

Preface

This book contains the fruit of a three-day international symposium – held in memory of the late Prof. Shaul Shaked – in Dec. 2022 at the university of Haifa. Prof. Shaked (05 March 1933–27 October 2021) was born in Debrecen, Hungary in 1933 and migrated with his family to Palestine one year later. His studies in secondary school in Haifa under the renowned Islamicist scholar Meir J. Kister led to him pursuing academic studies in Arabic Language and Literature and Semitic Philology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where he earned his BA in 1955 and his MA in Arabic Language and Literature and Comparative Religion in 1960. He continued and pursued his PhD in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London – first under Walter Bruno Henning and then with Mary Boyce – which he completed in 1964. Following his PhD, Shaked returned to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and taught there until his retirement in 2001. His memory lives on in the minds of his many students, colleagues, and friends remember him as a ground-breaking and generous scholar, an out-of-the-box thinker and a permanently curious and productive mind. He has been a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities since 1986.

The field of Iranian studies in general and of Jewish-Iranian connections in antiquity in particular owes a tremendous debt to Prof. Shaked's scholarship over his erudite articles covering every period – from the Achaemenid era through Elephantine, Qumran, and Persepolis, to the Parthian and Sassanian empires and from ostraca and papyri to amulets and magic bowls. Shaked published a series of volumes from 1982 to 2019 under the title *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages* and organized a series of conferences on this topic. His final *magnum opus*, which unfortunately he did not live to see through, is the Middle Persian Dictionary Project (MPDP) – a pioneering Digital Humanities project marrying a vast corpus on textual data with sophisticated technology. It is in the spirit of Prof. Shaked's scholarship, his vision and his collaborative and innovative approach that the 2022 conference as well as this book were conceived. May they be a worthy contribution to his memory.

The contributions to this book study the touchpoints between Yahwistic communities throughout the Achaemenid empire and the Iranian attributes of the empire that ruled over them for about two centuries. This is arguably the most formative period in the development, redaction and composition of some of the most central texts within the Jewish canon. However, there has historically been too little dialogue between scholars of Achaemenid history and Iranian linguistics and those of Jewish history, the Bible and archeology. To respond to these lacunae, both the conference and the present book take a fundamentally interdisciplinary

approach. They bring together scholars of Achaemenid history, literature and religion, Iranian linguistics, historians of the Ancient Near East, archeologists, biblical scholars and Semiticists – and encourage dialogue and cross-fertilization between these fields. The goal is to better understand the interchange of ideas, expressions and concepts as well as the experience of historical events between Yahwists and the empire that ruled over them for over two centuries. All the lectures from the conference were video-recorded and streamed live during conference and are available at the conference's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@yahwistichistory>) which makes for an excellent companion to the present book.

The Yahwistic colony on the island of Elephantine at the Nile's first cataract, facing modern-day Aswan (ancient Syene) during the Achaemenid period, is central in one way or another to almost all of the studies presented in this book. This community has left us the most extensive and varied corpus of documents documenting Yahwistic daily life from that period. It is from these documents that we can learn about cultic practices, administration, language and forms of expression, historical events, communication with Yehud and Samaria as well as with imperial authorities and the many ethnic groups that lived in close proximity to them.

Since many of the articles are, by design, interdisciplinary, and combine several fields together, this book is not organized according to subject matter, but alphabetically. The first contribution, by Gad Barnea, offers a new and detailed analysis of P. Berlin 13464 which is famously known as the "Passover papyrus." Barnea presents a detailed epigraphic study of the papyrus, including the history of its previous publications and suggests that since there is no hint of a Passover or a feast of Maššot being known and observed prior to the Hellenistic period, another cultic observance could fit the description better. This, according to Barnea, is the Zoroastrian *yasna* – specifically, the Haoma-drinking ritual intended to purify those who partake in it. Unlike the Passover or the Maššot festival, this ritual is well documented in the Achaemenid period and the cultic assimilation of the Yahwists with Achaemenid-Zoroastrianism was so strong that they had an *'atrwdn* – a Zoroastrian fire-altar – in their temple to Yhw.

Moving from Elephantine to Samaria, Diana Edelman presents a comprehensive study of the archeology and cultic profile of the sacred structures in that Achaemenid Province – both at the city of Samaria and at Mt. Gerizim – the development of which she traces from a possible Iron Age IIC date to Hellenistic times. She offers two options for which character of the deity Yhwh was honored in Samaria: Yhwh Shomron, with or without his Asherah, and Yhwh Elohim and notes that both have implications for the composition of the Pentateuch. Finally, she makes the suggestion that the governor of Samaria in the Achaemenid period, Sanballat the Harranite, may have been directly involved in the commissioning

of Pentateuch. His epithet refers to the city of Harran, which figures multiple times in the patriarchal origin stories of Abraham and Jacob but only three times elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

Back at Elephantine, Margaretha Folmer's contribution studies words of Persian and Egyptian origin (classified either as loanwords or as context switching) in documents written by Yahwists who lived on Elephantine or who were writing from other places in Egypt to family members in Elephantine. In both cases, she shows an accelerating use of the adopted terms from the second half of the fifth century BCE towards the end of that century. It is not surprising that loanwords tend to be more commonly found in official correspondence but are practically absent from the private letters and ostraca. Her conclusion is that the variety of Aramaic spoken by the Elephantine Yahwists was not deeply influenced by Old Persian vocabulary. Greater language familiarity can be detected with regards to Egyptian language "code-switching." the scribes of the Yahwistic community were familiar enough with the Egyptian terms used to analyse them grammatically and syntactically – which can probably serve as an indication that they possessed an intimate familiarity with the Egyptian language.

In the fourth contribution, Benedikt Hensel looks at Yahwism in Idumea during the Persian Period. He looks at archeological, epigraphic and biblical sources and shows that, much like other parts of the Achaemenid empire, Idumea during that period hosted a variety of ethnicities. However, the Yahwists living there formed the second largest group. That said, Hensel underlines the existence of multiple Yahwisms in the Persian period from which, according to Hensel, early Judaism emerged.

Moving from the Idumeans to the Samaritan diaspora in Egypt, Tawny Holm presents her work on Samaritans in P. Amherst 63. Only one passage in this papyrus mentions Samaria and Samaritans explicitly (the Samaritan-Judean arrival poem in xvii 1–6), however, clear northern traits are found in some of the hymns in this document dedicated to the Yahwistic deity Yahō/Adonay. Several of these hymns demonstrate that Yahō may be identified with the Aramean deity Bethel while retaining his superior position relative to all the gods, including Baʿal. The papyrus also serves as a witness to the close – even familial – relations between Judeans and Samaritans and possibly hints at both groups seeking refuge in a foreign land. Probably in Egypt.

Itamar Kislev delves into the Hebrew Bible – specifically the so-called "Priestly Source" (P), in a quest to find evidence for influence of the Achaemenid Zoroastrian cultic fire. Kislev noted six interpolations of differing levels of certainty relating to the sanctity of the fire in these sources such as the commandment to maintain a perpetual fire on the altar, the first being seen as coming from Yhwh and, as such, being viewed as "divine," as opposed to "alien fire," which is strictly prohibi-

ed. His analysis points to these text being Persian-period interpolations and he also suggests that they occurred very late in that period – consistent with the assumed dating of the development of the Achaemenid fire temples.

Staying in the realm of cultic practices, Ingo Kottsieper investigates the changes in the nomenclature of the divine name *Yhh* (יהה) and *Yhw* (יהו) at Elephantine as well as the use of the terms *Šb't* (צבאת) and *Mr' Hšmy'* (מרא השמיא). Through this evolution, he posits that the community initially maintained the traditions it brought with it from Palestine, but started developing other naming conventions in the second half of the fifth century BCE. Within this latter period, he sees the designation of the community as *Hyl' Yhwdy'* (הילא יהודיא) – first recorded in 420–419 BCE – and its aftermath, as a significant event leading to a new terminology and ethnic characteristics.

Returning to biblical traditions, Reinhard Kratz ponders the place of “biblical” Yahwism in the Persian period comparing it with Yahwism found in epigraphic sources of the time. The point is mainly methodological and conceptual – calling for a more critical approach to the study of Yahwism during that period, underlining the importance of giving precedence to the archaeological and epigraphic findings for the historical reconstruction of the history of Judaism and Yahwism in Achaemenid times and using the results as a foundation for everything else, subordinating the biblical sources to this blueprint. Specifically, he notes that the particular brand and characteristics of Yahwism found in the Hebrew Bible are found nowhere in the epigraphic sources of the period and thus must have been very limited in their adoption. The “biblical” brand only became popularized in later periods – especially under the Hasmoneans.

Archeologist Oded Lipschits looks at life among the ruins of Jerusalem in the Persian period and its interpretation. The ruins served as a “landscape of memory” wherein the people lived surrounded by vestiges of past glories that are to be reanimated. Two schools of thought emerged in this situation: those who wanted to rebuild at the earliest opportunity and those who waited for a divine signal prior to doing so. This can, for example, be detected in the prophecy of Ezekiel (36:10, 33–38) who considers the ruins as evidence of Yhwh’s power and their potential restoration as dependent on the purification of sins, the deity’s forgiveness, and the rebuilding of the land that will come only at the appointed time. Thus the ruins among which the small populace of Jerusalem lived, served also as a backdrop for theological contemplation.

James D. Moore, focuses on the administration of cult at Elephantine and specifically on the role of its temple. His analysis of the data shows that the temple of Yhw seems to have been more than a cultic center. It was also center of administration – as was the case across the ancient Near East, and as was expected by the Achaemenid overseers. It thus would have served principally as

an economic hub for the community – which, according to Moore, was, in fact, its primary role, over and above the cultic. It would also have served in a judicial capacity as a community court.

Offering an Iranist perspective, Antonio Panaino proposes a new study of Cyrus as a Messiah – seen in its ancient Iranian context and viewing its representation in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament as a “Theology of Power.” This is supported through various later traditions that reflect the connection between Cyrus and Jesus as *personae sacrae*: the legendary view of Cyrus serving as a model for representing Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ; traditions that present the prediction, made by Zoroaster himself, about the birth of Jesus; the miraculous birth of the three posthumous sons of the Iranian prophet, the last of whom, i.e., the *Saošiiant-* (in Pahlavi *Sōšyans*) was expected to resurrect the dead. Panaino shows that late antiquity Jews and Christians had used the image of Cyrus in sometimes opposing ways.

Laurie Pearce treats the question of Ezra’s ban on marriages with foreign wives from the perspective of Babylonia in the Achaemenid period. She provides a review of examples from that region and shows that concerns regarding the administration of marriage both in Ezra’s account and in Babylonia share a background of considerations of regulating marriage, divorce, and inheritance. She concludes that the specifically Jewish marriage ban promulgated by Ezra can best be understood not as a unique event in the region at the time, but as one example out of many cases of reacting to political and economic change in the early to mid-fifth century BCE.

Bezalel Porten traces the evolution of variants of Yawhistic names across different communities and focuses specifically on the form *Yama* found in the Babylonian sources as compared to the more expected forms found at Elephantine and the Bible. He concludes that the names served as identity markers for the Yahwistic communities, which maintained these names from generation to generation.

Returning to the archeological perspective, Michael Shenkar looks at the origin of the Fire-Temples and the phenomenon of the “ever burning fire” within a closed structure in the Achaemenid empire. While fire played a central role in Iranian cult for generations prior to the that period, the evidence for a constantly sustained fire at that time is limited – although it cannot be excluded. Shenkar posits that the closed temple model developed in the Iranian world only after the Macedonian conquest.

Konrad Schmid brings us back to the Hebrew Bible and studies the theory of the Persian imperial authorization of local regulations and the Torah as a force that contributed to its formation from D and P sources. The Pentateuch, according to Schmid, reflects reactions to Achaemenid rule that are hard to reconcile – on one hand it implicitly represents that era as the “end of history,” while simulta-

neously contesting this characterization, showing that history itself could very well lead to other conclusions.

Remaining in the Pentateuch, Stefan Schorch looks at its transmission in the Persian period – specifically in its Samaritan variant. He notes that it is this version which clearly reflects the elaboration of the Pentateuchal text both as a closed text and as an open text (specifically with regards to Deuteronomy). Thus, the transmission of the text in the Achaemenid period should primarily be understood as that of a “cluster text” rather than that of a unified text.

Jason Silverman examines Yahwism as a “religious field” during the Achaemenid era by using Bourdieu’s theoretical system. He analyzes such concepts as religious capital and supernatural social capital, which prove useful in understanding internal evolution within a cultic system (e.g., the introduction of a new feast).

Karel van der Toorn looks at the expressions *dātu* (or *dātu ša šarri*) in the Achaemenid period – expressions which refer to a written compendium containing royal decisions that must be followed without alteration. This concept, he shows, is fundamentally different from that found in the Torah. He points out the evolution in the sense of the word Torah – from “instruction, teaching” to, in the Persian period, something more similar to a law code, which is the way in which it was understood by the leadership of the province Yehud.

Finally, Ran Zadok’s contribution, which closes the book looks at evidence for Israelites (in the broad sense of the term) in the Iranian sphere. While evidence is scarce to non-existent prior to the Achaemenid period, the area surrounding Babylon at the time became the hotbed of a Judeo-Iranian interaction. Zadok complements his scholarship with a look at the the Iranian “Age of Empires” in general, including the Parthian and Sasanian eras and a vast amount of supporting data. The article is accompanied by an alphabetical list and a lengthy appendix meticulously analyzing the names found in the various sources across this long period.

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