

JONATHAN STÖKL AND CAROLINE WAERZEGGERS (EDS.)

Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context

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In November 2011, the research project “By the Rivers of Babylon: New Perspectives on Second Temple Judaism from Cuneiform Texts,” held a workshop in London. The meeting brought together scholars from various disciplines, including Assyriology, biblical studies and ancient history. This anthology collects most of the presentations from that meeting, and the essays deal with the notions of exile and return with special reference to the Babylonian context. The anthology can be divided into three different sections. The first six contributions deal with extrabiblical primary sources, such as the *Āl-Yāhūdu* tablets and the *Neirab Archives*. The following three pieces concern biblical material, e.g. the book of Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah. The last four articles focus on the issue of return, both theoretically and historically.

In the first piece, “Identifying Judeans and Judean Identity in the Babylonian Evidence”, Laurie E. Pearce examines the issue of naming, especially in Babylonian and Mesopotamian material. Pearce seeks to discover how Judean identity was shaped and what role Judeans held in society and whether Babylonian names indicate assimilation into Babylonian society.

The second essay, “Negotiating Marriage in Multicultural Babylonia: An Example from the Judean Community in Āl-Yāhūdu” by Kathleen Abraham, deals with marriage contracts from *Āl-Yāhūdu*. The investigation shows that intermarriage occurred, especially in rural settings. It was not as common in larger cities, which may have been more segregated (thus pointing to an intersection of ethnicity and class/social standing). Abraham does not discuss it in her article, but her findings on the prevalence of intermarriage in exilic Babylonia shed new light on the issue of intermarriage in Ezra-Nehemiah and might help explain the consequences imposed on those who formed such unions in the old homeland.

The *Neirab Archives* is the focus of Gauthier Tolini's contribution, "From Syria to Babylon and Back: The Neirab Archive." Tolini investigates the experiences of deportees of Syrian origin in Babylonia. The analysis concerns the presence of West-Semitic names and names pertaining to the lunar cult, evidence which shows how the community was constituted and which families held certain social positions. An interesting part of the investigation, which is not, however, elaborated upon, concerns how the second or third generation of deportees gained social positions in the community that they wished to continue to hold upon their return to the homeland.

The system of *hatru*, although touched upon in the first article, is more clearly outlined in Ran Zadok's article "West Semitic Groups in the Nippur Region between c. 750 and 330 BCE." It is interesting to note that the organization of individuals into *hatru* in Babylonia varies greatly, from something resembling the more modern phenomenon of guilds, such as the *hatru* of boatmen or leather workers, to organizations of different ethnic groups, or groups sharing the same social standing. For example, refugees are named as one *hatru* and the household of the crown prince is named as another *hatru*. Such organization offers an insight into the administrative system that dealt with those in exile and also shows how the status of a refugee was viewed, i.e. not as a temporary status but one that placed someone into a certain *hatru*, similar to his/her job or family relations.

The contribution of Johannes Hackl and Michael Jursa, "Egyptians in Babylonia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods" focuses on Egyptians in Babylonia. It appears that the Egyptians were not a colony in the same sense as the Judeans. Hackl and Jursa also look at the onomastic evidence, as do the other contributors, and it becomes clear that Egyptians are found among both slaves and free men, and as officers at court.

Kingship ideology in Babylonia and how it was affected by the Persian conquest is the subject of Caroline Waerzeggers' article "Babylonian Kingship in the Persian Period: Performance and Reception." The au-

thor notes that because of the great size of the Persian Empire, the king would not be able to be present in Babylonia often nor be able to control it closely. This affected kingship ideology, which had earlier been based both on the presence of the king in Babylon and on the king's status as imperial ruler, which shifts under Persian rule. As part of her investigation, the author discusses the Esangila library.

In "A Youth without Blemish, Handsome, Proficient in All Wisdom, Knowledgeable and Intelligent': Ezekiel's Access to Babylonian Culture", Jonathan Stökl discusses whether Ezekiel, as a priest, could have been trained at Babylonian scribal schools, possibly even to a rather high level. Stökl tests this hypothesis by looking at the appearance of loan-words in the book of Ezekiel, considering whether this points to a knowledge of cuneiform culture and other markers of Babylonian culture.

In line with Stökl, in "The Setting of Deutero-Isaiah: Some Linguistic Considerations" H. G. M. Williamson investigates what evidence in Deutero-Isaiah indicates that the text was composed during the exile in Babylonia. He builds his case on the prevalence of loan-words, which help to show that the text was written there.

Madhavi Nevader explores the role of the *nāšī* in Ezekiel's Temple Vision (chs. 40-48) and how this character can be understood through the lens of Neo-Babylonian kingship ideology, in "Picking Up the Places of the Little Prince: Refractions of Neo-Babylonian Kingship Ideology in Ezekiel 40-48?" Even though there are several similarities between the *nāšī* and the ideal monarch, there are also differences. The ideal monarch serves as the head of the priesthood and thus of the temple, whereas the *nāšī* is described as an ideal Israelite, who enters only those parts of the Temple where the people are permitted.

In the article "The Reality of the Return: The Biblical Picture Versus Historical Reconstruction", Lester L. Grabbe examines the discrepancy between the biblical text and reconstructions of the historical reality. He begins by stating that Haggai and Zechariah are more reliable sources than Ezra, yet most of the article is concerned with the Ezra material. The comparison between the text and the historical reconstruction is

very interesting and shows, for example, that the intermarriage debate probably could not have happened the way it is portrayed in Ezra 9-10, for, if it had, the Persian administration would have known and acted upon it.

In “Sheshbazzar, a Judean or a Babylonian? A Note on his Identity”, Jason M. Silverman argues for an understanding of Shezbazzar as the last Neo-Babylonian governor, who should not be understood as a Judean. Rather, he should be understood as forming a bridge between the Neo-Babylonian regime and the new Persian regime. This would help explain instances of Babylonian influence in Yehud even at the time of Persian control, especially Babylonian influence on the building of the new temple.

Katherine Southwood explores what “exile” and “return” entail through the lens of theories of “return migration” from anthropology and the social sciences, in “The Impact of the Second and Third-Generation Returnees as a Model for Understanding the Post-Exilic Context.” She points to the fact that many of the returnees were probably born in exile. Did they in fact return to a homeland or rather to the mythical idea of a homeland? This contribution stands out from the others, since Southwood does not focus on the Babylonian context or investigate extra-biblical sources, as the other writers do, but rather focuses on biblical texts and thoroughly incorporates theoretical approaches into her reading.

The final contribution is “Temple Funding and Priestly Authority in Achaemenid Judah” by Peter R. Bedford. Bedford asks how the rebuilding of the temple was financed upon the return to Yehud and how that financing made manifest who really had authority in Yehud. He argues that the priesthood had limited power and that Nehemiah, as the governor appointed by the Persians, had the power to control funding. The temple was not primarily funded through tax regulations but rather by free-will donations. However, Bedford refers to these donations as examples of “informal taxation” where donations were influenced by social demands if not administrative requirements.

This anthology is very interesting, especially the parts that analyze extra-biblical sources. The issues of exile, return and migration have been studied in great depth from many different perspectives in recent years and this volume greatly contributes to our understanding of the social and historical milieu of Judah in exile.

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LAURI THURÉN

*Parables Unplugged: Reading the Lukan Parables
in Their Rhetorical Context.*

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Evangelisten Lukas är den främste liknelseberättaren av evangelisterna. Trots det hör det inte till vanligheterna att det kommer ut någon ingående monografi om liknelserna i Lukasevangeliet. Det kommer ständigt ut ny litteratur om tolkning av (den historiske) Jesus liknelser i allmänhet, men mera sällan om tolkningen av liknelserna i Lukasevangeliet. Men nu har professorn i bibliska studier på School of Theology vid University of Eastern Finland i Joensuu, publicerat en ingående studie om Lukas liknelser. Vanligtvis har Jesu liknelser blivit lästa antingen mer eller mindre allegoriskt som uttryck för kristen teologi eller som nycklar till Jesu autentiska röst. Professor Thuréns ambition är en annan. Han vill frikoppla liknelserna i Lukas från alla sådana teologiska och historiska kopplingar och läsa dem i sitt retoriska sammanhang.

Boken består av tre delar. Den första delen på ca 50 sidor utgörs av en introduktion till författarens tolkningsprogram. Liknelserna är avsedda att övertyga. De var medel för berättaren Jesus att övertyga sina åhörare och medel för författaren Lukas att påverka sina mottagare. Varken historiska rekonstruktioner av den historiske Jesus eller sökandet efter andliga sanningar är liknelsetolkningens primära syfte. För att förstå liknelserna måste man fastställa deras argumentativa funktion i deras aktuella retoriska situationer. Liksom i all annan narrativ analys är den viktigaste frågan hur den textinterna mottagaren förväntas uppfatta storyn.