

Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple 586-539 B.C.

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Les échos des événements de la campagne de Sannéchérîb et le souvenir du salut de Jérusalem devant les Assyriens furent interprétés, après de nombreuses générations, comme la preuve irréfutable de la réalisation du pouvoir de D-ieu sur la terre, et conforta la foi indéfectible en la protection de D-ieu pour sa cité. Parmi les dirigeants politiques, militaires et religieux à Jérusalem, la croyance était répandue que Jérusalem demeurerait sûre et ne tomberait jamais sous le joug de l'opresseur et de l'ennemi. Cette perception conduisit à lever certaines des restrictions caractéristiques des dirigeants d'un petit royaume durant toutes ses années d'existence, et autorisa un large degré de liberté politique et militaire, précisément à une période où une telle précaution était vitale.

Dans le présent article, je tenterai de présenter que l'ensemble des preuves archéologiques et historiques atteste que les Babyloniens avaient compris que les racines de l'insurrection en Judée reposaient sur un ferment religieux persistant, sur la croyance en la protection de sa cité par D-ieu, sur son temple et la Maison de David, ainsi que sur les faiblesses des dirigeants politiques de Jérusalem. A la lumière de ces faits, les Babyloniens étaient déterminés à détruire Jérusalem, en particulier le temple et à mettre fin au règne infidèle de la dynastie de David en Judée. L'expédition babylonienne, qui débuta en 588 avant notre ère, était destinée à réduire Jérusalem. Près d'un mois après le siège de la ville, celle-ci fut rasée de façon méthodique dans le but d'annihiler son existence en tant que centre politique et religieux. Selon ce programme, il est probable que certaines dispositions avaient été prises pour laisser la ville en ruines et son temple dévasté. En outre, les Babyloniens n'avaient aucun intérêt à supprimer toute activité en Judée. Bien avant la destruction de la cité, ils s'étaient employés à annexer les territoires du royaume et à y établir une province. Ils firent de Mitzpé la capitale et placèrent des dirigeants qui n'avaient aucun lien avec la lignée de David. Des activités rituelles limitées, principalement la récitation des lamentations et des prières, furent mises en oeuvre sur le site nivelé du temple peu de temps après sa destruction, et apparemment en accord avec l'autorité babylonienne. Aucune preuve n'existe attestant que les Babyloniens n'aient jamais modifié leur politique à l'égard de Jérusalem. Le renouveau extraordinaire et la portée légale qu'attribuèrent au décret de Cyrus les aspirants au retour à Sion doivent être compris sous cet éclairage.

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Echoes of the events of Sennacherib's campaign and the memory of the salvation of Jerusalem from the Assyrians were after several generations interpreted as irrefutable proof of the realization of God's power on earth, and gave rise to a sense of perfect confidence in God's protection of his city. Among the military, political, and religious leadership in Jerusalem, faith abounded that Jerusalem would dwell in safety and would never fall to the oppressor and the enemy. This perception led to the lifting of some of the restrictions characteristic of the leadership of the small kingdom throughout most of its years of existence, and allowed a large degree of political and military freedom, precisely

at that period of time when such caution was vital. Jeremiah's attempt to combat this perception, and his appeal, "Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'... Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel" (Jer. 7: 4, 12), are one of the testimonies to the centrality of this idea on the eve of the destruction of the Jerusalem.

In this article I shall try to show that the complex of archaeological and historical evidence attests that the Babylonians understood what the roots of the insurgency in Judah were: the ceaseless religious ferment around the temple, the belief in God's protection of his city, his temple, and the House of David, and the weakness of the political leadership in Jerusalem. In light of this, they were resolved to lay all of Jerusalem waste, the temple in particular, and to terminate the unfaithful rule of the Davidic dynasty in Judah. The Babylonian expedition, which departed in 588 B.C., was set on the reduction of Jerusalem. About a month after the surrender of the city it was razed in a calculated and methodical operation, intended to annihilate its existence as a political and religious center. In this setting, presumably, certain arrangements were made intended to leave the city in its ruins and the temple in its ravages. Still, the Babylonians had no interest in finishing life altogether in Judah. Even before the destruction of the city they began activities meant to annex the territories of the kingdom and to establish a province in it. They made Mizpah the capital and placed a leadership over the province unconnected to the House of David. Limited ritual activity, chiefly the recitation of laments and prayers, was started at the leveled site of the temple shortly after its destruction, and apparently was conducted throughout Babylonian rule. No evidence exists that the Babylonians ever modified the policy towards Jerusalem, and the great renewal and the legal significance that the Returners to Zion attributed to the decree of Cyrus should be understood in this light.

1. Nebuchadrezzar's Policy in "Hattu-Land" (605-588 B.C.)¹

As Nebuchadnezzar consolidated his rule in “Hattu-Land” (605-604 B.C.) he preferred to retain the arrangements that had crystallized during the rule of Assyria and Egypt in the region, and allowed the continued existence of the vassal kingdoms on the Phoenician coast and the Philistia lowland, in Judah, and in Transjordan.² Only at the time of Psammetichus II (595-589 B.C.) and still more of Apries (Ḥofra) (589-570 B.C.), when Egypt began to grow stronger and actually threaten Babylonian dominion in the region, did Nebuchadnezzar decide to amend his policy and shift to a tighter control and full rule of the entire area. He began with the conquest of all the vassal kingdoms, which he annexed to Babylon, converting them into provinces. Historical sources on this period are few, but about twenty years of slow, considered, and determined Babylonian activity can be reconstructed. In this period the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, attacked Tyre and Sidon, and laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years; they conducted campaigns against Ammon and Moab, and apparently also mounted operations against most of the coastal cities.

No historical information exists about the features of Babylonian policy in the territories that were annexed, chiefly because unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians were not in the habit of describing it in their inscriptions. Seemingly, in contrast to Assyrian policy the Babylonians did not attempt to develop the provinces under their rule or to defend the marchers against nomad marauders.³ Their purpose was to introduce arrangements that would afford them stability and complete control particularly along the land routes to Egypt. The result of this policy was a drastic decline of settlement in Transjordan, the Jordan valley, the Negev, and the southern Shephelah.⁴ By contrast, historical and archaeological evidence from the early 6th century to the 4th century B.C. attests that the coastal region continued to develop throughout the era of Babylonian rule.⁵ The fate of Samaria province seems to have been more similar to that of the coastal region, and a continuation of settlement patterns between the time of the Assyrian and the Persian rule can be discerned.⁶

2. The Fate of the Kingdom of Judah and the Fate of Jerusalem (588-586 B.C.)

Judah was the first target against which the Babylonians acted within the new policy they formulated after the Egyptian threat to their rule in the region intensified. Nebuchadnezzar understood that he had to replace the unstable and headstrong leadership of the kingdom of Judah, to destroy its 'eternal capital', and to demolish the temple, which was an everlasting focus of hopes for salvation.⁷ Because he had no interest laying waste to the entire area, turning it into a vacuum over which rule would be difficult or even impossible, he annexed most of the territories of the kingdom and established a province. He installed a moderate leadership, which was not connected to the House of David, and he determined its capital as Mizpah in the Benjamin territory. Moves towards the establishment of this province began as early as the time of the siege of Jerusalem, and it existed under the rule of Babylon until the creation of the Persian 'Yehud' province.⁸

The archaeological finds yield a clear-cut picture of the time of the Babylonian destruction, in which the Babylonians dealt the major blow to Jerusalem and its close vicinity. The destruction of Jerusalem at the beginning of the 6th century B.C. is one of the prominent archaeological finds to appear in the many years of excavation of the city, and evidence of it has been unearthed all over the city at the twilight of the First Temple period. The excavations led by Avigad in the Jewish Quarter from 1969 to 1978 disclosed adjacent to the late Iron age tower the remains of a fire, arrowheads, and a Scythian bronze triple-winged arrowhead, which was in use by the Mesopotamian armies in that period.⁹ In the excavations conducted by Kenyon on the eastern slope of the City of David in the 1960s, evidence was found of destruction of the wall from the end of the Iron age (phase 9),¹⁰ and excavations led by Yigal Shiloh in the City of David between 1978 and 1982 produced evidence of the destruction of all the buildings (including the wall) and of a fierce fire that sealed stratum X in areas D, E, and G.¹¹ Remains of the Babylonian destruction were also found in excavations in the Citadel,¹² and in part of the structures excavated by Eilat Mazar in the Ophel.¹³

The finds of the archaeological survey that has been going on for many years now within the confines of the city of Jerusalem and its environs indicate the force of the destruction and the degree

of demographic decline in and around the city.¹⁴ Even at the zenith of the Persian period the settlement in Jerusalem was limited to a narrow extension of the historic City of David; settlement in the city and its surroundings amounted to about fifteen percent of what it had been on the eve of the destruction. The slight continuity reflected in the settlement patterns in this area indicates the absence of continuity of settlement, and calls for the assumption that previously, during the sixth century B.C., the condition of settlement and demography had been even more worse. The conclusion is that Jerusalem and its environs took a heavy blow from the Babylonians at the beginning of the sixth century B.C. and they were almost entirely depleted of their inhabitants.¹⁵

With Jerusalem, the fortified cities on the western borders of the kingdom of Judah were destroyed also. The main evidence for this is from excavations of stratum II at Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir),¹⁶ but a similar fate seems to have befallen other sites such as 'Azekah (Tell ez-Zakariyeh),¹⁷ Tell Goded (Tell el-Judeideh),¹⁸ and perhaps Maresha (Tell Sandahannah) also.¹⁹ The findings of the archaeological survey carried out in the region also attest that most of the settlements that existed in the Shephelah in the second half of the seventh and beginning of the sixth century B.C. were laid waste during the Babylonian campaign against Jerusalem.²⁰ At this stage the Shephelah became a border region in settlement terms and a marginal zone in geopolitical terms.

One can assume that after the severe injury caused to the army and the central government during the Babylonian military expeditions, in particular after they ceased to exist, the settlement array along the eastern border of the kingdom, in the Negev, and in the south of the Shephelah collapsed too.²¹ By contrast, in the Benjamin district, and apparently also in the area of Bethlehem, no evidence of destruction has been found. At most of the excavated sites in the Benjaminite region, such as Tell en-Nasbeh (Mizpah), Beitin (Bethel), Tell el-Full (Gibeah), and probably also El-Jib (Gibeon), the settlement evidently continued to exist, and perhaps even to flourish, until the end of the sixth century B.C. Such a picture emerges from the archaeological surveys conducted in the region.²²

Mizpah became the central settlement of the entire region under the patronage of the Babylonian rule, and around it a large rural array arose containing many agricultural installations.²³

The archaeological data match the biblical accounts of the time of the destruction and attest that the details conveyed in them are reliable and accurate. According to the biblical narrative, the Babylonian military campaign centered on Jerusalem, and took an uncompromising stand on the city and the temple. About a month after its conquest,²⁴ Nebuzaradan arrived in Jerusalem and began methodically to raze it. The interval between the time of the king's flight and the surrender of the city indicates that Jerusalem was not destroyed in the throes of war but in consequence of a strategic decision. The Babylonians assailed the centers of government and ritual in the city (v 9a); they burned "all the houses of Jerusalem" and "every great house" (2 Kings 25: 9b), and they smashed down the walls "around Jerusalem".²⁵ Babylonian policy on Jerusalem was also expressed in the deportation of its inhabitants. From the descriptions in 2 Kings 25: 11 (and compare Jeremiah 39: 9; 52: 15), the deportation of the citizens can be reconstructed, when apart from a few exceptions, selected with great care, the Babylonians did not permit any significant population to remain.²⁶

3. Jerusalem and the Temple 586-539 B.C.

The central place of Jerusalem as the hotbed of ceaseless religious and political turbulence motivated the Babylonians to raze it to its very foundations.²⁷ The city remained desolate and deserted. The laments that "the roads to Zion mourn, for none come to the appointed feasts" (Lam 1: 4) and "all who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem: 'Is this the city which was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?'" (Lam 2: 15) faithfully reflect this historical reality. Nor is Jerusalem mentioned in the account of the rule of Gedaliah at Mizpah (2 Kings 25: 22-26; Jer 40: 7-41: 18).²⁸ The disregard for

Jerusalem is particularly significant considering that the events described in this account encircle the city to the north (Mizpah and Gibeon) and to the south (around Bethlehem). In light of this, and in light of the archaeological picture, it may be assumed that the systematic acts of destruction by Nebuzaradan, about four weeks after the conquest of the city, were accompanied by political instructions that created this situation and made it permanent.²⁹ This was the sight that met the earliest Returners to Zion (compare Zechariah 1: 12; 2: 5-9), as well as the later (compare Nehemiah 2: 13-17; 7: 6). The recovery of Jerusalem, and its being made a great and important urban center came about only during the Hellenistic period.

A more difficult question concerns the status of the temple after the destruction. Archaeological finds cannot help here, and the description in 2 Kings 25: 9a is general, permitting various interpretations and reconstructions. No doubt need be cast on the assumption that the temple was destroyed and ceased to exist, and was rebuilt after a break of about seventy years (compare Haggai 2: 3; Ezra 3: 12), but it is uncertain if the Babylonians wished to prevent, or could have prevented, pilgrimage to the site of the ruined temple. Perhaps the pilgrimages even served their purpose, in that the pilgrims saw before them the fate of the rebellious city and the punishment of those who relied on the eternal protection of their God.

Many researchers have hypothesized that the absence of specific reference to the destruction of the altar by the Babylonians may hint at its continued existence.³⁰ This reconstruction is hard to accept, being based on the silence of the sources and on the assumption that the altar was a massive structure whose demolition would have required a planned operation. The account in 2 Kings 25: 9 is succinct and general, while the list in verses 13-17 centers on the copper, silver, and gold vessels. Still, the impression from these descriptions is distinct, and it accords with the absence of reference to any ritual activity at the site of the destroyed temple also in the other sources that treat this period. The general picture is "As to Mount Zion which lies desolate, the jackals prowl over it" (Lam 5: 18).

There is even an express statement about the desertion of the altar: “The Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary” (Lam 2: 7).³¹

The only testimony about the fate of the temple after the destruction of Jerusalem is an account of the arrival of eighty pilgrims from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria “...with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed, bringing cereal offering and incense to present at the temple of the LORD” (Jer 41: 5).³² The account refers to a large group of pilgrims from the Samaria province, behaving as if to display customs of mourning, apparently over the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.³³ The destination of the pilgrims is indeed not stated explicitly, but research generally assumes that it was the ruins of the temple,³⁴ about two months after the destruction.³⁵ They brought cereal offering and frankincense, which many researchers interpret as evidence of nonanimal sacrifice.³⁶ Ishmael the son of Nethaniah enticed the pilgrims to veer from their route to Mizpah, and on their arrival at the city he slaughtered seventy of them, and let the remaining ten live in return for “treasures in the field” (Jer 41: 7-8).

Although many researchers have pointed out the tendentiousness of the tale, which was intended to blacken Ishmael’s name, hardly anyone doubts the assumption that it is based on an event that occurred after the murder of Gedaliah.³⁷ At the same time, one cannot ignore the story’s connection to Jeremiah’s prophecies in chapter 7 (mainly vv. 4, 12) and in 31: 1-13, from which it transpires that the events were associated with the prophecies and were interpreted through them. The connection to chapter 7 was chiefly meant to convey a political and theological message and to close the cycle of Jeremiah’s prophecies on the fate of the temple in Jerusalem. The prophet’s call to “all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD” (7: 2) not to depend on the eternity of the temple, and to learn from the destiny of the ruined Shiloh (compare 26: 6, 9), is directly linked to the arrival of the pilgrims from Shiloh at the ruins of the temple in Jerusalem. According to this prophecy, past and present meet: the people of the destroyed northern kingdom, whose fate and the fate of their

temple served the prophet as an example for the future of Judah and the temple in Jerusalem, have come to mourn the destroyed temple of Jerusalem.

The association with chapter 31 is intended to add still more to the tendency to besmirch Ishmael's character, this time in a theological direction. One cannot ignore the connection of the prophecy "For there shall be a day when watchmen will call in the hill country of Ephraim: 'Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God'" (31:6 [5]), which according to verses 8-9 [7-8] "Behold I will bring them from the north country... With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back...for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first-born" to the account of the arrival of the pilgrims in Jerusalem in 41: 5.³⁸ This prophecy (and compare also 50: 4) may explain the naming of the pilgrims' places of origin as the three important historical centers that existed in the destroyed kingdom of Israel. These places had a major role in the history of the people as early as the epoch of the Patriarchs and the conquest of the land (Shechem), the pre-monarchial era (Shiloh), and the glorious age of the kingdom of Israel (Samaria). But the prophecy in Jeremiah, that the pilgrims will arrive "...in a straight path in which they shall not stumble" (31: 9 [8]), was not fulfilled. Seventy of them were murdered by Ishmael. The condemnation of Ishmael's acts in this setting appears fiercer than ever, and goes beyond the act of grim and merciless mass murder. Ishmael's deed is perceived as an attempt to halt the continuation of the ritual in Jerusalem and the renewal of the temple's status, in addition to his attempt to block the rehabilitation of the country under the rule of Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem.

In terms of historical reconstruction, most researchers have conjectured that soon after its destruction by the Babylonians the site of the temple became a focal point for pilgrimage, with many coming to pray, to recite laments, and to bring offerings to God.³⁹ No evidence exists of formal Babylonian sanction for the holding of any kind of ritual. The pilgrimages to the site of the ruined temple appear to have been made by small groups or by individuals, and the ritual conducted there was popular and spontaneous. The Babylonian government did not bother to ban or prevent it,

apparently because it suited its interest to demonstrate to all the fate of whoever rebelled against it.⁴⁰ Support for this reconstruction may be found in the report that Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest and the three keepers of the threshold were put to death by Nebuchadrezzar at Riblah (2 Kings 25: 18-21; Jer 52: 24-27). Just as the execution of Zedekiah and his sons was intended to terminate the rule of the House of David in Judah, the elimination of the priests seems to have been intended to terminate their status and their influence on the center in Jerusalem. But in contrast to information on the appointment of an alternative leadership, not from the Davidic dynasty, nothing is known of the appointment of priests from a different family.⁴¹ This point reinforces the assumption that formal ritual practices were not laid down in Jerusalem, and that with the introduction of such practices the family of Zadok re-established its position.

If the narrative in Jeremiah 41: 5 reflects actual history, a central theme is the bringing of cereal offering and frankincense and the lack of evidence of bringing animal sacrifices. The parallel in the terminology and in the historical processes to the circumstances that emerge from the Elephantine papyri has been conspicuous to many scholars, for the Elephantine temple too was destroyed (410 B.C.) and lay in ruins for some time. The grief over the destruction of the temple was heavy, and continued long, together with the submission of petitions for license to restore the temple. Eventually, in 407 B.C., instructions were received from Begavahya the governor of Judah and Delaiah the governor of Samaria that the Jews could rebuild their temple and resume there the bringing of the cereal offering and frankincense. This license did not include permission to offer animal sacrifices, which apparently was restricted to the temple in Jerusalem.⁴²

Despite the interval in time between the two destructions, the different circumstances of the two cases, and the apparent difference in the reasons why the imperial authority prohibited animal sacrifices, the inferiority of the status of the temple where cereal offering and frankincense were allowed to that where animal sacrifice was allowed becomes clear. A later author, working apparently at the time of Nehemiah or even later, understood this, and was responsible for the

addition of the passage in Jeremiah 16: 19-27.⁴³ Beyond the subject of the sabbath, which is the core of this passage, it emphasizes the prophet's vision of the future, when pilgrims from all over Judah are "bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, cereal offerings and frankincense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the Lord" (v. 26).

No information exists on events in Jerusalem between the time immediately after the destruction and the restoration period. In fact, the lacuna in knowledge is still wider, as great doubt exists as to what the composer of the description in Ezra 1-6 knew about the actual reality in this time span.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the perception that the status of the ritual in Jerusalem was a result of Babylonian policy requires that assumption that any change in this status would have to be connected with a change in policy. No evidence exists of such a change, and support for its absence is found in the situations reflected in the Psalms that are generally held to date to the period of Babylonian rule.⁴⁵

Considering the assumption that the temple in Jerusalem was not restored in the period of Babylonian rule, and that limited ritual activity continued at its ruined site, we may understand the great innovation and the legal importance attributed by the Returners to Zion to the decree of Cyrus. Unconnected to the question of historical veracity of the decree as an original document or as a reworking of such a document,⁴⁶ and unconnected to the attitude of the Returners to those who remained, the different policy of the Persians was grasped as the legal basis for the building of the temple and renewal of offering sacrifices in it: "In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt on the place where they used to offer sacrifices..." (or, "as a place where sacrifices are offered") (Ez 6: 3).⁴⁷ From the account in Ezra 3: 1-5, the building of the altar and the renewal of the offering of sacrifices there were also the first acts accomplished by the Returners to Zion: "From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid" (Ez 3: 6).⁴⁸

¹ For a comprehensive discussion and bibliography see O. Lipschits, 'Nebuchadrezzar's Policy in 'Hattu-Land' and the Fate of the Kingdom of Judah', *UF* 30 (1998), 1999, pp. 467-487.

² If there was any change in Babylonian policy as against the Assyrians and the Egyptians, it was along the 'road of the sea' on the main way to Egypt. Already at this stage Ashkelon was destroyed. Eqrn might also have been razed at this stage. For a discussion and bibliography, see Lipschits, *op. cit* (n. 1), pp. 468-469.

- ³ N. Na'aman, 'Province System and Settlement Pattern in Southern Syria and Palestine in the Neo-Assyrian Period', in M. Liverani (ed), *Neo-Assyrian Geography*, Roma 1995, pp. 114-115.
- ⁴ *ibid*; O. Lipschits, 'Was there a Royal Estate in En-Gedi by the End of the Iron Age and during the Persian Period?', *Jerusalem and Eretz Israel* (in press) (Hebrew). Against this background the dwindling of the eastern parts of the Samaria province may be understood, as emerges from Zertal's survey. For a summary of data see A. Zertal, 'The Pahwah of Samaria (Northern Israel) during the Persian Period. Types of Settlement, Economy, History and New Discoveries', *Transeuphratène* 3, 1990, pp. 9-30.
- ⁵ E. Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period*, Warminster 1982, pp. 238-240; *id.* 'The Dor Province in the Persian Period in the Light of the Recent Excavations at Dor', *Transeuphratène* 2, 1990, pp. 148, 153-154.
- ⁶ Zertal, *loc. cit.* (n. 4).
- ⁷ On this subject see, for example, J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, Philadelphia 1959, p. 176; J.M. Miller and J.H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, Philadelphia 1986, p. 409; J. Renkema, *Lamentations*, Leuven 1998, pp. 114-115.
- ⁸ O. Lipschits, 'The Formation of the 'Yehud' Province under Babylonian Rule', *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Part I – The Bible and it's World*, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 115-123 (Hebrew). Many scholars assume today that after the destruction of Jerusalem, Judah became a Babylonian province, and that Gedaliah was appointed as its governor. This status of Judah did not change throughout the time of Babylonian rule, and it continued even through Persian rule, when Sheshbazar and Zerubabel were made governors. See H.M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*. Oslo 1996, pp. 68-69, with further bibliography. A different view was expressed by Liver in 1958, namely that throughout Babylonian rule Judah remained in the status of a vassal state, and this continued until the time of Darius I. See J. Liver, 'The Return from Babylon, It's Time and Scope', *Eretz Israel* 5, 1958, p. 116. In the last decade this position has reappeared in the research literature. See P. Sacchi, 'L'esilio e la fine della monarchia Davidica', *Henoch* 11, 1989, pp. 131-148; F. Bianchi, 'Zerobabel re di Giuda', *Henoch* 13, 1991, pp. 133-156; *id.* 'La rôle de Zerobabel et de la dynastie davidique en Judée du VI^e siècle au II^e siècle av. J.C.' *Transeuphratène* 7, 1994, pp. 153-165. On this subject see the more moderate view of A. Lemaire, 'Zorobabel et la Judée à la lumière de l'épigraphie (fin du VI^e s.av. J.-C.)', *RB* 103, 1996, pp. 48-57, See also the review and criticism of H. Niehr, 'Religio- Historical Aspects of the 'Early Post-Exilic' Period', B. Becking and M.C.A. Korpel (eds), *The Crisis of Israelite Religion, Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, Leiden, Boston and Köln 1999, pp. 229-231.
- ⁹ N. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, Jerusalem 1980, pp. 52-54.
- ¹⁰ K.M. Kenyon, *Digging up Jerusalem*, London 1974, pp. 170-171; H.J. Franken and M.L. Steiner, *Excavations in Jerusalem 1961-1967, Vol. II: The Iron Age Extramural Quarter on the South-East Hill*, Oxford 1990, p. 57.
- ¹¹ Y. Shiloh, *Excavations at the City of David I* (Qedem 19), Jerusalem 1984, pp. 14, 18-19, 29.
- ¹² C.N. Johns, 'The Citadel, Jerusalem (A Summary of Work Since 1934)'. *QDAP* 14, 1950, p. 130, and fig. 7, no.1; H. Geva, 'Excavations in the Citadel of Jerusalem, 1979-1980, Preliminary Report', *IEJ* 33, 1983, pp. 56-58.

¹³ E. Mazar, 'Excavations in the Ophel – The Royal Quarter of Jerusalem during the First Temple Period'. *Qadmoniot* 26 (101-102), 1993, pp. 25-32 (Hebrew).

¹⁴ I wish to thank Prof. Amos Kloner who was kind enough to let me study the findings of the archaeological survey of the map of Jerusalem before it was published.

¹⁵ Barstad, *op. cit.* (n. 8), pp. 54-53, expresses a different view, but it is not clear to me on what he bases his statement that the destruction of the city by the Babylonians was "...enormous and probably impossible".

¹⁶ For a description of the characteristics of stratum II at Lachish see D. Ussishkin, 'Excavations at Tel Lachish – 1973-1977, Preliminary Report', *Tel Aviv* 5 (1-2), 1978, pp. 53-54, 64-67; *id.* 'Excavations at Tel Lachish 1978-1983: Second Preliminary Report'. *Tel Aviv* 10 (2), 1983, pp. 134-136, 146 .

¹⁷ Compare Jeremiah 34: 7 and ostracon 4 from Lachish, and see the evaluation of W.F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, Harmondsworth 1960, pp. 30-31.

¹⁸ Y. Dagan, *The Shephelah during the Period of the Monarchy in Light of Archaeological Excavations and Survey* (unpublished M.A. Thesis), Tel Aviv 1992, pp. 41-45 (Hebrew).

¹⁹ A. Kloner and E. Eshel, 'A Seventh Century B.C. List of Names from Maresha', *Eretz Israel* 26, 1999, p. 150 (Hebrew).

²⁰ Dagan, *op. cit.* (n. 18), pp. 259-263.

²¹ This is not the place to discuss the settlement processes that took place in the border zones of the kingdom of Judah, but it may be assumed that the onset of the collapse of settlement in these regions began with the weakening of the central government, before the destruction of Jerusalem. On the collapse of the array of settlements of the kingdom of Judah see Lipschits, *loc. cit.* (n. 4). On the settlement process in the Negev see I. Beit Arie, *Horvat Qitmit – An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev*, Tel Aviv 1995, pp. 310-315; *id.* 'Edomite Advance into Judah', *BAR* 22(6), pp. 28-36; *id.* 'Settlement in the Eastern Negev' in *Tel 'Ira, A Stronghold in the Biblical Negev*, Tel Aviv 1999, p. 3, with further bibliography. On the fate of the settlement in the area between the Negev and the surroundings of Hebron, see A. Ofer, *The Highland of Judah during the Biblical Period* (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation), Tel Aviv 1993, pp. 127-135 (Hebrew).

²² On the different fate of the Benjamin district see O. Lipschits, 'The History of the Benjaminite Region under Babylonian Rule', *Tel Aviv* 26 (2), 1999, pp. 155-190.

²³ For a summary of the archaeological picture at Tell en-Nasbeh see J.R. Zorn, *Tell en-Nasbeh: A Re-evaluation of the Architecture and Stratigraphy of the Early Bronze Age, Iron Age and Later Periods* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation), California 1993, pp. 103-162; 312-336; *id.* 'Mizpah – Newly Discovered Stratum Reveals Judah's Other Capital', *BAR* 23(5), 1997, pp. 28-38, 66; Lipschits, *loc. cit.* (n. 22), and there also a summary of data of the surveys conducted throughout the region.

²⁴ On the tradition concerning the date of the destruction of the city, see A. P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days*, New York 1978, pp. 245-246.

- ²⁵ A description of the smashing of the walls matches the actual condition that Nehemiah saw before him during his tour around the walls about 130 years later (Neh 2: 13-15).
- ²⁶ Compare the account of the unusual fate of Jeremiah (Jer 39: 11-14; 40: 1). It is hard to assume that the city and its surroundings were emptied entirely, and remained thus for a lengthy period. But the historiographic descriptions, as well as those in the prophetic literature and the laments on the destruction of the temple, seem to accord with the archaeological reality and Babylonian policy, whose aim was to turn all of the Benjamin region, and Mizpah particularly, into an alternative center of the new political entity that was being created at that time. See Lipschits, *op. cit.* (n. 8), pp. 118-123.
- ²⁷ On this subject see also the comments of E.J. Bickerman, 'Nebuchadnezzar and Jerusalem', *PAAJR* 46-47, 1979-1980, pp. 69-85.
- ²⁸ On the account in Jeremiah 41: 5 see the discussion below.
- ²⁹ By this definition I refer to the fundamental Babylonian policy, which is also reflected in a mass of historical and archaeological evidence. On this subject see also M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings*, Doubleday 1988, p. 319. It cannot be assumed that in reality the city was absolutely empty; restricted and sparse urban life undoubtedly continued. The view of Barkay, that an established population continued to exist in Jerusalem even after its destruction was founded only on the findings of one grave on the Hinnom slope. See G. Barkay, 'Excavations on the Slope of Hinnom Valley in Jerusalem', *Qadmoniot* 17, 1984, pp. 94-108 (Hebrew); *id.* 'The Priestly Benediction on Silver Plaque from Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem', *Tel Aviv* 19, 1992, pp. 139-192.
- ³⁰ See, for example, E. Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit*, Göttingen 1956, pp. 46-47, 94-104; Bright, *op. cit.* (n. 7), p. 325; J.M. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, New York 1965, p. XX, 26-27; Miller and Hayes, *op. cit.* (n. 7), pp. 426; D.L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless, The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile*, Oxford 1989, pp. 34-35; J.L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow, a Social and Historical Approach*, Minneapolis 1995, pp. 17-18; Niehr, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 234, with further bibliography.
- ³¹ D.R. Hillers, *Lamentations – Introduction, Translation and Notes*, Garden City 1972, p. 44; Renkema, *op. cit.* (n. 7), pp. 245-246. Great importance lies in the actual circumstances that gave rise to the recital of the lament in Lamentations 2: 7-9. The fate of the altar is the great innovation that appears in this passage, apparently because of its importance and the sense of its loss. The mention of the other elements is parallel to the information that exists in the description of the destruction in 2 Kings and Jeremiah. On this subject see D. Jones, 'The Cessation of Sacrifice after the Destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.', *JTS* 14, 1963, p. 12. But see the response of P.R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration, A Study of Hebrew thought of the Sixth Century B.C.*, Philadelphia 1968, p. 26, note. 39. On this subject, see the important note of J. Blenkinsopp, according to "Even if the altar had survived, it would have been corpse-contaminated (Lam 2:20), and therefore rendered inaccessible". 'the Judean Priesthood during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: A Hypothetical Reconstruction', *CBQ* 60(1), 1998, p. 26.
- ³² On the text see G.L. Keown, P.J. Scalise and T.G. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52* (World Biblical Commentary, vol. 27), Dallas 1995, pp. 238-239; W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah II*, Minneapolis 1989, p. 272, with translation and further bibliography. For a summary of the research posture that sees the literary unit in Jeremiah 40:7-41:18 as an original tradition, see C.R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict – Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah*, New York 1989, pp. 274-279.
- ³³ Holladay, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 297. On the attachment of the northern population to the temple in Jerusalem see M. Noth, 'The Jerusalem Catastrophe of 587 B.C., and its Significance for Israel', in *The*

Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies. Edinburgh and London 1966, pp. 263-264; R.J. Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews, The Origins of Samaritanism Reconsidered*. Oxford 1975, pp. 28-37.

³⁴ On this subject see, for example, A.C. Welch, *Post-Exilic Judaism*, Edinburgh and London 1935, pp. 67-68; W. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, Tübingen 1947, p. 160; M. Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, Göttingen 1954 (English edition, New York 1958), p. 291; Jones, *op. cit.* (n. 31), pp. 14-15; K. Galling, *Studien zur Geschichte Israels im persischen Zeitalter*, Tübingen 1964, p. 129; J. Bright, *Jeremiah*, New York 1965, p. 254; B. Oded, 'Judah and the Exile', in J.H. Hayes and J.M. Miller (eds), *Israelite and Judaeon History*, London 1977, p. 478; Ackroyd, *op. cit.* (n. 31), p. 25; *id.* *Israel under Babylon and Persia*, Oxford 1970, p. 17; S. Japhet, 'People and Land in the Restoration Period', in G. Strecker, (ed), *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit*, Göttingen 1983, p. 107; Holladay, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 297; Seitz, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 273. As an exception, one may mention the researchers listed in Ackroyd, *op. cit.* (n. 31), p. 25, note 33, and add also: J. Klausner, *The History of the Second Temple Period* (vol. I), Jerusalem 1949, pp. 57-58 (Hebrew); Miller and Hayes, *op. cit.* (n. 7), pp. 426, who assumed that the reference was to some ritual site that existed at Mizpah. On this subject see also the detailed discussion of Blenkinsopp, *op. cit.* (n. 31), p. 25-43, who claims "...that Mizpah served as both the political and the religious center of the province in the early period of Babylonian rule, down to the attempted coup d'état of Ishmael, and that Bethel, for reasons unknown, then took over as the imperially designated center of worship" (p. 34).

³⁵ Such was the assumption of most scholars, and see Keown, Scalise and Smothers, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 241; Lipschits, *loc. cit.* (n. 22), with further bibliography. Reservations about this view were expressed by Bright, *op. cit.* (n. 34), p. 254; J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, Grand Rapids 1980, p. 657. An exceptional view was expressed by J.P. Hyatt, 'Introduction and Exegesis, Jeremiah', *Interpreters Bible 5*, New York and Nashville 1956, pp. 778, 1087, who assumes that the episode occurred in 582 B.C., but it is doubtful that any basis can be found for this opinion.

³⁶ On this subject see R. Rendtorff, *Studien zur Geschichtes des Opfers im alten Israel* (WMANT 24), Tübingen 1967, p. 191; Ackroyd, *op. cit.* (n. 31), pp. 25-26, and note 42. For a comprehensive discussion on frankincense see K. Nielsen, *Incense in Ancient Israel*, Leiden 1986, esp. pp. 80, 87, with further bibliography. For a comprehensive discussion and for the literature on the cereal offering and the frankincense see *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. VII, Grand Rapids and Cambridge 1995, pp. 441-447; vol. VIII, Grand Rapids and Cambridge 1997, pp. 407-421. For additional literature see *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (vol. 2), Grand Rapids 1997, pp. 757, 989-990.

³⁷ Keown, Scalise and Smothers, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 241. Exceptional in this context was J. Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion – Studies in the Life of Jeremiah*, Cambridge 1961, pp. 304-305. In his view this episode does not contain a description of a historical event but a vision of the future, and in it people from Israel will see Jerusalem as their capital and will make the pilgrimage to it. N. Na'aman, 'Shechem and Jerusalem in the Exilic and Restoration Period', *Zion 58* (1), 1993, p. 23, note 52 (Hebrew), argues that the tendency of this story was to show that after the destruction the central status of Jerusalem in the ritual was preserved.

³⁸ Compare also the account of the "stores" in in 41: 8 with the prophecy in 31: 12.

³⁹ See, for example, Welch, *op. cit.* (n. 34), p. 68; Janssen, *op. cit.* (n. 30), pp. 46-56, 101-102; Noth, *op. cit.* (n. 33), p. 264. Exceptional in this context was Hyatt, *op. cit.* (n. 35), p. 1088, who claimed that "...by this time the temple in Jerusalem had been sufficiently restored so that some offerings could be

made there". On this subject see the comments of Ackroyd *op. cit.* (n. 34), pp. 17-18, and see also the fine remarks of G.W. Ahlström, *Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem*, Leiden 1971, pp. 114-115.

⁴⁰ Jones, *op. cit.* (n. 31), pp. 12-31; Ackroyd, *op. cit.* (n. 34), p. 17.

⁴¹ On this subject see, for example, the comments of Welch, *op. cit.* (n. 34), pp. 68-69; Bright, *op. cit.* (n. 7), p. 325.

⁴² On the correspondence between the Jews in Elephantine and the Persian government see letters 30-33 in A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford 1923, pp. 108-126, and compare with the translation and discussion in B. Porten, *The Elephantine Papyri in English, Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change*, Leiden, New York and Köln 1996, pp. 139-151 (letters B19-B22).

⁴³ On this subject see W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1, A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25*, Philadelphia 1986, pp.508-511.

⁴⁴ On this subject see H.G.M. Williamson, 'The Composition of Ezra i-vi' *JTS* 34, 1983, pp. 1-30; S. Japhet, "'History" and "Literature" in the Persian Period: The Restoration of the Temple', in M. Cogan and I. Eph'al (eds), *AH, ASSYRIA... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (Scripta Hierosolymitana, vol. Xxxiii), Jerusalem 1991, pp. 174-188; *id.* 'Composition and Chronology in the Book of Ezra and Nehemiah', *Eretz Israel* 24, 1994, pp. 111-121 (hebrew).

⁴⁵ See Janssen, *op. cit.* (n. 30), pp. 19 on Psalms xliv, lxxiv, lxxix, lxxxix and cii, and see the discussion of Jones, *op. cit.* (n. 31), pp. 24-31 on Psalms xl, li, lxix and cii

⁴⁶ Compare H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, Waco 1985, p. 3; Japhet, *op. cit.* (n. 44)(1991), pp. 179-180.

⁴⁷ Compare the translations and commentaries for this verse in W. Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, Tübingen 1949, p. 54; J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, Philadelphia 1988, p. 123; L.L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, London and New York 1998, p. 25, with those in Myers, *op. cit.* (n. 30), pp. 47-52, and Williamson, *op. cit.* (n. 46), p. 71.

⁴⁸ See Myers, *op. cit.* (n. 30), p. 23, and compare also with Williamson, *op. cit.* (n. 46), pp. 40, 47; Blenkinsopp, *op. cit.* (n. 47), pp. 94, 98 .