

# **BUILDING THE SECOND TEMPLE: INTERPRETING THE EVIDENCE**

by

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## Abstract

This thesis summarizes a brief survey of literature that bears on the question of when the Second Temple was built. To the extent that the launching of Second Temple Judaism is conceptually related to the construction of the Second Temple, an estimate of when the Temple was built is important in assessing the opportunity that the ancient Persian religion, Zoroastrianism, had to influence the ideology and doctrine of the ancient Jewish religion.

The thesis is presented in two parts. The first part summarizes the scholarship published in The Cambridge Ancient Series, The Cambridge History of Judaism series, and anthologies, authored by such scholars as E. Stern, T.C. Mitchell, H. Tadmor, I. Eph'al, L.L. Grabbe, B. Becking, and O. Lipschits. This section concludes, not surprisingly, that construction of the Second Temple was complete by the end of the sixth century BCE. The second part summarizes theories offered by Kenneth G. Hoglund and Diana Edelman. In his 1992 book, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah*, Hoglund argues that alarmed at the growing threat posed by the Greeks and Egyptians on Persian hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean, the Persian authorities took steps to enhance the military preparedness of the region. Accordingly, in the mid-fifth century BCE, the Persians built garrisons throughout the Levant and fortified Jerusalem by rebuilding its defensive wall. In her 2005 book, *The Origins of the 'Second' Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem*, Edelman argues that having learned during the Egyptian Revolt that the Levant was underproducing, Artaxerxes I (465-423 BCE) implemented a

comprehensive plan to improve food production, manpower availability, governance, transportation, communication, and security. It was the realization of this plan that resulted in the rebuilding of the defensive wall around Jerusalem and the building of the Second Temple. It is Edelman's opinion that construction of the Second Temple was completed late in the fifth century BCE.

## **Preface**

The material used in this thesis was drawn from publications available to the public. The interpretation of the material and the opinions and conclusions stated are those of the author, Kenneth Saari.

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# 1 Introduction

Naming the ancient Jewish religion, Second Temple Judaism, after the structure referred to as the Second Temple, albeit a much later practice, is not without risk of confusion. For example, was the commencement of Second Temple Judaism dependent upon the completion of the construction of the Second Temple? This is a question that must be asked because the longer the exiled Jews lived and worshipped in close proximity of the Persians, the more the Jews were influenced by them. Mary Boyce and other scholars who study the Zoroastrian religion point to similarities between the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Persian religion which they argue suggest the borrowing of ideological and doctrinal concepts. On the other hand, scholars of the Old Testament such as Morton Smith are of the opinion that Second Temple Judaism was not influenced by Zoroastrianism. While there are features that appear similar, the connection with Zoroastrianism cannot be substantiated with a “cause and effect” relationship. Reading differing views on this subject, I was reminded of a common facet of raising children. The sooner an off-spring leaves home, the sooner the off-spring develops his/her own characteristics. Conversely, the longer the child lives at home, the more he/she adopts the habits and mind-sets of the parents. I suggest that the relationship between Second Temple Judaism and Zoroastrianism during the early years of the Persian Period, be thought of similarly. Under this hypotheses, an early commencement of the Jewish religion favours the arguments for isolation and uniqueness of ideology and doctrine while a late commencement of the religion favours the arguments stressing coexistence and the adoption of Zoroastrian characteristics. Given the importance that scholars place on the Second Temple in the functioning of

Second Temple Judaism (as alluded to above), it seems reasonable to use the Temple's completion date as a crude estimate of the religion's commencement date. I suggest therefore, that a measure of the degree of influence that Zoroastrianism had on the embryo Jewish religion is the date that construction of the Second Temple was completed. An early date supports Morton Smith and his colleagues, a late date favours Mary Boyce and her colleagues.

Research for this paper showed that developing an estimate of the Temple's completion date involved the consideration of a number of related issues: the permission of the Persian monarch to build a temple, the return of the exiled Israelites and Judahites to Judah, the commencement of the program to build the Temple, the difficulties experienced while building the Temple, and even the rebuilding of the defensive wall surrounding Jerusalem. Three sources were sampled to better understand these issues. Firstly, the biblical account given in the *JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH: The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation - Second Edition* was reviewed. Secondly, scholarly hypotheses that interpret and explain the biblical account were reviewed. Thirdly, two recently published monographs describing theories that attempt to incorporate archaeological evidence with the biblical account were reviewed.

The paper is presented in two parts, the first part summarizes the biblical account and the scholarly hypotheses. This section concludes that Cyrus the Great issued an edict to the Jews allowing them to return to Jerusalem to build a Temple, that the Jews began to return to Judah soon after Cyrus made his edict, that the construction phase is not well understood, that construction of the Second Temple was complete by the end of

the sixth century, and that Nehemiah rebuilt the defensive wall surrounding Jerusalem around the middle of the fifth century. The second part summarizes theories offered by Kenneth G. Hoglund and Diana Edelman. Hoglund accepts the chronology of events argued by biblical scholars, but he argues different reasons for the events based on archaeological evidence. In his 1992 book, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah*, Hoglund argues that alarmed at the growing threat posed by the Greeks and Egyptians on Persian hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean, the Persian authorities took steps to enhance the military preparedness of the region. Accordingly, the Persians built garrisons throughout the Levant and fortified Jerusalem by rebuilding its defensive wall. Edelman proposes a chronology markedly different to that argued by scholars. In her 2005 book, *The Origins of the 'Second' Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem*, Edelman argues that having learned during the Egyptian Revolt that the Levant was underproducing, Artaxerxes I (465-423 BCE) implemented a comprehensive plan to improve food production, manpower availability, governance, transportation, communication, and security. It was the realization of this plan that resulted in the influx of many formerly exiled Israelites and Judahites into Jerusalem and Judah, the appointment of Zerubbabel as governor of Judah, the rebuilding of the defensive wall around Jerusalem, and the building of the Second Temple. It is Edelman's opinion that construction of the Second Temple was completed late in the fifth century BCE.



## 2 The Cyrus Cylinder and the Book of Ezra

By defeating the Babylonians, Cyrus the Great had reached a major symbolic plateau in his climb to military domination of his world. After more than twenty years of brilliant campaigning, he was at that moment the uncontested ruler of most of the world that mattered: Babylon, Sumer, Akkad, and the 'four corners of the world'. He would continue to campaign for the rest of his life and in fact would die while on an eastern campaign (c. 530 BCE), but in 539 BCE he could step back from campaigning and implement programs devoted to consolidating and putting into order the gains he had acquired. Sometime between 539 and 530 BCE, Cyrus recorded on what is today known as the Cyrus Cylinder, a summary of his accomplishments from which can be sensed, his thoughts on how he intended to rule his empire. The Cyrus Cylinder is a barrel shaped clay cylinder measuring 22 1/2 cm in length and 10 cm in diameter at its mid-point. Akkadian cuneiform script covers the whole of the long surface of the cylinder. The extant cylinder, consisting of about two-thirds of the original, is an assemblage of many broken parts.

Embedded in his long pronouncement is a short passage that states that he returned certain peoples and the images of their gods to their homelands and that he rebuilt their sanctuaries:

From [Babylon] to Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the cities of Zamban, Meturnu, Der as far as the borders of the Gutians – I returned to these sanctuaries on the other side of the Tigris, sanctuaries founded in ancient times, the images that had been in them there and I made their

dwellings permanent. I also gathered all their people and returned to them their habitations. And then at the command of Marduk, the great lord, I resettled all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus had brought into Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods in their shrines, the places which they enjoy . . . (Michalowski 429).

This passage indicates that Cyrus returned the images of the gods of Ashur, Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the cities of Zamban, Meturnu, and Der as far as the borders of the Gutians to their ancient sanctuaries, and that he repaired the sanctuaries that were in a deteriorated state. Also, he gathered together all the peoples of those places and returned their lands to them. By this proclamation, Cyrus was stating that he had demonstrated benevolence towards those people who had been recently abused by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

The places Cyrus cites on the Cylinder were located either between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers or to the east of the Tigris River. His proclamation does not specify any place located to the west of the Euphrates River. Specifically, Cyrus did not include in his list any place located in the polity termed "Beyond the River". This omission is significant because within Beyond the River were located the former kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Residing in his empire at the time he composed his proclamation were Israelites and Judahites who had been removed from their homelands as a result of the relocation programs imposed by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

Notwithstanding this omission on the Cyrus Cylinder, the biblical account of the relocation of Israelites and Judahites back to Judah and Jerusalem assumes that Cyrus did make such a proclamation:

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled, the Lord roused the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation throughout his realm by word and in writing as follows: "Thus said King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has charged me with building Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Anyone of you of all His people -- may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the Lord God of Israel, the God that is in Jerusalem . . ." (Ezra 1:1-3).

This passage indicates that in the first year of his reign, King Cyrus issued a proclamation by word and in written form wherein he stated that the Lord God of Heaven (and of Israel), Yahweh, charged him to build Him a Temple in Jerusalem. The king announced also, that he was charged by Yahweh to allow any Jew who wished to do so, to go to Jerusalem to help build the Temple.

Of the many similarities and differences between the quoted passages of the Cyrus Cylinder and Ezra 1:1-3 only a few that bear on the construction of the Second Temple are discussed below. In both documents, peoples who had at some earlier period been abused by the Assyrians or Babylonians were being treated with

benevolence by King Cyrus. Exiles were being allowed to return to their homelands and their places of worship were being restored. While the Cyrus Cylinder states that it is Cyrus himself who is taking credit for these acts of kindness, it does not inform the reader as to why he took these actions. The consensus held by scholars is that Cyrus, by such acts of beneficence, was attempting to gain the good will of his subjects thereby reducing the need for a large military force and diplomatic corps to assist him in the governance of his vast empire. On the other hand, Ezra 1:1-3 states that Cyrus was responding to the directive of the Jewish god Yahweh and in fact, the reason the exiled Israelites and Judahites were returning to their homeland and building their Temple was because that was Yahweh's wish. But why did the author of Ezra 1:1-3 assume so much more than was specified in the Cyrus Cylinder? King Cyrus had limited his proclamation to the peoples that lived along and to the east of the Tigris River, whereas the author of the Book of Ezra broadened that group to include the peoples of the former states of Israel and Judah, a land located far to the west of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

Most scholars of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah take Ezra 1:1-3 at face value. Ephraim Stern represent the majority opinion. He states that "Cyrus issued a proclamation to the Jewish exiles in Babylon urging them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple there." (70). T.C. Mitchell (430), Hayim Tadmor (262), and Israel Eph'al (151) are equally as blunt. Diane Edelman is circumspect, arguing that Ezra 1:1-3 should be read as satisfying the first of the six elements specified by Victor Hurowitz that make up the "standard ancient Near Eastern template for temple-building" (see 159-62 for Edelman's description of the template). The first element of

the template stipulates that temple-building projects must be initiated either by a god or by a king with the blessing of a god (159). Lester Grabbe is skeptical. He argues that the matter of the return of deported peoples to their homelands and the rebuilding of their temples is more a case of a general allowance than the subject of a royal decree. He concludes that Ezra 1:2-3 did not originate from the royal chancellory but from the desk of a Jewish theologian (541-44). With this argument, he implies that the Persian authorities might not have made a record of this allowance.

The Cyrus Cylinder was composed in Mesopotamia by the King of Persia during the last decade of his life, 538-530 BCE. Ezra 1:1-3 was written in Judah by an unknown author probably around 400 BCE. One must not underestimate the differences in the geopolitical circumstances that existed when these two artifacts were produced. The Cyrus Cylinder was composed when the principle threat to the empire was in the east. "The Iranian plateau is wide open to the north east, as later invasions by Turks and Mongols so bloodily demonstrated, and for a Persian monarch to allow his attention to become focused on the lowland Near East before he has secured the east of the plateau is to take grave military risks" (Young 36). Little is known about Cyrus' later activities other than he met his death probably while campaigning in the east around the Oxus River. The little evidence that exists is interpreted to suggest that Cyrus named those places laying along the Tigris River for special treatment to establish a defensive barrier between the Persian heartland and the eastern threat. That was in the mid-to-late sixth century BCE. In the mid-fifth century, the principle threat to the empire (at least as argued by Hoglund) was in the west from the Greeks generally but from the Egyptians in the south-west most immediately. As the fifth

century ground to an end, the threat posed by Athens, locked as it was in an exhausting and debilitating war with Sparta, was diminishing. Notwithstanding Athens' plight, the Greeks still posed a threat to Persian hegemony in the south-western corner of their empire. Also late in the century, Egypt again revolted, this time gaining its independence and although Egypt showed no continuing aggressive tendencies towards the empire, it still posed a threat to Persia. In the early-fourth century when Ezra 1:1-3 was composed, Persia still viewed the Greeks and the Egyptians as threats and had reason to continue maintaining its military installations in the Levant. Therefore, the Book of Ezra should be read as not only having been composed in a tense environment but also in an environment that forced Judahites to carefully choose their allies. In other words, both composer/authors were responding to the influences of the political and strategic realities that existed when they wrote. In my view, Grabbe's explanation seems the more probable; Ezra 1:2-3 was composed by a Jewish theologian.

### 3 The Return of the Exiles

Before inquiring into when the Temple was built, it is necessary to know when the people, the builders of the Temple, arrived in Jerusalem and Judah. Ezra 1:1-4 speaks of God's command to King Cyrus. Ezra 1:5 states that the command stirred the spirits of His people, and that they got ready to return to Jerusalem to rebuild His Temple. But whereas Ezra 2:1 states that people did return and the balance of the chapter sheds light on the total number of people that returned, the Book of Ezra does not specify when the people returned to Jerusalem and Judah.

Stern does not give an opinion as to when the exiled people began to return to Judah. He does say though, that early in the reign of Darius (one must assume Darius I, 522-486 BCE), the rate that people returned to Judah increased steadily. He then reiterates the biblical account (Ezra 2) of the number of people alleged to have returned "in those days" (72). Stern states that between the death of Darius I (486 BCE) and the death of Artaxerxes I (423 BCE) Judah experienced a growth in population (73). He does not indicate whether this mid-fifth century surge in population was part of or additional to the numbers reported in Ezra 2. While he is not clear on this point, Stern appears to be arguing for a numerically-fluctuating stream of immigrants into Jerusalem and Judah over the period of 522 and 423 BCE. Bob Becking (12) and Oded Lipschits (*Achaemenid* 32-34) also believe that the evidence hints at waves of returnees lasting more than a century. Lipschits attempts to align archaeological evidence with the biblical description of the returning exiles. He argues for a very small number of people at the beginning, probably carrying the temple vessels, and several small waves during the next hundred years, probably consisting of family groups. Lipschits points to the

three waves spoken about in the Book of Ezra: the first wave at the very beginning during the years of Cyrus and headed up by Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8-11), the second wave in the early days of Darius I headed up by Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:1-2), and the third wave during the reign of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7-8). On the other hand, Mitchell argues for a greater number of people returning over a shorter period of time. He argues that the immigration of returning Jews began in 538 BCE with a substantial group followed by either an additional ten thousand people spread over the next twenty years or by a second group of ten thousand people in 520 BCE. Mitchell argues that about fifty thousand people had immigrated to Judah by 520 BCE. He arrives at that number having rationalized the lists of returnees reported in Ezra 2, Neh 7, and 1 Esd 5 (431). Mitchell does not speak of a surge in population occurring between the death of Darius I and the death of Artaxerxes I. One assumes from his silence that he believes that the immigration of exiled people had taken place in the late-sixth century BCE and that any fifth century immigration into Judah was numerically insignificant. Both Stern's and Mitchell's chronologies for the return of the exiles support the hypothesis that there were (Mitchell's) or could have been (Stern's) enough workers in Jerusalem in the final decades of the sixth century BCE to have carried out the building of the Temple. Both chronologies also support the hypothesis that the Second Temple could have been built much later, perhaps during the fifth century BCE, as suggested by Edelman.



## 4 Laying the Foundation of the Temple

Ezra 3:8-10 states that Levites from the age of twenty and upward were appointed at Zerubbabel's direction to supervise the work and that the builders laid the foundation of the Temple in the second year of their arrival at Jerusalem. While Ezra 2:2 includes Zerubbabel in the lot of returnees identified in Ezra 2, the Book of Ezra does not state when the lot arrived at Jerusalem. Ezra 5:16 states that it was Sheshbazzar who laid the foundation of the Temple, but the Book of Ezra does not state when he arrived in Jerusalem either. Notwithstanding the emphatic statements on the subject, the Hebrew Bible is silent on when construction of the Temple began.

Stern states that Zerubbabel with support from Haggai and Zechariah began to rebuild the Temple in the second year of Darius' reign (520 BCE); one assumes that Stern means Darius I (72). Stern does not concern himself with Ezra 5:16. Mitchell points out that Ezra 5:16 states that Sheshbazzar laid the foundations of the Temple while Ezra 3:8-10 states that Zerubbabel laid the foundations. Mitchell offers the following resolving theory. It was Sheshbazzar who first began work on the Temple, probably soon after the arrival of the first lot of returnees in 538 BCE. Occupied with the demands of day-to-day living, the returnees quickly set aside the rebuilding of the Temple. A short time later (c. 537 BCE), Zerubbabel caused the work on the Temple to resume (432).

## 5 Project Delays

Ezra 4:4-5 states that the people of the land intimidated the people of Judah to such a degree and were so successful in frustrating their building plans that the people of Judah did not work on the Temple throughout the reign of Cyrus. Ezra 4:24 goes on to state that work on the Temple resumed in the second year of the reign of Darius. The consensus among scholars is that it is Darius I that is being referenced therefore work on the Temple resumed in 520 BCE. Later, Tattenai, the governor of the provinces of Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai, demanded to be told who gave the elders of the Jews authority to build the Temple (Ezra 5:3). They informed the governor that King Cyrus, in the first year of his reign, had made a decree that the Temple should be built (Ezra 5:13). The Jews continued to work on the Temple while the governor sought guidance from King Darius. King Darius' staff found a scroll that substantiated the elders' claim and Darius charged Tattenai to not only allow the Jews to rebuild their Temple but also to provide them with financial support from the royal revenue (Ezra 6:1-12).

Stern's interpretation of the reported interruption of work and the substantiation of authority to build the Temple agrees with the Book of Ezra. Soon after work on the Temple began, the Samaritans, Ashdodites, Edomites, and Arabs were successful in their efforts to bring an end to the building activities (70). King Darius reaffirmed King Cyrus' edict in a letter to Tattenai and Zerubbabel began to rebuild the Temple in the second year of King Darius' reign (72). Tadmor dismisses the reason given in the biblical account for the interruption in work on the Temple in the sixth century. He believes that those reasons better reflect Nehemiah's struggle with the leaders of

Samaria in the fifth century or perhaps even a possible fourth century schism with the Samaritans. He reasons that it was probably a grave economic situation in Judah that was behind the late-sixth century interruption. The situation in Judah might have been caused by a long drought (Hag 1:6) and aggravated by civil unrest (Zech 8:10) (266). He argues that once work resumed on the Temple, it proceeded uninterrupted to completion (268-69).

## 6 Completion of the Second Temple

Ezra 6:15 states that construction of the Temple was finished on the third of the month of Adar in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. However, Ezra 6:15 does not specify which Darius is being referenced: Darius I (522-486 BCE), Darius II (423-404 BCE), or Darius III (336-330 BCE). The sixth year of King Darius could be c. 516, c. 417, or c. 329 BCE.

Stern states that reconstruction of the Temple was completed by 515 BCE (72). Mitchell agrees that 515 BCE was the year the Temple was complete, but he disagrees with the day of the month quoted in Ezra 6:15. He argues that because the third of Adar in 515 BCE fell on a Sabbath, it is unlikely that any work would have been carried out, even work that would bring the construction of the Temple to completion. He favours the twenty-third of Adar (1 Esd 7:5) suggesting that the “twenty” of the “twenty-third” was lost at some moment in time during transmission of the host document, thus leaving only the “third” (437). Tadmor also argues for the late-sixth century construction of the Temple. He states that the foundation of the building was laid on 30 December 521 BCE (265) and the Temple was completed on 12 March 515 BCE (269). It is Tadmor’s opinion that the completion date should not be thought of as a date showing up on a project scheduling document but rather a date purposely selected to fulfill a divinely mandated duration of seventy years between the destruction of the First Temple and the completion of the Second Temple. Tadmor argues that 12 March 515 BCE satisfied Jeremiah’s prophesy (Jer 25:11-12) that the land would lay desolate for seventy years (266-69). The number seven and multiples of the number, such as seventy, were important in ancient Near Eastern cultures so Tadmor’s suggestion should be given

serious consideration. Is 12 March 515 BCE the day work was completed on the construction of the Second Temple, or is it a date we are to remember as the seventieth anniversary of the destruction of the First Temple? In anticipation of the discussion of Edelman's hypothesis discussed later in this paper which postulates that the Second Temple was a key component of the Artaxerxes I revitalization plan for the Levant, I suggest that perhaps the Hebrew Bible is referring to Darius II (423-404 BCE) when it states that the Temple was completed in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

## 7 Rebuilding the Wall of Jerusalem

Nehemiah 1:1-3 states that in the twentieth year of the reign of King Artaxerxes (Artaxerxes I, 465-423 BCE), Nehemiah questioned his brother about the current state of affairs in Jerusalem. He learned that “The survivors who have survived the captivity there in the province are in dire trouble and disgrace; Jerusalem’s wall is full of breaches, and its gates have been destroyed by fire.” Nehemiah 2:5-8 states that the king granted Nehemiah the authority to rebuild Jerusalem and specifically, the authority to requisition from the keeper of the King’s Park “timber for roofing the gatehouses of the temple fortress and the city walls and for the house I shall occupy.” Upon inspecting the wall, Nehemiah quickly decided to rebuild it (Neh 2:11-18). Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab opposed the rebuilding of the wall accusing Nehemiah of “rebellious against the king” (Neh 2:19-20; 6:1-14). Nevertheless, the rebuilding of the wall was completed in fifty-two days (Neh 6:15). Nehemiah put his brother, Hanani, and the captain of the fortress, Hananiah, in charge of Jerusalem. He issued instructions as to when the gates should be opened and closed, and he issued instructions that only inhabitants of Jerusalem be chosen as guards (Neh 7:1-3). Nehemiah increased the population of Jerusalem by relocating ten percent of the population of Judah to the city (Neh 11:1).

When was the defensive wall of Jerusalem repaired? Stern states that Nehemiah immediately undertook the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem (74). Tadmor states that Nehemiah arrived in Judah in 445 or 444 BCE, that he made the repair of the defensive wall of Jerusalem his first priority, and that he completed the work in fifty-two days. Tadmor argues that Nehemiah returned to Persia soon after arriving in Judah,

presumably soon after rebuilding the wall (277, 279). While neither Stern nor Tadmor state as much, the inference is that the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt between 445 and 443 BCE.

Why was the defensive wall of Jerusalem rebuilt? The biblical record is silent on why Nehemiah or Persian authorities felt that Jerusalem needed to be defended. The accusation leveled by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem (Neh 2:19) is valid if in fact Nehemiah did intend to lead a rebellion against the king using Jerusalem as his “base of operations” but that scenario would most definitely argue against the king lending his support as he did in Neh 2:5-8. Two features of the exchange between the three accusers and Nehemiah stand out. Firstly, the accusation they leveled against Nehemiah highlighted a “homegrown” type of threat, not a threat originating from outside Jerusalem. Secondly, had they been aware of the king’s personal interest in Nehemiah’s mission they would probably have voiced a different objection. The episode raises questions. Were the three accusers acting out of ignorance or were they “fifth-columnists” attempting to thwart a Persian response to a pending attack on their empire?

Stern adds to the mystery when he points out that Nehemiah also strengthened the city by increasing its population (74). Tadmor calls attention to the letter sent by Rehum to King Artaxerxes (Ezra 4) wherein Rehum points out that Jerusalem, always a rebellious city, would stop paying taxes to the King if the wall was completed (271). Tadmor also points out that Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem opposed Nehemiah’s attempts to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem because once completed they would be denied the privileges which their administrative, social, and economic status had given

them in Jerusalem and its Temple (278-79). Another hypothesis he offers is built on the premise that completion of the walls would elevate the perceived importance of Jerusalem as a temple city (271).

Scholars who attempt to see the matter from the Persian perspective argue two reasons for the Persians giving Nehemiah permission to rebuild the wall. Firstly, the Persians were rewarding the Jews for staying loyal during the confused early years of the empire. This reason is made weak by the failure of its proponents to identify specific instances that are persuasive. Secondly, a fortified Jerusalem was a component of Persia's strategic plan to develop political and military infrastructure in the region. Pressure from the Delian League on the Mediterranean coast after 476 BCE, the Egyptian Revolt of 464 - 454 BCE, the general unrest all along the Levantine coast during the first half of the fifth century, or the revolt of Megabyzos in 448 BCE could have been threatening the security of Persia's western borders (Lipschits, *Achaemenid* 35-36).

Lipschits points out that the rebuilding of the wall was co-incident with a sentiment growing within the Jerusalem elite to re-establish the city as an important ideological, literary, and fiscal center (*Achaemenid* 38-40). Were the author(s) of Ezra and Nehemiah anticipating a return of Jerusalem to the status of its former days before its destruction in 586 BCE by the Babylonians? Was the rebuilding of the wall an outward display of their intent to resurrect their much revered past? Lipschits also reminds his readers that the main reason for Nehemiah going to Jerusalem was to tend to the walls and gates having heard of their dilapidated condition from his brother and to rebuild the city (*Nehemiah* 98-99). One must be careful to note that this reason



addresses why Nehemiah felt compelled to go to Jerusalem, not why the Persian authorities allowed him to repair the wall or rebuild the city.

While most agree that the wall was rebuilt in the latter half of the 450's BCE, there appears to be no consensus as to why it was rebuilt. David Ussishkin is given the last word. He states that there is no archaeological record of Nehemiah's repair work. He deduces that whatever work was carried out served a symbolic purpose only and was not militarily significant (125).

## 8 Summary of the Biblical Account

The Cyrus Cylinder indicates that Cyrus the Great restored sanctuaries located between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers and on the east side of the Tigris River and returned the peoples of those locations previously displaced by the Assyrians and Babylonians, to their homelands. Further, at the command of Marduk, Cyrus resettled the gods of Sumer and Akkad to their sanctuaries. The Cyrus Cylinder does not include exiled Israelites or Judahites in the list of peoples he returned to their homelands. The Book of Ezra states that Yahweh directed King Cyrus to build for Him a Temple in Jerusalem and to encourage the exiled Jews to return to Judah and Jerusalem to build the Temple. The few scholarly works referenced here are unanimous in the position that the biblical account takes precedence, that Cyrus did encourage the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to build the Temple. Accepting the biblical account however, is not without difficulty. Firstly, there was no reason for Cyrus to have issued a personal decree to the Jews. As is made evident by the Cyrus Cylinder, it was his policy to show benevolence to those peoples who had earlier been abused by the Assyrians and Babylonians. With this policy in place, any group who felt that they had been similarly victimized would have sought and been approved for restitution from the member of Cyrus' court who was holding the office designated responsible for administering Cyrus' policy. The injured party would not have dealt with Cyrus himself. Secondly, the Cyrus Cylinder and Ezra 1:1-3, when looked at together, suggests that Cyrus was not beneath employing local gods to help him achieve his political objectives. When he dealt with the Babylonians, he said that it was their god, Marduk, that moved him. When he dealt with the Jews, he attributed his actions to their god, Yahweh. Treating

the gods of his subjects as political tools suggests that he considered both Marduk and Yahweh to be subordinate to his god. Flowing from this observation is a third point. The Ezra 1:1-3 edict signaled that regardless which religion Cyrus practiced or the power of his own god, Cyrus remained an instrument of Yahweh and by default, Cyrus' religion was inferior to the religion practiced by the author of the Book of Ezra.

The Book of Ezra implies that a large group of people returned to Judah soon after Cyrus issued his edict to the Jews. Scholars generally accept that scenario. Some scholars say that the migration might have begun slowly but grown steadily over the decades until by the middle of the fifth century BCE about fifty thousand persons had resettled in Judah. Most scholars agree though, that a sizable Jewish workforce resided in Jerusalem and Judah in the last quartile of the sixth century BCE. The Book of Ezra states that construction of the Temple was finished in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. Scholarly opinion is nearly unanimous that it is King Darius I who is being identified, and therefore work on the Second Temple was completed in 515 BCE. Arguments that conclude that the construction of the Second Temple was finished on 515 BCE are made weak by the failure of the biblical account to specify which Darius was reigning. Taken by itself, Ezra 6:15 can be understood to mean c. 516 if Ezra is referring to Darius I, c. 417 if Darius II, or c. 329 BCE if Darius III.

The Book of Nehemiah implies that the rebuilding of the defensive wall surrounding Jerusalem was carried out soon after Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. While there is consensus among scholars that the wall was repaired c. 445 BCE, there is no consensus as to why it was repaired.

The scholarly theories discussed so far have been drawn from The Cambridge Ancient History series, The Cambridge History of Judaism series, and from recently published anthologies, sources generally considered to be authoritative. The research reported above highlights the diversity of theories pertaining to the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible accounts of Jews and Judah during the early years of the Persian Period. The main reason these and other fundamental questions remain unresolved is a lack of credible evidence. With only the evidence provided by the Hebrew Bible, we are forced to live with a plethora of contradictory opinions.

## 9 Hypotheses Argued From Biblical and Archaeological Evidence

The next section of the paper addresses two recently postulated hypotheses concerning the Jews of Judah and Jerusalem in the early Persian Period that blend evidence gleaned from the Hebrew Bible with evidence discovered as a result of archaeological excavations. Hoglund argues that the events that took place in Jerusalem during the mid-fifth century can be explained and understood only if the geopolitical circumstances of the region are understood. Persian imperial concern for the security of its western border, especially following the failed 464-454 BCE Egyptian Revolt, was the primary motivating force behind Persian policies for the Levant. The Egyptian Revolt had demonstrated to the Persian authorities that their hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean was being seriously challenged by the Greeks. The Persians responded by enhancing the military preparedness of the whole region. Nehemiah's mission to rebuild the defensive wall of Jerusalem should be read in this context. Hoglund's argument rests on the archaeological remains of nine widely placed structures that he interprets as military garrisons built during the opening years of the Egyptian Revolt and abandoned soon afterwards. Hoglund's theory, focussing as it does on a serious but singular military threat, is effective in explaining the circumstances behind the rebuilding of the defensive wall around Jerusalem, but it is not effective in shedding light on the other questions concerning the return of the exiles to Judah and the building of the Second Temple. Edelman argues that it was not the threat posed by the Greeks (or the Egyptians) that motivated the Persian authorities to impose new policies on the region but a desire to extend imperial control over this heretofore neglected frontier for the purpose of generating additional taxes and

developing more manpower for their army. Edelman supports her theory with archaeological evidence taken from a wide variety of sites positioned throughout the region. Her theory, much broader in scope than Hoglund's, accommodates the many methods employed by the imperial authorities to absorb this distant region into their domain. She suggests that a Persian "master plan" resulted in the creation of new farmsteads, the forced transfer of settlers into Judah, the construction of transportation, communication, and security infrastructure, and the shift of the provincial capital to Jerusalem. It is in this context that one must read her argument that the return of the exiled Israelites and Judahites to Jerusalem and Judah, the repair of the defensive wall surrounding Jerusalem, and the building of the Second Temple all occurred in the fifth century BCE.

## 10 Hoglund's Hypothesis for the Repair of the Wall

Egypt escaped being absorbed into the embryonic empire of Cyrus the Great. It was his son, Cambyses (530-522 BCE), who brought Egypt into the Persian sphere. Egypt did not willingly accept its new role as a subordinate, though. Taking advantage of the relaxed Persian control following the death of Cambyses, Egypt attempted to regain its independence. It is unknown if King Darius I personally attended to the disturbance, but in any event Egypt was quickly brought back into the Persian fold. Egypt launched another revolt (the Egyptian Revolt) in the middle of the fifth century. This revolt brought Persia face-to-face with the Delian League and demonstrated to the imperial authorities that their hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean was being challenged by the Greeks. The Egyptian Revolt was bitterly contested, but in the end Egypt failed to regain its independence. Egypt revolted again late in the fifth century BCE and in 402 BCE succeeded in regaining its independence which it enjoyed until 343 BCE when Artaxerxes III brought Egypt back into the Persian fold.

As Kenneth Hoglund emphasizes, two difficulties plague any attempt to interpret the ancient literary accounts covering the Egyptian Revolt. Firstly, none of the more prolific authors who wrote on the subject, Herodotus (484-25 BCE), Thucydides (460-395 BCE), and Ctesias (fifth to early-fourth century BCE), personally attended the event. Their works are second-hand accounts of the Egyptian Revolt. Secondly, their accounts are products of the Greek historiographical tradition. Westerners in general, and Greek historians in particular, demonstrated a dismissive attitude towards the Persians. In the minds of the westerners of the time, there was nothing good to be said about the eastern monarchy when compared with the western democracy. With those

points made, Hoglund attempted to extract a history of the Egyptian Revolt from the ancient literature.

The Egyptian Revolt probably began in 464 or 463 BCE during the confused period book-ended by the death of Xerxes I and the enthronement of Artaxerxes I. Hoglund deduces that the most likely reason behind the rebellion was a desire held by the Egyptian elites to return their ancient kingdom to a state of independence. The Egyptian forces initially experienced successes against the Persian forces. The Egyptians met the Persians at Papremis, soundly defeated them, and even killed their satrap, Achaemenes, who was the brother of Xerxes and uncle of Artaxerxes. The Egyptians forced the Persians into the Persian stronghold of Memphis at which point the rebellion stalled. At the request of Inaros, the leader of the Egyptian forces, the Delian League (under the leadership of Athens) joined the siege of Memphis with its own military forces. By making his request, Inaros was acknowledging that Egyptian forces alone could not compel the Persians to leave Egypt and by accepting the invitation, Athens was demonstrating in a material way their intent to challenge Persian hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean. A successful conclusion to the Egyptian bid for independence would in all likelihood have resulted in a general withdrawal of Persian forces from the Levant and Egypt awarding Athens an independent trade/military colony on the Levantine coast. Unfortunately for the rebels, even the combined Egyptian and Delian League forces were unable to overcome Persian military might. The Persian imperial administration, now fully cognizant of the threat being posed by the participation of the Delian League, launched a substantial military response under the leadership of Megabyzos, the satrap of Beyond the River. A large military force was



assembled in Mesopotamia then moved to the coast of the Mediterranean north of the Levant. Supported by naval forces supplied by the coastal provinces, the army moved down the Levantine coast into Egypt. The Egyptian forces were engaged and defeated, the siege of Memphis was lifted, and the Delian League forces were destroyed. The Egyptian Revolt was concluded c. 454 BCE (Hoglund 138-61).

One theory that attempts to explain why the wall of Jerusalem lay in ruins in 445 BCE is that Megabyzos destroyed it during his alleged revolt (Stern 74). According to Ctesias, Inaros was taken into custody and executed contrary to a promise made to Megabyzos that Inaros' life would be spared. Megabyzos, incensed, launched a revolt against his superiors. It was during this rebellion that the defensive wall of Jerusalem was destroyed. Hoglund argues against that hypothesis concluding: ". . . outside of Ctesias' highly questionable narratives there is not a single piece of evidence that can be produced to support the occurrence of a revolt by Megabyzos in the early 440s BCE" (162-63). If Hoglund correctly understands the ancient authors, the destruction of the wall was not a consequence of Megabyzos' revolt against his Persian superiors. Another reason must be found to explain why the wall was in disrepair when Nehemiah was tasked to rebuilt it.

Hoglund goes on to argue that in conjunction with fielding a large army and navy to address the local (Egyptian) and international (Greek) threat developing in the south-west corner of their empire, the Persian imperial administration also took significant steps to enhance control over the Levant and integrate it more effectively into the imperial military system. He reviews a few of the methods commonly employed by empires seeking to achieve this objective. The indigenous social, cultural, and

economic structures were sometimes absorbed into the empire structures. The indigenous aristocracies were sometimes dissolved and reformed as a component of the empire aristocracy. The empire sometimes establish communication and transportation networks and then connect them to the empire's networks. Without the ability to exercise some degree of control over the subjects however, an empire would have little hope that these steps would be successful. Furthermore, the imperial authorities had to balance the use of coercion with persuasion both to establish and then to maintain imperial rule over an outlying territory.

Establishing military garrisons in peripheral territories was a common technique used by empires for ensuring the compliance of the local people to imperial directives. Military garrisons provided the local people with the economic, financial, and military security they needed but also reminded them of the overwhelming strength of the empire. Høglund states that the existence of the remains of garrison-like structures supports his assertion that between 464 BCE and 454 BCE, military garrisons were erected by the Persians throughout the Levant. He characterizes a garrison structure as nearly square in shape with a central courtyard and many rooms facing the courtyard and backing onto the perimeter wall. The area taken up by the rooms is about 75% of the total area of the structure. He acknowledges that assigning a date to the structures was the most challenging task in his research but that he was successful in doing so by means of analysing ceramic remains found at the sites. Høglund identified nine archaeological sites that met his criteria. In the Negev district, garrisons were established at four sites: Horvat Mesora, Horvat Ritma, Mesad Nahal Haro'a, and Nahal Yattir. In the central Judean hill country, garrisons were established at three sites:

Khirbet Abu et-Twain, Deir Baghl, and Khirbet el-Qatt. In the Ephraimite hill country, garrisons were established at two sites: el-Qul'ah (S), and Khirbet Zakariyah (N). At an unnamed site located north of Ashdod, another garrison was established and in the central Jordan area at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh, another garrison was established. That these named sites are located throughout the Levant indicates that the Persian authorities were including the lands and peoples of the whole of the Levant in their strategic plans, not just the polities of Jerusalem or Judah (Ch. 4).

It is in the light of the Persians establishing control over the Levant and the steps they took to achieve control in the mid-fifth century that Hoglund interprets Nehemiah's authority to rebuild the defensive wall of Jerusalem. He argues that King Artaxerxes I intended to make Jerusalem a center of imperial authority in the Levant. It was to achieve this objective that King Artaxerxes I sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem to strengthen the city's defenses. While this discussion has focussed on the rebuilding of the wall, Hoglund stresses that Nehemiah's authority also extended to social and economic reforms, steps designed to further transform the relationship between the imperial center and its outlying territory, the Levant (243).

Reviewers' comments vary but in the main are supportive of Hoglund's hypothesis. For example, although Hugh Williamson mentions that Hoglund sometimes forgets that archaeological finds in a single-period site may reflect only the last phase of use and not necessarily its construction, he assesses Hoglund's work as coherent and worthy of future research (429-30). Ran Zadok cautions that because of the small sample size and the restricted geographical distribution of the garrison sites, Hoglund's contribution should be considered only a hypothesis (597-98). Aelred Cody assesses

Hoglund's interpretation of the sites as garrisons established to tighten imperial control after the unrest caused by the Egyptian revolt as persuasive (138). As a summary of Hoglund's hypothesis, Amelie Kurht asserts that by placing Achaemenid history ahead of the biblical theological interpretations of the history of Judah in the Persian period, Hoglund has given the academic community a 'most stimulating study' (95).

## **11 Edelman's Hypothesis for the Construction of the Second Temple**

Diana Edelman agrees with Hoglund that the changes made in Judah during the mid-fifth century BCE were implemented to integrate the province more fully and efficiently into the Persian imperial system. She states though, that Hoglund erred in so narrowly defining the reason for the changes. It was not just a perceived threat to Persian western hegemony that was behind these policies. It is her theory that the militarization of the Levant should be interpreted as evidence of a larger Persian policy that established a network of military garrisons, guard stations, inns, and caravanserais along the Levantine coast and in the hill country to facilitate trade, communications, and military mobility (9). Also, she holds that his interpretation of the nine sites as garrison fortresses do not explain why Jerusalem was fortified (340).

In Edelman's view, even before the Persian army engaged the Egyptians, Artaxerxes I had decided that the Levant was an underperforming province. Although the region was able to adequately supply Megabyzos' army as it passed through, it was obvious to the imperial agents that there was much room for improvement in the areas of food production, supply of manpower, governance, transportation, communication, and security. Their report to the king probably concluded that creating more farmsteads and storage facilities would increase taxes-in-kind and provide more men for corvee labour and army service, moving the capital to Jerusalem would place the imperial presence in the strategic center of the province, and investing in infrastructure such as forts, roads, inns, and caravanserais would improve transportation, communication, and security (340-41).

Edelman suggests that as a consequence of the field reports sent back by the royal agents, the imperial court drew up a “master plan” for the region. Included in the plan was the creation of new farmsteads with settlers to be brought in from outside the province. She reminds her audience that Persia also used the technique of deporting and relocating peoples to meet imperial requirements. She also points out that to find Israelites and Judahites within the Persian empire and to encourage them to return to their homeland would have been a simple undertaking in view of their often proclaimed attachment to their homeland (342-43). The Persian plan also included the building of infrastructure to enhance transportation, communication, and security within the region and the connecting of those systems with the imperial heartland. The plan also called for the appointment of a new governor who had ancestral ties to the region to coordinate the implementation of the program (343-44). Edelman argues that Artaxerxes I designated Zerubbabel as the new governor thinking that by selecting one of their own to lead them, the king could persuade the Jews to cooperate in executing his “master plan”. Also included in the plan was the transfer of the provincial capital to Jerusalem (344).

It is in the details of the fortification of Jerusalem, the new capital, that Edelman makes her most profound assertion. She argues that embedded in Ezra 2.7-8 is Nehemiah’s request and Artaxerxes I’s permission to build a temple (344-48). It is her view that Ezra 2.8 should not be given its traditional biblical interpretation, for example: “... timber for roofing the gatehouses of the temple fortress and the city walls and for the house I shall occupy.” Edelman argues that the intended meaning was “wood for the gates of the *birah*, which will be adjacent to the “house”, to the city wall, and to the

governor's house that Nehemiah will build" (344). The "house" she argues, can only be the earthly house of the deity, in other words, the Temple (345).

To summarize Edelman's theory, it was during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-423 BCE) that Jerusalem was made the capital of Judah, a group of Jews were encouraged to emigrate to Judah, Zerubbabel was made the governor of Judah, Nehemiah was tasked with and did rebuild the defensive wall of Jerusalem, and construction of the Second Temple was contemplated, began and perhaps, completed.

Edelman's hypothesis demands a significant change to be made to the accepted chronology of events. She must convince her readers that both Zerubbabel and Nehemiah served in Judah during the reign of Artaxerxes I and that the Books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra wrongly state the chronology of the building of the Temple. Using genealogical information gleaned mainly from the Books of Nehemiah and 1 Chronicles, Edelman argues that Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were contemporaries with either overlapping or consecutive terms of office. She further argues that the dates given in the Books of Haggai and Zechariah are untrustworthy because a) they reflect prophecies made in connection with the Temple's reconstruction, b) they flow out of secondary editions that reflect a temple-building template, and c) a later editor used unreliable dates drawn from the Darius I era. Edelman argues also that Ezra 1-6 is flawed by inconsistencies because the author was overly motivated to stay true to existing prophetic writings. She concludes by pointing, albeit with reservation, to archaeological evidence to support her claim of an increase in settlements at various places in the province of Judah and along strategic transportation and communication

corridors (332). A summary of her reasoning follows starting with an allegorical description of her genealogical argument.

Edelman defines a Generation as three blocks of twenty-five years each: youth, when the person is unproductive; middle-age, when the person is highly productive; and old age, when the person is valuable because of his/her experience and wisdom. She maps out the Generations of the Jewish community spanning the Persian Period. The map reflects the relationship of the two-hundred-plus years of the empire against the half-dozen or so Generations of Jews that lived in Judah during that period. She tentatively fixes the last Generation so that the last High Priest, Yaddua, is enjoying old age when Alexander the Great rages through the Levant. This Generation is tentatively represented on the map as say, Generation 'X' spanning a 75 year period from about 400 to 325 BCE, the expected life-span of Yaddua. She characterizes the Generation that came immediately before, say Generation 'X - 1', also having a seventy-five year span and lays it on the map starting one age earlier, from 425 to 350 BCE. She repeats that process for the other Generations. Working with the genealogies reported in the biblical accounts, especially those specified in the Books of Nehemiah and 1 Chronicles, she assigns people to the mapped Generations. The placing of the High Priest Yaddua is an example of this non-trivial step in her methodology. She then cements the map of Generations, now complete with names of individuals, to history (to the calendar) by connecting known names with known events. For example, the sons of Sanballat, who are listed personages on her map (57) are also mentioned in the Elephantine letter AP 30 which is known to have been written on a specific date, 408 BCE (39). She then determines the total number of Generations that passed through



Judah during the Persian Period and numbers them. This process results in Yaddua's Generation being assigned the number six. (Note that Edelman does not specify calendar dates in her argument but only Generation numbers and that specific dates are used above only to help describe how she developed her model.) By analyzing the details reflected on her populated and chronologically fixed model, she concludes that Zerubbabel was a member of Generation 2, and that Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, and Zechariah the Prophet were members of Generation 3 (Ch 1). She deduces also that "to accommodate all of the chronological implications found in the [B]ook of Nehemiah, [Nehemiah] could only have been a member of [G]eneration 3" (74-75). Hence, Edelman concludes that Nehemiah either succeeded Zerubbabel as governor in Judah or he served as a special envoy of the king during Zerubbabel's governorship (13).

As mentioned above, Edelman places the prophet Zechariah in Generation 3 with Nehemiah. Edelman does not say when Haggai lived but W. Sibley Towner, a contributor to the Harper Collins Study Bible suggests "their [Haggai and Zechariah] shared mission surely brought them together" (1265). It would seem that Edelman believes that Haggai and Zechariah were contemporary with the construction of the Second Temple, which she argues occurred in the mid-fifth century BCE. They both left accounts of the building of the Second Temple. Edelman is silent on the point so one must assume that she believes that when the two accounts were first written, they were factually accurate. Edelman argues that a review of the Temple construction dates given in the two books indicates that both books were substantially edited at a later date, probably c. 300 BCE. She attributes the editing activity to a desire by the editor to

align the two books, to have the combined edition fall in line with an accepted template for temple-building, and to demonstrate that Jeremiah's prediction of seventy years of Neo-Babylonian rule had been actualized in history. Edelman argues that it was a strong sense of piety that eased the editor's conscience for setting aside dates that he knew to be more accurate for contrived dates. The intent of the editor was to show Yahweh's guiding hand at work on earth, not to be faithful to history (Ch 2).

Edelman holds that the Book of Ezra is also not to be taken as factual. The material used for the book was arbitrarily organized to reflect a standard ancient Near Eastern template for temple-building, not to give a historically accurate account of events. Edelman argues that the author of the Book of Ezra adjusted his version to have it agree with existing accounts of the building of the Temple. In keeping with the template motif, Ezra reflects five types of accounts that involved temples. 1 and 2 Chronicles speak to the First Temple. Ezekiel speaks to the vision of the building of the Second Temple. Haggai and Zechariah speak to the building of the Second Temple. 2 Isaiah speaks to the prediction that Cyrus would lay the foundation to the Temple and that the temple vessels would be returned. Jeremiah speaks to the seventy years of desolation that Jerusalem and Judah would suffer and to the subsequent restoration and rebuilding of the Temple (201). One assumes that Edelman believes that underlying the writing of the Book of Ezra was a strong sense of piety as was underlying the editing of the Books of Haggai and Zechariah (Ch 3).

Edelman's major contribution is to argue for a revisit to the chronology traditionally assigned to Persian Period events as they pertain to the building of the Second Temple. The strategic value of Jerusalem was recognized during the reign of

Artaxerxes I (465-423 BCE) and the decision was made to fortify the site and shift the capital there from Mizpah. Zerubbabel was made governor of the province of Judah. Israelites and Judahites who had been exiled by the Assyrians and Babylonians together with their families, were returned to Judah. Under Nehemiah's governorship (c. 445 - c. 432 BCE), the defensive wall of Jerusalem was repaired and construction of the Second Temple was at least contemplated.

Edelman published her book in 2005. In his 2006 review, Albert Hogeterp saw no serious problem with her interpretation of genealogies to place Zerubbabel in the fifth century or her challenge to the reliability of the biblical accounts of when the Temple was built. However, he did question her argument that connects the concept of "the gatehouses of the temple fortress" with the concept of an earthly house for Yahweh (i.e. the Second Temple). That said, he evaluated her contribution as "a major challenge to the scholarly consensus about the 'origins' of the Second Temple." He asserts that her book will, if nothing else, force a rethinking of the historical and literary evaluation of the Books of Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Nehemiah (583). In his 2007 review, Mark Boda was not nearly so accepting of her revolutionary suggestions. He reviewed in detail Edelman's application of genealogy and her reasons for dismissing the dates given in the Books of Haggai and Zechariah. There was no ambiguity in his assessment; he was not persuaded by Edelman's arguments. In his 2010 review, Jeremiah Cataldo gave Edelman a passing grade. He made a few specific comments but concluded with a powerful warning to his colleagues: "Moreover, [Edelman's] work holds that those theories that are increasingly turned into assumed facts must be made honest." (265).

## 12 Summary of Høglund's and Edelman's Hypotheses

Høglund's hypothesis gives context to the rebuilding of the defensive wall surrounding Jerusalem. Persian authorities were feeling threatened by the power of Athens and its designs on the eastern Mediterranean and the continuing ambitions of Egypt to gain its independence. Responding to these concerns, the imperial court had a number of garrisons constructed throughout the Levant which archaeological excavations have exposed. The Persian king dispatched Nehemiah to Jerusalem to fortify the city as part of the program to enhance the military posture of the Levant. Høglund's hypothesis was well received by the scholarly community.

Edelman's hypothesis gives context to the return of the exiles, to the rebuilding of the defensive wall surrounding Jerusalem, and to the building of the Second Temple. On learning that the Levant was an underproducing province, Artaxerxes I (465-423 BCE) implemented a program designed to increase food production and manpower availability, and improve imperial control over transportation, communication, and security in the region. These objectives were achieved by creating more farmsteads and investing in infrastructure such as forts, roads, inns, and caravanserais, much of which archaeological excavations have exposed. The program resulted in an orchestrated transfer of former Israelites and Judahites to Judah, the installation of a native governor in Judah, the shift of the seat of government to Jerusalem, the fortification of Jerusalem, and the construction of the Second Temple. According to Edelman, the construction of the Second Temple did not occur during the final decades of the sixth century but during the second-half of the fifth century BCE. Edelman's

hypothesis received mixed reviews from the scholarly community with responses ranging from tentative acceptance to outright rejection.

## 13 Conclusion

Did the Second Temple come into being late in the sixth century as scholars of the biblical account have traditionally argued or late in the fifth century as some scholar/archaeologists have recently argued? Both chronologies are accommodated by the biblical account. The issue therefore, is not which chronology is correct but which rests on the most reliable evidence.

None of the scholars surveyed challenge the authenticity of the Cyrus Cylinder or its indication of Cyrus' policy of showing benevolence towards the peoples abused by the Assyrians and Babylonians. There is general agreement as well, that Cyrus extended this policy to include the exiled Israelites and Judahites and the building of the Temple, as indicated in Ezra 1:1-3.

The Book of Ezra is ambiguous on the details of the returning Jews, specifying neither number nor timing. This ambiguity allows for both chronologies. Some scholars argue for a more or less steady stream of returnees lasting a century while others argue for a few large groups arriving within decades of Cyrus' edict. Edelman argues that the Israelites and Judahites were returned to Judah at the command of Artaxerxes I sometime during the mid-fifth century to populate the farms and communities as part of his master plan for revitalizing the Levant.

The Book of Ezra is silent on when construction of the Second Temple began but states that construction was finished in the sixth year of King Darius' reign. The general consensus among scholars is that Darius I is being referenced and construction was completed in 515 BCE. Notwithstanding scholarly consensus, Ezra 6:15 can also be read as referring to Darius II. Under that interpretation, completion of the Second

Temple occurred around 417 BCE. Edelman's hypothesis that the Second Temple was constructed during the fifth century BCE is thereby, also accommodated by the Book of Ezra.

The Book of Nehemiah states that in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah was given permission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the defensive wall. The consensus among scholars is that it is Artaxerxes I that is being referred to and hence, the wall was rebuilt in 445 or 444 BCE. The Book of Nehemiah is silent as to why Nehemiah rebuilt the wall. Hoglund argues that the repair of the wall was a component of the militarization program Artaxerxes I instituted in the Levant. Scholarly consensus, including Hoglund's theory, is therefore, also accommodated by the Book of Nehemiah.

When was the Second Temple built? A growing number of scholars are coming to the conclusion that Cyrus was a Zoroastrian. If such was the case, that fact helps to explain his seemingly cavalier way of using the gods of his subjects to achieve his political objectives. Cyrus probably respected all gods but privately acknowledged the supremacy of Ahura Mazda, the principle god of Zoroastrianism. By emphasizing that Cyrus was an instrument of Yahweh (Ezra 1:1-3), the author was making a counter claim. Yahweh, and what was to become Second Temple Judaism, were in fact, superior to Ahura Mazda and Zoroastrianism. By this passage, the Jewish scholar was isolating his religion from the religion of his former neighbours. But, the Book of Ezra was written in the early fourth century BCE. The ideological separation between the Jews and the Persians had begun long before that and undoubtedly spanned many years. Having suggested that it is reasonable to assume a connection between the

commencement of Second Temple Judaism and the completion of the construction of the Second Temple, I asked the question “When was the Second Temple built?”. Most biblical scholars favour a late sixth century date. There are a few scholars though, that argue for a late fifth century date pointing to recent archaeological discoveries. The biblical account accepts both dates. I favour the later chronology because that position can be argued from a geopolitical viewpoint and has some archaeological evidence to support it. Second Temple Judaism owes at least a little of its ideology and doctrine to Zoroastrianism.



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