

The History of Judah and Samaria in the Late Persian and Hellenistic Periods as a Possible Background of the Later Editions of the Book of the Twelve

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One needs to be reminded that the concept of historical critical research, which became common in biblical exegesis during the last three centuries, is based on a close relationship between literary critical analysis and historical investigations. In recent times several biblical scholars – especially in Germany – are confident that they are able to reconstruct the literary history of a textual corpus in detail, but they doubt whether it is possible to reconstruct the accompanying political and social history with any degree of certainty. The connection between two approaches, however, should not be dissolved. Admittedly, each approach has its material and methodological limits, but our experience with historical critical research during the last centuries, in spite of unavoidable errors, shows that knowledge of the historical background of a biblical passage leads to a more concrete and a better understanding of the text on the one hand. On the other hand, insights into the formation of a biblical corpus help to reconstruct the political, social, and theological history of ancient Israel, and these insights should not be forgotten.

1. Diachronic Literary Approach and Historical Investigations Concerning the Minor Prophets

Concerning the Minor Prophets the results of the historical critical research have been ambivalent. Focusing on the early phases of the prophetic books, several scholars as Rudolph, Wolff, Jeremias, Kessler, Mays, Sweeney, Hanhart and others¹ were able to reconstruct the mes-

¹ See just the most influential commentaries of these scholars: Rudolph, *Hosea*; idem, *Joel*; idem, *Micha*; idem, *Haggai*; Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 1–2, 4, 6*; Jeremias, *Hosea*;

sage of the prophets Amos, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah on their historical background from the 8th to the 6th century, even though it turned out that it was more shaped by their pupils and early tradents than some of these scholars were aware. And even for the early collections of those prophetic books, the Book of the Four consisting of most of the books of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah and the Book of the Two containing most of the books of Haggai and Zech 1–8, suitable historical backgrounds could be found. The former seems to have come from the late exilic period, when the aims at a new beginning were at stake (539–520 B.C.E.).² For the latter I recently proposed the Babylonian revolts during the early reign of Xerxes (484–479),³ which might have nourished new hopes for a complete realization of salvation.

For the later redactional layers of these books and for those books of admittedly later origin (Joel, Zech 9–14, or Malachi), however, it remains extremely difficult to find any historical background. On the one hand, this has to do with the nature of these post-exilic prophetic texts: representing a kind of scribal prophecy and exegesis, they have less clear allusions to historical events than the older collections. Even in those passages that seem to allude to specific events (e.g. Zech 11:8a; 12:10), we do not have the historical knowledge to understand them and to integrate them into the history of the Persian or Hellenistic Judah and Samaria.⁴ On the other hand, from the middle of the 5th century onwards, when the biblical historical accounts end, only a few non-biblical sources exist for the reconstruction of the history of Judah and Samaria in the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods (mainly Josephus). These sources have been only slightly amplified by archaeological, epigraphical, and iconographical findings during the last 100 years. Therefore, combining isolated prophetic passages with specific historical events was often risky and conclusions were dubious. For example, is it or is it not possible to relate Zech 9:1–8, which mentions YHWH's judgment on Phoenician and Philistine cities, to Alexander's campaign through the Levant on the way to Egypt in 332 B.C.E., as Elliger proposed?⁵ Or, does the symbolic prophetic act in Zech 11:14, tell us that

idem, *Amos*; idem, *Joel*; Kessler, *Micha*; Mays, *Hosea*; idem, *Amos*; idem, *Micah*; Sweeney, *Prophets*; idem, *Zephaniah*; Hanhart, *Dodekapropheton* 7,1.

2 See Nogalski, *Precursors*, 176–177; Albertz, *Exile*, 236–237; Wöhrle, *Sammlungen*, 272–275.

3 See Albertz, "Streit," 17–19.

4 For the discussion about the identity of the "three shepherds" in Zech 11:8a see Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 87–88, esp. note 73, for the speculations about the "pierced one" in Zech 12:10 see Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 103–104, esp. note 120–121.

5 See Elliger, "Zeugnis," 89–115.

the brotherhood between Judah and Israel was broken by referring to the schism of the Samaritans, as several scholars believe?⁶ Apart from the question of whether the material correspondence holds true, the answer depends on one's view regarding the time to which the text should be dated. From an isolated passage, however, this decision is often difficult to make.

Under these poor conditions, a diachronic approach to the Book of the Twelve that covers its entire literary history promises genuine progress.⁷ By reconstructing a sequence of redactional layers throughout the books, layers to which specific passages can be attributed, it establishes a relative chronological order, which provides us with a period of time, in which those passages can probably be dated. If this period of time can be fixed, the search for a possible historical background for those passages can proceed with a much higher degree of probability. If a redactional history of the Book of the Twelve can be reconstructed with some degree of probability, we would not only enhance our chances for a better historical understanding of its texts, but also gain a new source for reconstructing the political, social, and theological history of the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods.

2. The Destiny of the Foreign Nations in the Book of the Twelve

It has often been noted that the destiny of the foreign nations belongs to the major topics of the Book of the Twelve.⁸ The study of Roth, however, shows, that a topical investigation, which goes without a redaction critical reconstruction, leads to very vague results.⁹ Roth merely describes different positions concerning foreign nations, which he attributes to an ongoing discourse of literary prophecy over two centuries, without being able to show any developments or to detect influences from the course of Judean and Samaritan history. According to Roth, the oracles on foreign nations intend to construct a counter-world, by

6 So e.g. Elliger, *Buch*, 163, and others; for the discussion see Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 91–92, esp. note 86.

7 See the pioneer works of Nogalski, *Precursors*; idem, *Processes*; Scharf, *Entstehung*, and Sweeney, *Prophets*. Most elaborated is the thesis of Wöhrle, *Sammlungen*; idem, *Abschluss*.

8 See the literature mentioned by Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 139.

9 See Roth, *Israel*, 291–298, even though in this book he starts with an overview of the political, social, and theological history of the late Persian and Hellenistic periods (Roth, *Israel*, 12–55).

which the Jewish identity was defined.¹⁰ But does this rather general information explain the variety and the prominence of the topic?

In his redaction critical study Wöhrle distinguished no less than 4 different literary layers, which are concerned with the destiny of foreign nations:¹¹ first, a layer announcing a divine judgment on all the nations, including the dominant world power, in connection with the final salvation of Jerusalem and the people (Foreign-Nations-Redaction I), dated at the end of the 5th century; second, a layer announcing specific divine judgments on a number of nations (Phoenicians, Philistines, Edomites, Greeks) for their concrete misdeeds, dated to the beginning of the 3rd century (Foreign-Nations-Redaction II); third, a layer announcing the possibility of salvation for foreign nations beyond divine judgment (Salvation-for-the-Nations-Redaction), dated in the first part of the 3rd century; and finally, a layer reflecting upon the possibilities and the limits of divine grace for foreign nations with reference to Exod 34:6–7, dated in the second part of the 3rd century. Thus, Wöhrle elaborates in detail how reflection about the destiny of foreign nations lasted over a period of two centuries. Indeed, he demonstrates that the destiny of foreign nations was one of the driving forces that enlarged and shaped the Book of the Twelve during the later phases of its formation. Moreover, he shows that the attitude towards the nations changed from a negative one during the late Persian and the beginning of the Hellenistic periods to a more positive one during the later Hellenistic period. According to Wöhrle, this development is not only the result of internal theological reflection by scribal groups, but has also to do with concrete experiences between foreign nations and Judeans during these periods. Do his results, derived from critical literary analysis, fit the historical developments in Judah and Samaria during the Persian and Hellenistic periods?

3. The Late Persian Period as Background for the Foreign-Nations-Redaction I

At first glance, a redaction, which reworked and united eight prophetic books from the perspective of a total divine judgment on all the nations, including the Eastern world power, does not correspond with our typical view of the Persian period. In contrast, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah essentially draw a picture of successful cooperation

¹⁰ Roth, *Israel*, 292.

¹¹ See Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 139–171.264–287.335–361.400–419.

between the Persian authorities and Jewish leaders, cooperation which provided the province of Judah, and especially its temple in Jerusalem, with many privileges.¹² Even a more critical view of the imperial policy of the Persians has to admit that their imperial ideology opened the way of integrating the cultural and religious diversity of the subjected nations into the empire in a positive manner,¹³ although acts of cultural “tolerance” were granted only to loyal subjects, while disloyal subjects were severely punished.¹⁴ We learn of complaints about the severe economic rule of the Persians (Neh 9:37), especially their strict tax system, which burdened the poor in particular (Neh 5:1–4), but the Judean upper classes and their leaders seem to have enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom under the Persian government.

In order to provide his Foreign-Nations-Redaction I with a suitable historical context, Wöhrle already points to the Bagoses story¹⁵ told by Josephus in Ant. XI.297–301 as a story that shows a totally different picture of Persian provincial policy toward Judah.¹⁶ According to this story the Persian governor Bagoses seriously interfered with Judean self-government. He tried to supplant the ruling high priest Joannes with his brother Jesus. This intervention failed, since Joannes murdered his brother because of a dispute while he was serving in the Jerusalem temple. Afterward, Bagoses forced his way into the temple and deliberately defiled it. Moreover, he punished the entire community by imposing a high tax of 50 drachmae on any sacrifice for a period of seven years. Wöhrle draws a striking parallel between these events and the

12 Cf. only Ezra 1:1–11; 6:1–22; 7:1–18; Neh 1:1–2:18; 13:4–6.

13 In difference to the Neo-Assyrian kings, who called themselves ‘king of the countries,’ ‘king of totality,’ or ‘king of the four world regions,’ Persian kings after Darius used titles as ‘king of the peoples,’ or ‘king of the peoples of numerous origins’ (see Lecoq, *Inscriptions*, 137.187.219.228 and passim), thus emphasizing not the totality, but the diversity of their empire. In their royal inscriptions, sometimes these peoples, who carry tributes or maintain the royal law, are listed (Lecoq, *Inscriptions*, 228.233). The Behistun inscription lists 23 peoples (188). See also the visual portrayals of this ideology in the palace in Persepolis, where the peoples are depicted carrying tribute or the royal throne (Walser, *Persepolis*, 16–76.80–81; the latter similar to a picture on the mausoleum of Naqš-e Rostam, see Lecoq, *Inscriptions*, pl. 15–16). In Persian royal ideology, ethnic diversity was also accepted on the religious level, because it could also include – apart from the main deity Ahuramazda – “all gods, who exist” in divine support of the king (see §§62–63 of the Behistun inscription; Lecoq, *Inscriptions*, 210). According to Lecoq, *Inscriptions*, 210 note 3, this formula constitutes an archaic grammatical formulation that may have come from the Medes. For the discussion about Persian ‘toleration’ see Albertz, *Exile*, 114–116.

14 Cf. Darius’ statement in the second inscription of his Mausoleum, translated by Lecoq, *Inscriptions*, 222: “L’homme qui aide, lui je le protège selon sa collaboration; celui qui nuit, je le punis ainsi selon sa nuisance.”

15 See Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 162–164.

16 See in the edition of Marcus, *Josephus*, 6:457–461.

4. A Historical Reconstruction of the Bagoses Story

Since Josephus has only limited knowledge about the late Persian period,²¹ the credibility of the Bagoses story, which is reported only by him (Ant. XI.297–301), could be doubted. However, even critical scholars as Grabbe now tend to accept the historical reliability of the story, because “the murder in the temple is not likely to be simply a Jewish invention.”²² Moreover, Williamson has pointed out that Josephus was probably drawing on an independent source (§§298–301), which he framed by his own introduction and conclusion.²³ The event is important enough to be reported and handed down in the temple archive. Thus the formal historicity of the Bagoses event seems to be established.

Before the discovery of the Elephantine papyri, the Bagoses of the story was generally identified with the influential minister of this name²⁴ under Artaxerxes III (358–337 B.C.E.),²⁵ but since the papyri TAD A4.7–9 verify a Persian governor of Judah, named Bagohi,²⁶ who was a contemporary of the high priest Joḥanan at the end of the 5th century (at least 410–407), the majority of scholars prefer the latter identification.²⁷ Williamson has recently questioned this interpretation, because the Bagoses of the story is called στρατηγός (§§297.300),²⁸ but since Grabbe has shown that this title was used in Hellenistic Greek not only for military, but also for civil offices, including the office of a provincial governor or satrap,²⁹ the main counter-argument against this natural identification is removed. Because of his Persian name, Bagohi

20 For a more detailed reconstruction with additional rationale, see Albertz, “Controversy,” 484–499.

21 For this judgment see Grabbe, *Judaism*, 1:61–62. For example, Josephus did not know that there were three rulers with the name Artaxerxes. Apart from the first one, he mentions only “the other Artaxerxes” (τοῦ ἄλλου Ἀρταχέρξου) in Ant. XI.297. After the Bagoses story Josephus immediately continues with the “last king Darius” (= Darius III) and Alexander (§§302–305); Darius II, as the forerunner of Artaxerxes II, seems to have been unknown to him.

22 Grabbe, *Judaism*, 1:62.

23 See Williamson, “Historical Value,” 75–79.

24 Cf. Torrey, “Two Persian Officers,” 300–301.

25 He is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, XVI.47–50, and called a ‘general,’ a ‘commander over the thousands,’ who was in charge of the king’s body guard and the chief friend of King Artaxerxes III. He seems to have been one of the most influential persons at the Persian court; he poisoned Artaxerxes and later Arses and replaced them with his favorites (first Arses, then Darius III); but no contact to Palestine is attested.

26 See Porten and Yardeni, *Textbook*, 1:68–78.

27 So Galling, “Bagoas,” 162–164; Schwartz, “Papyri,” 193–194; Grabbe, *Judaism*, 1:62–63; idem, “Bagoses,” 54–55; Rooke, *Zadok’s Heirs*, 236; Dušek, *Manuscripts*, 593–597.

28 See Williamson, “Historical Value,” 81–89; idem, “Judean History,” 21–23.

29 See Grabbe, “Bagoses;” idem, *Judaism*, 1:63.

– as well as the Bagoses of the story – should be regarded as a Persian.³⁰ According to Josephus he was a governor of Judah under Artaxerxes II (§297: τοῦ ἄλλου Ἀρταχέρξου), who was enthroned 404 B.C.E., but according to the papyri he was already in office under Darius II (424–405). Thus, the events told in the story can be dated, indeed, to the end of the 5th century, in the same period, to which the Foreign-Nations-Redaction I probably belongs according to literary historical criteria.

The severe conflict between Bagohi and Johanan at the end of the 5th century is better to be understood from the new insights granted by two recent archaeological discoveries. First, Lipschits documents a considerable change of Persian policies toward the Levant that seems to have been provoked by the Persian Empire's loss of Egypt.³¹ While for most of the 5th century the Persians fostered urban life in the coastal plain, where they built many fortresses in order to safeguard their roads and harbors on the way to their province Egypt, at the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 4th centuries, they put the previously neglected Samaritan and Judean hill country under stricter control. During this period, they built several fortresses and administrative centers in Lachish, Ramat Rahel, and in the Negev, because – with the loss of Egypt – Judah had become the southwestern border of the empire. Thus, we probably have to distinguish between two phases of Persian policy concerning Judah and Samaria: a first phase of *laissez faire*, when the Persian government was only interested in the profit they could make from these rural provinces, and a second phase of strict control, when the political stability of that border region came into the Persian's field of view.

Second, the excavations of Magen have shown that the first sanctuary on Mount Gerizim was not constructed in the days of Darius III and Alexander as Josephus reports (336–332 B.C.E; Ant. XI.306–325), but about 100 years earlier in the last third of 5th century.³² Gerizim temple construction probably followed Nehemiah's decision of expelling a member of the high priest's family from Jerusalem, who had married a

30 According to Lemaire, "Administration," 54, Bagohi is the Aramaic spelling of Bagavahya. This is clearly a Persian name, even if Jews might have adopted it in some way, cf. Bigwai in Ezra 2:2, 14; Neh 7:7; 10:17.

31 See Lipschits, "Imperial Policy," 26–38; decisive for this evaluation was the insight that the Persian fortress on Tell Lachish was built not in the midst, but at the end of the 5th century B.C.E.

32 According Magen, "Samaritan Temple," 176, the sanctuary was constructed in the mid-fifth century, but since he himself refers to Neh 13:38 (188–189), the date has to be lowered to about 430 B.C.E. at least, since the first term of Nehemiah's office lasted from 445–433, and the expulsion of the high priest's son took place during the second term, a date that cannot be determined with precision.

daughter of Sanballat (Neh 13:28).³³ Being excluded from any influence in the Jerusalem temple, the Samaritan governor decided to found his own sanctuary, where he could install his Zadokite son-in-law. The foundation of the Gerizim temple could have happened shortly after the accession of Darius II in 424 B.C.E.³⁴ Thus, Judah got a new cultic rival in a neighboring province, a fact that would have challenged the Jerusalemites to claim their leadership in all cultic and religious affairs. Thus, this rivalry involved the danger of the destabilization of the two border provinces, a situation which the Persians must have tried to avert.

In the light of these two new insights, the conflicts, which are mirrored in the Elephantine papyri, on the one hand, and told in the Bagoses story of Josephus, on the other hand, verify the changing international conditions and their impact on a more rigorous Persian policy toward Judah and Samaria. The course of events can be reconstructed in the following way. The Egyptian fight for independence was a long process. It already started with small riots from 410 B.C.E. onwards, as can be seen from Elephantine papyri.³⁵ Also, the encroachment on the Jewish temple in Elephantine, initiated by the Khnum priests, can be interpreted in this context; it was not only a religious, but also a political demonstration against foreign elements in the Persian garrison.³⁶ With the death of Darius II in the year 405 and the length period of battles of Artaxerxes II against his brother Cyrus for executing his claim to the Persian throne (404–401), Armyrtaeus from Saïs seized the opportunity to throw off the Persian yoke with the help of Sparta and became the first Pharaoh of independent Egypt.

Presupposing the typical good relations between the Persian governor and the Judean self-government, Jedaniah, the priest and leader

33 Since the son of the high priest Joiada, who was expelled, probably did not marry the daughter of the Samaritan governor without the consent of his father, this high priest seems to have felt much more sympathy for the Samaritans than did his forerunner Eliashib, who had supported Nehemiah's policy of dissociation, cf. Albertz, "Purity Strategies," 200–205.

34 King Artaxerxes I seems to have supported Nehemiah and his strict anti-Samaritan policy, while his follower was probably less obliged to foster Judean interests.

35 Cf. TAD A4.5:1; 6.7:6; 6.10:4; 6.11:2, 4.

36 According to TAD A4.3:7 the hostility with the Khnum priests arose because Hananiah had been in Egypt. Hananiah was probably sent by the central Persian government in order to enhance the public religious status of the Jewish minority in the multiethnic society of Elephantine, for example, by the official acknowledgement of its holidays during the feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. TAD 4.1). This public enhancement of a foreign element obviously bothered the Egyptian priests; they likely regarded it as neglecting Egyptian interests by the Persian government. For the important mission of Hananiah, which can be compared with the mission of Nehemiah in some ways, see Kottsieper, "Religionspolitik," 150–157; Kratz, "Tempel," 65–57.

of the Jewish garrison in Elephantine, addressed his first letter of the year 410 B.C.E (TAD A4.7:17–19) to the governor Bagohi, the high priest Joḥanan, the leader of the congregation of priests, and Ostanēs, the leader of the council of elders,³⁷ in order to win their support for the reconstruction of the Elephantine temple that had been destroyed. Bagohi was probably concerned about recent Egyptian unrest, interested in preventing the success of Egyptian nationalism, and in strengthening the morality of the Jewish mercenaries in the Persian garrison. The high priest Joḥanan, however, refused to agree and prevented any quick answer. In competition with the Samaritans, Joḥanan used the matter of the Elephantine temple as an opportunity to demonstrate the cultic exclusivity of the Jerusalem temple and the Judean leadership in all matters pertaining to YHWH religion. As his brother Joshua verifies, there was also a party among the leading priests and the aristocrats that pleaded for more sympathy for Persian interests and for a concession to the Jewish brothers in Egypt. But this party does not seem to have had the majority in the two councils of the Judean self-government. Thus, Joḥanan notoriously used his authority to prevent the council from making any decision for three years.

This is probably the situation in which the conflict reported by Josephus took place. Frustrated by Joḥanan's resistance, the Persian governor was no longer willing to accept that the Judean religious ambitions should disturb the Persian strategic interest in safeguarding the empire at its southwestern wing. Thus, he intervened in the Judean self-government. By promising Joshua his support in taking over the office of the high priest (Ant. XI.298b), he tried to replace Joḥanan, to change the majority in the Judean councils and to pave the way for a reasonable decision. However, this attempt failed; the priestly brothers got into an argument about their opposing political options, and provoked by Joshua's assurance, the high priest Joḥanan killed his brother while he was serving in the sanctuary (§299). The murder may have happened in the year 408 B.C.E.

One can imagine that Bagohi was disappointed and angry about the failure of his guarded intervention. The shocking sacrilege, however, provided him with the opportunity to teach the ambitious priests of Jerusalem and the entire Judean community a harsh lesson. Brutally, he forced his way into the temple and defiled it deliberately (§§300–301). Moreover, he maligned the high priest in public, who had himself de-

37 For this two councils of the Judean self-government below the Persian provincial administration see already Galling, "Bagoas," 162–163, and Albertz, *Israelite Religion*, 2:446–447.

filed the sanctuary by a corpse (§301).³⁸ Obviously, he wanted to humiliate the Judeans and their ambitious priesthood. Finally, in order to punish the whole Judean community he imposed a high tax of 50 drachmae on each of the daily sacrifices, which had to be paid from the public treasury (§297). This tax was intended to reduce the temple cult to a minimum, to decrease the income of the priests, and to burden to the entire Judean province with severe financial losses. With all these measures Bagohi wanted to demonstrate in a brutal way that in spite of their ambitious claims, the Judeans (including their temple and their priests) were subject to the Persian government. During a long seven year period of punishment they were supposed to learn that their claim to religious leadership was very restricted and should never contradict the Persian strategic interest.

During the years 408 and 407 the Jews of Elephantine heard about the serious disagreement between Bagohi and the Judean community. Thus, they decided to write a new petition in the year 407. This time, however, they wrote two letters and sent one to Bagohi only, and the other to the sons of Sanballat in Samaria, who seem to have carried out the governorship of their old father (TAD 4.7:1, 29). Thus they addressed only the governors of the two provinces and deliberately excluded the high priest Joĥanan and the Judean councils of self-government. This time, Bagohi no longer felt obliged to show consideration to the Judeans and their claims. As we know from the papyrus TAD 4.9, both governors, Bagohi and Delaiah, immediately made a common decision and supported the reconstruction of the temple with some minor restrictions.³⁹ Thus, the cult-political decision was made only on the level of the Persian provincial government, without any participation of the Judeans.

During the years of punishment (408–401 B.C.E.), the Judeans probably tried to lodge complaints against Bagohi at the Persian royal court with the help of the Diaspora Jews. But as long as the two rival brothers, Artaxerxes and Cyrus, engaged in their bitter war over succession (404–401), the Judeans did not gain a hearing. The period of harsh in-

38 Following Marcus, *Josephus*, 6:459, who rightly preferred the passive variant of the mocking phrase of Bagoses: "Am I, then, not purer than he who was slain in the temple?" instead of "who slew" (Ant. XI.301).

39 The memorandum of Bagohi and Delaiah TAD A4.9:9 speaks of grain-offerings and incense-offerings, but not blood sacrifices, while Jedaniah had also mentioned holocausts in his letter (TAD 4.7:25). This restriction may have to do with the reservations of the Persians against blood sacrifices or it may have been a compromise to lessen any provocation of the Khnum priests. The formulation of the text does not show that the governors took any Judean claim into account, cf. Kottsieper, "Religionspolitik," 169–175.

tervention into Judean affairs lasted so long because of these inner Persian struggles, which also included allies from many nations of the empire.⁴⁰ Only after Artaxerxes II emerged successfully, does he seem to have stopped the punitive policy against the Judeans. Assuming it was he who sent Ezra to Judah in 398 B.C.E.,⁴¹ this mission and the implementation of the Pentateuch aimed at pacifying the conflict and stabilizing the southwestern border against Egypt.

5. Interpreting the Foreign-Nations-Redaction I on this Political Background

The political and cultic crisis, which Judah experienced under the reign of the Persian governor Bagothi (alias Bagothes) during the last decade of the 5th century B.C.E. was severe and long lasting enough to provoke theological reflections and literary activities among the scribal elite of Judah. Since the redaction shows many of the basic convictions of Zion theology,⁴² its authors probably belonged to the priestly or lay staff of the Jerusalem temple. Thus, they were personally affected by the punitive measures against the temple cult. Confronted with the brutal political intervention of the world power into Jerusalem's cultic affairs combined with high military activity during Egypt's struggles for independence and the succession wars of the royal brothers, they could have gained the impression that Jerusalem and YHWH's people were surrounded by enemies and threatened by all those foreign nations. In light of Zion theology they understood the frightening contemporary events as an onslaught of the peoples against Mount Zion⁴³ that YHWH would stop.

40 See Briant, *History*, 615–634. Cyrus assembled Greek mercenaries and forces from many peoples of Asia Minor. Artaxerxes, who had gathered in 404 B.C.E. an army in Phoenicia against revolting Egypt, mustered troops from Babylonia, Susiana, Media, and Persia against his brother, who attacked him in Babylonia during the year 401. Artaxerxes seems to have intended to use the army of Levantine peoples also for his defense against his brother, but it was probably still on the road, when the decisive battle was fought in Cunaxa near Babylon (see *ibid.*, 629).

41 Whether Ezra's mission should be dated in the 7th year of Artaxerxes I (458 B.C.E.) or the II (398) is still a matter of dispute (cf. Grabbe, *Judaism*, 1:136–138), which cannot be discussed here. Galling ("Bagoas," 161–178), who preferred the later dating, drew a very close connection between the Bagothes crisis and Ezra's letter of appointment (Ezra 7:12–26). Whether all details of this Aramaic text, however, can be regarded historically reliable, is rather improbable.

42 Cf. Joel 4:16–17; Mic 1:2; 4:7, 13; Zeph 3:19; Hag 2:7–9; Zech 12:9; 14:3, 11b–12, 20–21.

43 For this topic cf. Pss 46:7; 48:5–8; 76:4–6.

The existing compositions of the Minor Prophets – the Joel-Corpus and the Haggai-Zechariah-Corpus⁴⁴ according to Wöhrle – provided the redactors with a theological basis for both: to understand their present distress as YHWH's just judgment on his own disobedient people⁴⁵ and to express the hope that YHWH would judge all the nations including the world power for their unreasonable conduct against YHWH's people and his temple in future. Accordingly, this universal judgment would lead to the salvation of the people, the reestablishment of Jerusalem's holiness, and the enrichment of its cult so it would never be disturbed again by the intrusion of strangers (Joel 4:17; Zech 14:20–21).

This is not the place to unfold all the possible allusions to this historical background that may be detected in the Foreign-Nation-Redaction I. The intention is only to demonstrate that the Foreign-Nation-Redaction I is a reasonable theological response to the historical situation during the last decade of the 5th century, if this period has been reconstructed properly.

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⁴⁴ See Wöhrle, *Sammlungen*, 285–385.387–460.

⁴⁵ In the Bagoes story of Josephus the temple's defilement by the Persians and the period of suppression is also understood as a divine punishment, but in this case especially for the crime of the high priest, cf. §300.

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