two-parties thesis, i.e. that the groups of people were representative of different interpretations of the nature and status of “Israel”. He suggests that a conflict between the theocratic establishment and an apocalyptic movement is traceable in Isa 24–27, and in parts of Joel, Daniel and Zech 9–14. He further argues that the members of this last group, while probably being part of the theocracy, regarded the re-establishment of a YHWH-istic society under Ezra and Nehemiah, limited to Judah and Benjamin, as a compromise lacking eschatological hope. According to Plöger, their hope of a complete restoration, based on the prophetic promises, caused disagreements with the theocratic leaders, a conflict which much later culminated in the schism between the Sadducees and the Hasidim during the Maccabean revolt.<sup>15</sup>

Tracing this conflict further back to the late sixth century BC, Hanson proposes that Isa 56–66 is an attack on the leading exilic priestly party and

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<sup>12</sup> A. Rofé, “The Onset of Sects in Postexilic Judaism: Neglected Evidence from the Septuagint, Trito-Isaiah, Ben Sira, and Malachi”, *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee* (ed. J. Neusner, Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 41–42.

<sup>13</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, “A Jewish Sect of the Persian Period”, *CBQ* 52 (1990), pp. 9–11.

<sup>14</sup> Blenkinsopp, “Jewish Sect”, p. 20. See also his book *Sage, Priest, Prophet. Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* (Library of Ancient Israel, Louisville, Kentucky, 1995), p. 92, in which he identifies the priests as the prime target of the prophetic criticism in Isa 56–66.

<sup>15</sup> O. Plöger, *Theokratie und Eschatologie* (WMANT, Neukirchen, 1959), 129–42.

their programme of restoration by the heirs of Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>16</sup> Hanson argues that the origin of this conflict goes back to 586 BC when the destruction of Jerusalem left society in confusion. The former hegemony of the Zadokite-dominated priestly party over the temple crumbled and left a power vacuum which caused tension between the different factions of society. The heirs of the ruling classes reacted by seeking the preservation of the former social structure, thus enabling them to remain in power, while the poorer classes sought change and revolution. The latter, labelled “visionaries” by Hanson were people who had remained in Judah. They took the message of Isa 40–55 to heart and placed their hope in God’s direct intervention through the course of history.<sup>17</sup> These visionaries joined forces with the Levites whose power was curtailed by the exilic Zadokite priesthood.<sup>18</sup> These Zadokites belonged to the upper stratum of the pre-exilic society. They had been exiled to Babylon where they kept their social position, planning a restoration which would enable them to continue in power. At the time when the exiles were allowed to return to Judah, these priests wielded leadership positions in the exilic community. Furthermore, they were empowered by the Persian Empire to realize their restoration programme and to rebuild the temple. Hanson interprets the list in Ezra 2 // Neh 7 which records 4289 returning priests compared with 74 Levites as symptomatic, indicating that the Babylonian Levites saw no future in returning to Judah where they would have had no part in the leadership of the restored cult.<sup>19</sup>

#### 2.4.1. Critique of Hanson’s theory (Schramm, Williamson)

Hanson’s theory, in particular, has been criticised by several scholars.<sup>20</sup> Schramm offers one of the more severe attacks, questioning Hanson’s identification of the two groups found in Isa 56–66. First, since no-one denies that the authors responsible for Isa 56–66 were strongly influenced by Isa 40–55 (DI), and that they developed its views to fit their own contemporary conditions, Schramm points out that these later authors would have been unlikely to oppose the return of the exiles which DI had

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<sup>16</sup> P.D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, 1975), pp. 71–76.

<sup>17</sup> Hanson, *Dawn*, pp. 212, 217–18.

<sup>18</sup> Hanson, *Dawn*, pp. 220–21. In support of a Levitical movement opposing the priests, Hanson quotes, among other places, Ex. 32:26–9 where the Levites are singled out as the faithful ones, in contrast to the idolatry of Aaron (p. 223).

<sup>19</sup> Hanson, *Dawn*, pp. 225–27.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., R.P. Carroll, “Twilight of Prophecy or Dawn of Apocalyptic?”, *JSOT* 14 (1979), pp. 3–35.

# Source Index

Footnotes are not included

<i>Genesis</i>		28	250–251
3:17–19	244	28:11–12	250
12:3	188	28:29	20
15:4	235–236	28:35	20
15:18	188	28:36–38	250
19:1	132	28:36	250
21:17	132, 235	28:37	251
22:12	234	29:14	246
24:3	179	29:37	224
24:7	189	30:29	225
27:46ff.	179	30:33	225
32:21	133	32:21	128
41:45	179	32:34	235
43:9	106	34:10–17	187
49:4	157	34:11	186
		34:15–16	179
<i>Exodus</i>		34:20	173
4:12	234	39:30	250
5:11	235		
9:27	106	<i>Leviticus</i>	
13:13	173	1:3–11	170
14:10	234	1:3	213
16:9	236	1:5	236
16:33	236	1:11	236
16:34	236	2:1–13	170
19:12–13	225	2:2	170
19:22	128	2:9	170
21:12	172	2:16	170
21:20	172	3:16–17	208
22:25–26	138	4:11	246
22:30	213	4:15	170
23:9	234	5:1–2	220
28–29	249	5:2–4	224

5:12 170  
 6:8 170  
 6:11 225  
 6:20 225  
 6:21 225  
 7:18 164  
 7:19–21 213  
 8:14 128  
 8:17 246  
 8:35 252  
 9 249  
 10:1–5 114  
 10:10–11 114, 223  
 10:16–20 114  
 10:18 20  
 10:26–29 26  
 11:24ff 224  
 11:7–8 174  
 11:7 163  
 12:8 238  
 16 249  
 16:2 20  
 16:20 20  
 16:23 20  
 16:27 246  
 17:6 208  
 17:15 213  
 18:6–19 158  
 18:30 252  
 19:7 164  
 19:8 19  
 19:19 187  
 22 219–220  
 22:2 220  
 22:9 252  
 22:10–16 220  
 22:15–16 222  
 22:15 220  
 22:16 220  
 22:17–25 212–213  
 22:18–19 214  
 24:7 170

27:9–12 214

### *Numbers*

4:15 225  
 5:2 224  
 6:23–27 242  
 6:26 133, 135  
 7:2 234  
 7:3 234  
 7:18–19 234  
 7:18 234  
 8:6ff. 256  
 8:15 257  
 8:22 257  
 12:1 179  
 18:2ff. 98  
 18:3 98  
 18:4 99  
 18:7 99  
 18:17 208  
 18:21 242  
 19:5 246  
 21:29 194  
 22:6 234, 236  
 25:12–13 242  
 27:21 90

### *Deuteronomy*

7:1ff. 189  
 7:1–6 179, 187  
 7:1–4 186  
 7:1–3 187  
 7:1 186  
 7:4 188  
 7:6 187  
 10:17 133  
 12:2 156  
 13:15 189  
 14:2 187  
 14:8 163, 174  
 15:9–23 212  
 15:21 213

17:4	189	6:7	98
20:10–18	180	7:4–14	265
20:17–18	187	12:16	163
20:17	186, 188	15:20	235
21:4	173	18:25–27	123
21:6	173		
21:10ff.	179	<i>1 Kings</i>	
23:4–7	187	2:3	252
23:4	186–187	3:4–5	163
24:12–13	138	5:22–23	68
24:15	209	6:3	143
28:50	133	6:23–26	143
32:19	194	8:27	265
32:47	118	11:1–8	180
33:10	114	11:1–2	186
		11:4	187
<i>Joshua</i>		11:5	176
5:27	235	11:7	176
		11:19–20	190
<i>Judges</i>		11:33	252
2:17	252	14:23	156
14:1–3	180	16:31	180
14:9	122	18:12	235
16:10	105	22:19	132
		22:23	234
<i>1 Samuel</i>		26:2–27	170
2:10	253		
2:12–17	207–210, 214	<i>2 Kings</i>	
2:13–14	208	17:26–28	123
2:15–16	208	21:21–22	252
2:22–25	208		
2:22	208	<i>Isaiah</i>	
2:28–29	208	1–55	153
2:30–31	208	1:11–14	259
2:31	244	1:12–13	214
9:7	201	1:13	216
14:31–34	142	2:2–3	154
15:23	175	2:2	155
28:6	163	2:12ff.	155
		2:12	155
<i>2 Samuel</i>		2:13	155
6:6–11	225	2:14	155

2:15	155	56:6	70–71, 274–276, 278–279– 280, 285–286
2:17	155	56:7	52, 70–71, 79, 275, 278, 280, 284
3:36	145	56:8	70, 274, 276–278, 280
6	132	56:9–66:17	36, 70
6:1	154–155	56:9–59:21	13, 17, 36, 43, 46–48, 50, 53, 56–57, 65, 71–79, 84, 86, 88, 100–102, 108, 149–150, 152, 162, 171, 177, 185, 198, 204–205, 238, 264–265, 272, 274, 288
6:9–10	188	56:9–57:21	17, 36–43, 46–48
6:13	188	56:9–57:14	154
9:3	130	56:9–57:13	37–39
9:14	133	56:9–57:5	40
14:1–2	276–277	56:9–57:2	37, 39, 42
14:1	276	56:9–12	37, 40, 42, 113, 122–126
14:2	276	56:9–11	154
21:2	260	56:9	47, 204
24–27	9	56:10–11	47, 90, 126
28:7–9	124–125,	56:10	44, 123
28:24	170	56:11	38, 49–50, 65, 124, 126
40–55	2, 10, 11, 12, 38–39, 75, 87, 204	56:12	124, 138
40:9	153–155	57	196
41:24	189	57:1–10	9
41:29	175	57:1–2	37, 39–40, 42
46:8	106	57:2	39–40, 42
49:26	71	57:3ff.	40
50:2	111	57:3–13	37, 39–40, 42, 49–50, 158– 159
50:6	172	57:3–6	25
53:4	172	57:3–5	40
56:1–59:21	44, 46, 56, 71, 74, 79	57:3	39–40, 42, 158–159
56:1–57:21	43	57:4	40
56:1–8	17, 36, 46, 51–52, 57, 70–74, 79–80, 84, 167, 262, 265, 274, 276–282, 285–286, 289	57:5–8	288
56:1–7	79	57:5–6	40, 159
56:1–2	286	57:5	40–41, 156, 158, 160, 172, 202, 205
56:1	71	57:6ff.	40, 159
56:2	70–71	57:6–13	40, 237
56:3–8	67	57:6–8	149–159
56:3–7	70, 285		
56:3	275–276, 279		
56:4	70		
56:5	79, 278		
56:6–8	274–275		
56:6–7	286, 288		

- |            |   |           |   |
|------------|---|-----------|---|
| 57:6       | 40, 63, 151–153, 155–156,<br>162, 177                                   | 58:2      | 26, 43–45, 57, 90–93, 97–98,<br>100, 140–141                      |
| 57:7–8     | 40, 151, 153–159, 177, 202  | 58:3ff.   | 45  |
| 57:7       | 151–157, 177, 217   | 58:3–12   | 50  |
| 57:8–10    | 203   | 58:3–4    | 26, 43, 45, 50, 78, 91, 96,<br>137, 139–143, 147–148, 172,<br>216 |
| 57:8       | 157, 159  | 58:3      | 43–46, 65, 90, 93, 98, 140–<br>141–142                            |
| 57:9–10    | 199–206   | 58:4–10   | 92  |
| 57:9       | 199–205   | 58:4      | 45, 141–142, 172  |
| 57:10      | 38, 200, 203, 205   | 58:5–12   | 45  |
| 57:11      | 101   | 58:5      | 43, 141   |
| 57:12      | 86–89, 97, 100, 108   | 58:6–14   | 45  |
| 57:13      | 39–40, 88, 99, 154–155, 167,<br>265                                     | 58:6–12   | 39  |
| 57:14–21   | 37–39, 41–42  | 58:6–7    | 96, 140   |
| 57:14–20   | 37, 63  | 58:6      | 142   |
| 57:14–19   | 38–39   | 58:7      | 147   |
| 57:14      | 37–38, 41–43, 47, 146   | 58:8–9    | 140   |
| 57:15ff.   | 37  | 58:9–10   | 140   |
| 57:15–21   | 43  | 58:9      | 45, 57, 96  |
| 57:15–19   | 42  | 58:10–11  | 140   |
| 57:15      | 41, 89, 154   | 58:10     | 96  |
| 57:17–19   | 41  | 58:12     | 78, 88, 140   |
| 57:17–18   | 38–39   | 58:13–14  | 167, 265  |
| 57:17      | 49–50, 101, 172   | 58:13     | 140   |
| 57:18–19   | 41  | 59:1–21   | 17, 36, 45–46   |
| 57:18      | 39,   | 59:1–2    | 44, 64  |
| 57:19      | 41  | 59:1      | 57  |
| 57:20–21   | 41–42   | 59:2      | 43  |
| 58:1–59:21 | 37, 43–44, 46–48, 55, 57  | 59:4–8    | 12  |
| 58         | 8, 17, 24, 36, 45–46, 50, 79,<br>90, 94, 96, 140, 144, 146–<br>147, 167 | 59:4–5    | 92  |
| 58:1–12    | 45, 90  | 59:4      | 92  |
| 58:1–5     | 167   | 59:5ff.   | 92  |
| 58:1–4     | 43–45, 96   | 59:9–21   | 39  |
| 58:1–3     | 89–94, 99   | 59:9–15   | 65  |
| 58:1–2     | 44–45, 92   | 59:10     | 126   |
| 58:1       | 43–44, 46–47, 90–92, 98   | 59:11     | 101   |
| 58:2ff.    | 44, 92  | 59:12     | 43  |
| 58:2–4     | 25–26, 141  | 59:15b–20 | 47  |
| 58:2–3     | 22, 23, 26, 78, 86, 93, 107,<br>214                                     | 59:16     | 47  |
|            |   | 59:20     | 46, 71  |

- 60–63:6 17, 36  
 60–62 36, 38, 47, 66–70, 72–75, 84,  
 272, 274–282, 284, 288  
 60 68  
 60:2 69  
 60:5–9 68  
 60:6–9 68  
 60:6 67–68  
 60:7 66–68, 70, 72, 75, 265, 274–  
 275, 277, 279–280, 282–283  
 60:9 68–69  
 60:10–11 68–69  
 60:10 66, 68–70, 72, 75, 172, 274,  
 276, 279–280  
 60:11 68  
 60:12 69  
 60:13 68, 75  
 60:14 69  
 60:16 71  
 61:5–7 69  
 61:5–6 66, 68–70, 72, 75, 216, 274–  
 275, 279  
 61:5 69, 275–276, 279–281, 285  
 61:6 67, 69, 265, 274–276, 280–  
 281, 284–286  
 61:7ff. 69  
 61:7 69  
 61:8 66, 75, 207, 212, 215–217  
 62:4 140, 216  
 62:8–9 275  
 62:8 275–276, 279  
 63:1–6 36, 47, 73, 84  
 63:5 47  
 63:7–64:11 17, 22, 23, 36, 55, 57–65,  
 72–74, 78–79, 84, 88, 100–  
 109  
 63:7–14 58  
 63:8–14 59  
 63:9 71  
 63:11 100, 111  
 63:15–64:4 58  
 63:15–17 61  
 63:15 100, 111  
 63:16 22, 58–60, 63–64  
 63:17 59, 61, 100, 102, 105–106,  
 108  
 63:18 61, 78–79  
 63:19–64:3 62  
 63:19–64:2 62, 100–101  
 63:19 59, 62, 100, 102–103, 105,  
 108  
 64:1 62  
 64:2 62  
 64:3–6 62  
 64:3 62  
 64:4–6 22, 58, 86, 103  
 64:4–5 58, 100, 102, 108  
 64:4 62, 103–108, 110  
 64:5–7 62  
 64:5 103–105, 108  
 64:6 58, 100–101, 104, 107  
 64:7 57–58, 62  
 64:8–11 58  
 64:8 22, 60, 62  
 64:9–10 78–79  
 64:9 59  
 64:10 62  
 64:11 64, 100–101, 104  
 65–66 196  
 65:1ff. 55  
 65:1–66:17 13, 17, 36, 48–57, 60–65,  
 72–79, 84, 86, 88, 97, 100–  
 102, 108–109, 149–150, 162,  
 171, 177, 185, 198, 238,  
 264–265, 269, 272, 274,  
 282–283, 288  
 65:1–66:16 56  
 65:1–66:6 17  
 65:1–66:4 54  
 65 49–50, 53–54–55, 64  
 65:1–16 9  
 65:1–7 49–50, 54–55, 61–64, 171,  
 237  
 65:1–5 160

65:1-3	98	66:1-16	51, 56
65:1-2	50, 54, 57, 64	66:1-6	8-9, 48-53, 55, 62, 76, 164, 167, 264-265, 267, 270-274, 288
65:1	57, 63, 91, 160	66:1-4	48-52, 54-56, 62, 167
65:2	61, 160	66:1-2	48-52, 67, 77, 164, 166-167, 264-267, 270-271
65:3ff.	61	66:1	49, 51-52, 54-55, 77-78, 266
65:3-5	9, 54, 56, 269, 288	66:2	48-52, 55, 185, 264, 266-268, 286
65:3-4	25, 97, 149, 151, 160-164, 269	66:3-6	50
65:3	98, 160-162	66:3-4	8-9, 13, 48-52, 169, 173, 177, 237, 268-271
65:4-5	175	66:3	9, 48-50, 52, 54, 57, 77-78, 79, 149, 151-152, 156, 163-177, 216, 266, 269, 283, 286
65:4	63, 160, 162-164, 174-175, 177, 283, 286	66:4	48-52, 54-55, 57
65:5	65, 86, 88, 97-100, 160	66:5-24	55
65:6	64, 101	66:5-17	54
65:7	62, 162	66:5-6	48-52, 56, 62, 270
65:8ff.	64	66:5	9, 13, 48, 50-53, 56, 65, 185, 264, 267-271
65:8-25	55	66:6-11	51
65:8-16	62	66:6	25, 51-53, 55, 77-78, 256, 264, 271, 288
65:8-10	61	66:7-17	17
65:8	61	66:7-15	62
65:9	54, 99	66:7-14	51, 56
65:10	54	66:7-11	62
65:11-12	61	66:9	50
65:11	54-55, 61, 167, 176, 265	66:10	62
65:12	50, 54, 57	66:12-13	62
65:13-16	62	66:12	272
65:13-14	54	66:14-24	62
65:15	62	66:14-16	56
65:16-25	62	66:14	51, 62
65:17	54, 62	66:15	62
65:17-18	62	66:16	56
65:18-19	62	66:17	9, 51, 54, 56, 62, 163-164, 174-175, 177
65:18	62		
65:19-23	54		
65:20-23	62		
65:21-22	54		
65:23	54		
65:24	50, 54, 57, 62-63		
65:25	54-55		
66	48, 272		
66:1ff.	51, 53-55, 78, 265, 272		
66:1-17	50		

66:18–24	17, 36, 46, 51–52, 55, 70–74, 79–80, 84, 262, 274, 281– 283, 286, 289	<i>Ezekiel</i> 4:14 7:26 14:3 14:4 14:7 16 16:31–34 16:50 18:12 20:3 20:7 20:8 20:31 22:23–31 22:26 22:28 23 23:16 23:40 23:39 27:25 33:23–29 34:5 34:11 34:26–29 40–48 42:4 42:14 43:18–27 44 44:7–9 44:8 44:9 44:10–11 44:13 44:15 44:16 44:19 44:23 48 48:11	164 114 90 90 90 159, 193, 199 203 189 189 90 176 176 90 218 7, 223–224 219 159, 193, 199, 203 203 203 172 200 284 204 186 271 272 254 98 231 253, 285–286 285–286 252 285 170 128 279, 285–286 252 98, 225 114 253 252
66:18–21	281		
66:18	56, 70–71, 281		
66:19	282		
66:20–23	265		
66:20–21	274, 281–282, 288		
66:20	70–71, 152, 274, 281–284, 286		
66:21	281–282, 284–286		
66:22	70		
66:23	70–71, 282		
66:24	62, 71, 286		
<i>Jeremiah</i>			
2–3	193		
2:7	189		
2:8	113, 116, 118–119, 122–124		
2:22	258		
3:13	156		
4:1	176		
5:28	253		
5:31	113, 115–116, 119, 121–122		
7:31	172		
7:32	111		
8:8	119–119		
12:9	204		
18:11	114		
18:18	114, 118		
19:2–6	172		
19:11	111		
21:12	253		
22:16	253		
22:30	170		
30:13	253		
31:27	244		
33:18	170		
41:5	77, 83		
48:35	170		

*Hosea*

1–3	193, 199
4:1	116–118
4:4–19	209
4:4–14	117
4:4–9	116–117, 120
4:4–6	117
4:4	116–117
4:5	117–118
4:6	113, 115–119, 122, 124–123, 132, 209–210
4:7–9	117
4:7–8	117
4:8	207, 209–210, 214
4:10–15	209
4:10–14	149–150
4:10–12	117
4:10–11	150
4:10	117
4:11–12	124–125,
4:11	124–125, 138
4:12	124–125, 150
4:13–14	117, 150
4:13	150
4:14	118, 177
4:15	175
5:8	176
8:11–13	207–210, 214
9:11	176
10:2	173
12:12	203

*Joel*

3–4	257
-----	-----

*Amos*

1:5	170
1:8	170
2:6–16	138
2:8	137–139
4:1	138
6:4–7	138

7:10	117
9:13	170

*Jonah*

3–4	64
-----	----

*Micah*

2:11	219
3:1–12	120
3:5	219
3:11	113, 115–116, 119–122, 134
3:12	120
4:2	121
7:20	59

*Zephaniah*

3:1	219
3:2	219
3:3–4	219
3:4	218–220, 224

*Haggai*

1:1–8	28
1:2–11	223
1:2–3	227
1:2	227
1:3	227
1:6–11	29–30, 78, 230
1:9–11	271
1:9	238
1:12–14	30
1:12	223, 226, 233
1:13	132
1:14	233
1:15	29, 30, 230
2:1–9	226
2:1–7	28
2:1	239
2:4	238
2:5	226
2:6–9	271–272
2:6	271

- 2:7 227, 271  
 2:9 234, 236  
 2:10–19 28  
 2:10–14 13, 16, 27–30, 72, 80–81,  
 108, 123, 126, 218–239, 243,  
 251, 272, 288  
 2:10 29, 81, 230  
 2:11–13 72, 221, 233  
 2:12–13 77, 126, 221–222, 224–225,  
 227, 229, 232, 238  
 2:12 224–225  
 2:13 221  
 2:14 13, 16, 28, 126, 218, 221–  
 223, 226–238, 247, 266  
 2:16–19 78  
 2:15–19 28–30, 230, 237  
 2:15 28–29, 232, 236  
 2:17 30  
 2:18 27, 29–30  
 2:19 28–29  
 2:22 227  
 2:23 31, 238
- Zechariah*
- 1–6 32, 34  
 1:7–6:15 81  
 1:7 81–82, 239  
 2:8–9 68  
 2:12–15 277  
 2:12–13 277  
 2:15 276–277  
 3 13–14, 16, 30–34, 80–82,  
 113, 132, 196–197, 239–241,  
 243, 248–251, 256, 258–259,  
 288–289  
 3:1–8a 30, 72  
 3:1–7 33, 82  
 3:1–5 218  
 3:1–2 241, 288  
 3:2 243, 258  
 3:3–5 33, 249, 251  
 3:3–4 258
- 3:4–7 288  
 3:4 196, 241  
 3:5 251  
 3:6–7 30, 33–34, 248, 251  
 3:6 33  
 3:7–9 146  
 3:7 34, 82, 132, 144, 146, 252–  
 254, 289  
 3:8–10 33  
 3:8 17, 30–33, 72, 239–241, 251  
 3:9 30, 32–33, 72, 146, 240,  
 248–251, 289  
 3:10 17, 30, 32–33, 72  
 4 44, 144  
 4:6b–10a 31, 81  
 4:6 14, 44  
 4:10 44  
 4:14 31, 34, 82, 255  
 5:1–4 17, 30, 137, 143–148, 214  
 5:3 137, 144–146  
 5:4 24, 144–146  
 6:9–15 13, 17, 30, 81, 144, 248, 251,  
 255–256  
 6:10–11 205  
 6:11 255  
 6:12–13 31, 255  
 6:13 14, 255  
 6:15 262  
 7–8 34, 44, 72, 81, 95  
 7:1–5 13, 16, 78, 80–81, 113  
 7:1–3 11, 17, 30, 34–35, 44, 72,  
 94–95  
 7:1 81  
 7:2 35  
 7:3 34–35  
 7:4ff. 94  
 7:4–8:17 34–35, 72  
 7:4–8 95  
 7:4–7 35, 90, 94–97, 123, 126  
 7:4–6 17, 30, 34, 44, 86, 96  
 7:4–5 34, 72  
 7:5–6 95–96, –97

7:5	35, 94–95	2:1–3	130, 241–247
7:6	34, 95	2:1	18, 130
7:8–14	96	2:2–3	130
7:9–10	24, 96	2:2	27, 242–244
7:13	96	2:3	21, 242–246
8:16–17	24	2:4–6	25, 127
8:18ff.	30, 35, 72	2:4–5	127, 129, 193
8:18–19	34–35, 44	2:4	130
8:22–23	262	2:5–9	262
9–14	9	2:5–8	1
		2:5–7	259
<i>Malachi</i>		2:5–6	26
1:1	132	2:5	129
1:1–5	27	2:6–9	113, 248
1:2–5	261	2:6–7	127, 131
1:4	83	2:6	129, 131
1:6ff.	1	2:7–9	124
1:6–3:12	27	2:7	123–124, 127, 131–132
1:6–3:5	27, 72	2:8–9	119, 127, 129, 132, 135
1:6–2:9	8, 16, 17, 18–19, 21, 23, 27, 135, 242	2:8	7, 124, 132,
1:6–14	207–208, 211, 217	2:9	127, 132–135
1:6–12	109, 108–110	2:10–16	16, 17, 18–24, 83, 178, 189, 193–196, 198, 245, 247, 289
1:6–7	109–110, 211–212	2:10–15	194
1:6	16, 18, 23, 211	2:10–12	9, 19
1:16–14	7, 18, 207	2:10	21–22, 261
1:7–8	18, 109–110,	2:11–13	19
1:7	19, 21, 110, 193, 211–212, 219, 262	2:11	19, 20–22, 24, 189
1:8	83, 133–134, 212–214	2:12	20–22
1:9	133–134	2:13–16	19
1:10–11	248, 259–263	2:13–14	22, 24, 109, 110–112,
1:10	20, 25, 82, 110, 237, 260, 262	2:13	19–22, 110–111, 189, 193, 218
1:11	20, 109–110, 259–262	2:14	111
1:12	21, 109–110, 126, 193, 211– 212	2:15–16	194
1:13–14	212–214	2:15	21, 22, 245
1:13	207, 212–213, 215–217	2:17–3:5	16, 17, 23–26, 257–259
1:14	18, 213–214, 248, 260	2:17–3:4	23–26, 146
2:1–9	7, 78, 127–135	2:17–3:1a	23–24
2:1–8	78	2:17	23–26, 109, 111, 112–113, 257
		3:1ff.	1

3:1-5	256-258	7-10	8, 184
3:1-4	24, 130, 257-258	7:8	184
3:1-2	83	7:10	115
3:1	25, 82, 132, 256-258	7:25	115
3:2-4	248, 256-259	8:2	183
3:2	26, 256-258	8:16	190
3:3-4	25, 256-257, 261-262, 289	8:17	261
3:3	128, 256, 258-259	9-10	83, 180, 193, 197
3:4	26, 258-259, 262	9	9, 187
3:5	23-26, 137, 144, 146-148, 257	9:1-15	183-189
3:6ff.	26-27, 242	9:1-4	183
3:6-12	26-27	9:1	13, 185-187
3:6	23-24, 26, 146	9:2	187-189, 197, 245
3:7	26	9:3-4	189
3:8-12	84	9:4	13, 51-52, 184-185
3:8	26	9:5-15	189
3:9	27	9:10-12	189
3:10	244	9:12-13	178
3:11	243	9:12	179
3:14	23	10	9, 192
3:16	7, 185	10:3	13, 51-52, 185
3:19-24	83, 257	10:5-6	192
<i>Ezra</i>		10:5	13
1-6	59, 81, 231	10:6	190
1:2	202	10:7	181, 184
2:2-11	205	10:9	184
2	10, 181	10:16	191
2:2	31	10:18-22	178, 180-182
2:36-40	282	10:18-19	7, 13, 197
2:62	212	10:18	182
3-5	228	10:19	187
3:1-6	77	10:21	181-182
3:2ff.	31	10:22	182
3:2-6	230-231	10:44	184
4:1-5	6, 59, 226, 266, 269	<i>Nehemiah</i>	
4:2	186	2:16	147
5:16	77	3:4	182, 190
6:3ff.	205	3:20	182
6:3-10	202	3:21	182
6:20	170	3:29	190
		3:30	190

5:1–19	8, 24, 137, 144, 147–148	12:10	182
5:1–13	78, 147	12:11	197
5:1	147	12:12–21	182
5:4	84	12:12	183
5:7ff.	126	12:13	182–183
5:7–8	147	12:16	183
5:7	94	12:21	182
5:14–19	147	12:27–43	182
5:14	83	12:30	256
5:15	147	12:33	182
5:17	147	12:41	182
5:18	83	12:44–45	256
6	178, 189–191, 196, 199	12:45	252
6:10–14	126	12:47	181
6:10–13	78	13	178, 180, 189–192, 196–197, 199
6:17–19	178, 190	13:1	185–187
6:18	181, 190, 192	13:4–9	7, 191
6:19	191	13:4–8	78, 178
7	10, 181	13:4	191
7:7	31	13:7–9	192
7:64	212	13:10–12	84
8	7	13:10	7
8:1–8	115	13:23–28	9
8:8	115	13:23–27	83, 192
8:11	115	13:26	189, 192
9–10	180	13:28–30	192
9:4	181	13:28–29	7
10	7	13:28	13, 78, 178, 181, 197–198
10:1–8	180–183	13:29–30	192
10:2	182–183	13:29	83, 212
10:3	183		
10:4	183		
10:5	182	<i>Psalms</i>	
10:6	182–183	24:4	209, 235
10:7	182	25:1	209
10:8	181, 190–191	42:4	111
10:28	183	42:11	111
11:10–14	182	44:8–9	58
11:11	182, 190–191	44:17–18	58
12:1–7	182	50:1	214
12:3	190	55:20	235
12:4	183	58:3	215

60:13 234  
 64:7 215  
 77:15–20 59  
 82:2 133  
 89:26 58  
 89:46 58  
 89:50 111  
 95:4 235  
 95:5 235  
 106:7ff. 59  
 106:35 188  
 127:3 245

*Proverbs*

18:5 134  
 20:19 188  
 24:21 188  
 25:26 214

*Daniel*

2:1 130  
 8:27 130

*Job*

4:19 235  
 5:5 235  
 5:16 215  
 9:5 235  
 14:21 267  
 27:6 106

42:8 133

*Ruth*

1:16 235  
 2:9 235

*1 Chronicles*

9:16 190  
 15:23 190  
 28:2–3 266

*2 Chronicles*

1:5ff. 163  
 2:15 68  
 13:11 252  
 15:3 115  
 17:3–4 252  
 17:7–9 115  
 29:23–24 170  
 30:16–17 170

*Jubilees*

20:4 180  
 22:20 180  
 25:1–10 180  
 30:17 180

*Testament of Levi*

9:10 180

## Authors Index

Footnotes are not included

- Ackerman, S. 158, 161, 164  
Ackroyd, P.R. 229
- Barstad, H.M. 11  
Beckwith, R.T. 6–8  
Beuken, W.A.M. 33, 55, 77, 227, 266  
Blank, S.H. 106  
Blenkinsopp, J. 9, 11, 74, 169  
Bosshard, E. 19  
Browne, L.E. 59
- Calvin, J. 254  
Chary, T. 237–238  
Clines, D.J.A. 233
- Day, J. 200
- Ehrlich, A.B. 235
- Glazier-McDonalds, B. 18, 83, 189,  
195, 244–245  
Goldenstein, J. 62–63  
Gruber, M. 133
- Halpern, B. 143  
Hanson, P.D. 6, 9–13, 15, 41–42, 53–54,  
55, 59–60, 74, 90, 216, 270, 272  
Hollday, W.L. 122  
Holtmann, O. 6–8
- Jeremias, J. 82  
Joüon, P. 234–236
- Kessler, J. 228  
Kissane, E.J. 64  
Koch, K. 13, 28–29, 232  
Koenen, K. 40–41, 49–50, 64, 67, 172–  
173, 175, 215–216  
Koole, J.L. 74  
Kosmala, H. 43–44  
Kratz, R.G. 19
- Mantel, H. 6–8  
Mason, R. 246, 259  
Matthew, I.G. 83  
Mays, J.L. 13  
Milgrom, J. 187  
Muilenburg, J. 142
- North, F.S. 11
- O'Brien, J.M. 83, 127–128
- Pauritsch, K. 57–58, 66, 80, 123–124  
Perowne, T.T. 33, 83–84  
Petersen, D.L. 26, 231, 242–246  
Plöger, O. 9  
Polan, G.J. 37–38, 46–47, 71
- Redditt, P.L. 19, 81–82  
Rofé, A. 6, 8–9, 15, 74, 78, 169–171  
Rose, W. 33  
Rothstein, J.W. 226–227, 230  
Rudolph, W. 235–236

- Sasson, J.M. 169, 173, 176  
Schaper, J. 128  
Schramm, B. 10–13, 46, 64–65, 204  
Sekine, S. 41, 49, 51–52, 57–58, 70–71, 81  
Sellin, E. 33, 130, 222  
Smart, J.D. 8–9, 52, 167  
Smith, P.A. 37–38, 46, 50–51, 54–57, 66–67, 74  
Smith, R.L. 244  
Stager, L.E. 173  
Steck, O.H. 37–38, 42, 46–47, 55, 61–62, 68  
Swetnam, J. 261  
Torrey, C.C. 83–84, 168  
De Vaux, R. 174–175  
Veijola, T. 57–58  
Verhoef, P.A. 245  
Vermeulen, J. 66  
Volz, P. 69–70, 174  
Webster, E.C. 52  
Welch, A.C. 82–83  
Wernberg-Møller, P. 200  
Whybray, R.N. 47, 142  
Williamson, H.G.M. 10, 13, 60, 198  
Wolff, H.W. 117  
Zeitlin, S. 14

# Subject Index

Footnotes are not included

- Abraham 60, 63, 188–189  
Altar 77, 82, 109–110, 139, 230–231, 236–237, 261  
Ancestor worship 151, 162  
Asherah 161  
  
Baal 118, 202  
Bethel 34–35, 59, 95, 117  
(the) Branch 30–32, 240, 255–256  
  
Cleansing/Purity 25, 108, 218–220, 248–263, 288–289  
Covenant 127–131  
Cyrus 204  
  
Day of Atonement 248–251, 289  
Day of the Lord 257  
Dietary laws 163–154, 174–175  
Divided society 5–13  
Divine absence 101–102, 112  
Dogs 172–174  
Dreams 162–163  
  
Edom 83  
Eliashib 191–192  
Ezra 115, 180, 184–185, 187  
  
Fasting 34, 78, 92, 94–97, 142, 167  
Foreigners 47, 51–52, 68, 178–198, 259–263, 274–286, 288–289  
Foreign Nations 185–186  
  
Gad 175  
  
High places 120  
Holy/holiness 97–99, 218–220, 223–225, 283  
  
Idolatry/unorthodoxy 12, 149–177, 189, 195–196, 287  
  
Impurity 21–22, 108, 110, 152, 211–212, 218–247, 283, 288  
Intermarriage 83, 178–198, 212  
  
Jerusalem/Zion 51, 67–69, 75, 81, 120, 156, 167, 270, 275, 282  
Josephus 196–198  
Joshua 14, 31–34, 59, 81–82, 132, 182, 190, 196–197, 223, 233, 239–241, 243, 248–256, 258, 269–272, 272, 288  
  
Levi/Levitical 114, 127–130, 132, 261–262, 279, 281–282  
Levites 10, 60, 84, 127–130, 170, 183, 192, 270  
  
Marriage metaphor 153, 193–195, 203  
Mt Gerizim 156  
Meni 175  
Molech 202  
Murder 171–172  
  
Nehemiah 147–148, 180, 190–192  
  
Persian Empire 10, 82  
Pharisees 6–8  
Political alliances 189–190, 199–206  
Proselytes 51–52, 80, 274–280, 285  
  
Sabbath 70  
Sacrifices 19–21, 26, 77–78, 83, 110–111, 152–153, 160–162, 164–165, 207–217, 233–234, 259–260, 275, 280, 283–284, 289  
Sadducees 6–9  
Samaria/Samaritans 6, 13–14, 59, 158, 166–167, 226–227  
Sanballat 181, 197–198  
Seed 187–189, 243–245

- Sheshbazzar 77  
Social (in)justice 93–97, 137–148, 167, 287  
Teaching 113–136, 154, 287  
Temple 19–21, 25, 67, 76–80, 82–83, 121, 143, 151–159, 167–169, 230–231, 253–255, 164–267, 271–272, 287  
Theocratic party 9–13  
Theodicy 102–108, 112  
Tithing 26  
Tobiah 181, 190–192  
Torah 12, 132, 175, 261  
Universalism 70  
Watchman 44, 123, 126  
Wine/drunkenness 124–126, 138  
Zadokites 10, 59, 270  
Zerubbabel 14, 30–34, 59, 81–82, 182, 190, 233, 269–270, 272

Forschungen zum Alten Testament  
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Alphabetical Index

- Barthel, Jörg*: Prophetenwort und Geschichte. 1997. *Volume 19*.  
–: see *Hermisson, Hans-Jürgen*.  
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