

New Perspectives on Ezra-Nehemiah: History and Historiography, Text, Literature, and Interpretation. Edited by ISAAC KALIMI. Winona Lake, Ind.: EISENBRAUNS, 2012. Pp. xv + 296, illus. \$49.50.

According to the editor's introduction, "The purpose of this volume is to introduce the reader to the latest views on Ezra/Ezra-Nehemiah based on present research" (p. 1). In providing a well-rounded treatment of several aspects of current research, the writers have accomplished this goal.

Lisbeth Fried begins the set of essays with an interesting theory that the writer of Ezra 1–6 utilized Hellenistic rules of rhetoric. She claims the inclusion of primary documents, such as lists of temple vessels (Ezra 1:9–11) and the returnees to Judah (Ezra 2), follows a technique of Greek historians to bolster credibility (pp. 17–18). Also, the use of narrative and proofs, according to Fried, reflects Hellenistic practice (cf. 4:1–23). The question is how much direct Greek influence to allow in Ezra-Nehemiah when no Greek is used in the text. Could some of these "tactics" be cross-cultural in the ancient world?

The essay of Lester Grabbe forms a counter-balance to the trend to search for Hellenistic influences in Ezra-Nehemiah. Grabbe cautions against unwarranted identifications. Focusing on Greek models of leadership, he argues that while some comparisons can be made to Nehemiah's role, this does not mean that Nehemiah followed these role models when making his decisions. In fact, according to Grabbe, Nehemiah is not enacting the same rules as Solon (except in the case of debt cancellation) or Pericles. He points rather to biblical models and, to a lesser degree, Mesopotamian and Egyptian models for Nehemiah's reforms.

Don Polaski regards Nehemiah as a colonial governor caught between imperial edicts and the effort to forge his own realm of control. He sees the Nehemiah Memoir as a redactor's attempt to present Nehemiah as a Persian official who uses texts for authority. However, Polaski is struck by the fact that Nehemiah does not cite either the Persian imperial law or the law of Moses in his efforts to reform his society, relying rather on his position as governor and oral tradition.

Klaas Smelik compares Nehemiah to the *Hofjuden*, "court Jews" of the seventeenth-eighteenth-century German states. In so doing, he reminds the reader of the difficult position of Jews in government, in both ancient and modern history, trying to mediate between their communities and the crown. Smelik points out that Nehemiah could conceive plans for rebuilding Jerusalem, but, like the "court Jews," he had to demonstrate that the project was also advantageous to the king. This essay is interesting from a socio-historical perspective.

Oded Lipschits examines the sources and purpose of the list of builders of the wall around Jerusalem in Nehemiah 3. He argues that the list is placed at the beginning of the process by the editor in order to emphasize the role and importance of Nehemiah. This endorsement comes not only by God's will, but by national consensus. This conclusion seems reasonable. A strong sub-argument in the essay concerns the translation of *הִרְזִיק* in Nehemiah 3. According to Lipschitz, the verb should not be translated, as is usually done, as "repaired, rebuilt, or built." Rather, he insists that the verb refers to financial support. This definition seems rather restrictive. Although Lipschits demonstrates that the verb can indicate financial support, it is not clear why it should be restricted to that sense.

David Ussishkin revives an earlier argument that the limits of the wall Nehemiah built encompass the southwestern hill of ancient Jerusalem following eighth-century-B.C.E. walls. The majority of scholars follow a "minimalist" understanding which limits the borders of the city to the Temple Mount and the City of David. Ussishkin successfully debunks the notion that Nehemiah's account reflects the building of a Hasmonean city wall based on toponyms which were landmarks in the First Temple period, but not the second (e.g., "the upper king's house," "the court of the prison," and "the horse gate," Neh. 3:25–28). Nevertheless, Ussishkin's argument for a "maximalist" city remains speculative in light of the lack of archaeological support for habitation on the southwestern hill during Persian times.

In "The Theological Ideas behind Nehemiah's Wall," Manfred Oeming reminds us that the (re-)construction of the wall was not driven solely by military, economic, and political factors, but by theological ones as well. Rather, it reflected a burgeoning identity on the part of Nehemiah and his community. Oeming notices the expansion of the idea of temple to a temple city, emphasizing the notion that God

needs a sacred city, i.e., a protected Temple area in which his name dwells and his will is done. Less convincing, however, is his claim that Nehemiah's wall reflected a Hasmonean rather than a Persian-period reality.

Ran Zadok presents various issues in current scholarship surrounding Nehemiah too numerous to explore here. He provides a helpful compendium for anyone wishing to discover the main knotty problems confronting scholars today and supplies his own views. Zadok cogently argues that the Temple cult follows norms set out in first-millennium Babylonia (e.g., a militia accompanies the workmen of the temple).

The second part of the book focuses on text, literature, and interpretation. David Marcus presents a fascinating explanation of the doublets and catchwords in the Masorah, rabbinic comments in the margins of the biblical text. Marcus argues that this data has value not only for preservation of the correct text and as an aid to memory but also for exegesis. For example, the Masorah notes that the description that Ezra during mourning "did not eat bread" (Ezra 10:6) is a phrase referring only to Moses elsewhere in Scripture. This notation may be an implicit comment that Ezra should be given a status comparable to Moses.

Deirdre Fulton examines the list of settlers in Neh. 11:25–36 in both the MT and LXX versions. She concludes that the LXX is the earlier, as it is much shorter. She attempts to sort out the reality behind the texts in regard to the Judahite, Benjaminite, and Levite settlement in Persian and post-Persian Judah.

Paul Redditt tackles the problem of the considerable difference between the subtotals of the settlers in Ezra 2/Neh. 7 in comparison to the actual totals at the end of the lists. He argues that only the persons included in the subtotals are the people the author considers to be truly Israel. The totals represent both "true" Israel and others in the community. However, Redditt's interpretation requires too much work from the reader. If it was the author's intent to delineate the numbers of "true" Israel from unauthorized persons, why did he not make that clear? He certainly is not subtle on this point elsewhere.

Joseph Fleishman claims that Nehemiah's request (Neh. 2:1–9) to King Artaxerxes reveals strategies based on the assumption that the Persian kings were Zoroastrians. For example, their concern with care for the dead is highlighted in Nehemiah's request to travel to Jerusalem to repair the graves of his ancestors. Fleishman also points out that the reference to Jerusalem's destruction as "consumed by fire" (a *hapax legomenon*) may be a purposeful way of telling the king that fire, sacred to Zoroastrians, had been wrongfully utilized, and hence the city's walls must be rebuilt. Fleishmann explains Nehemiah's "bad/sad" face as giving a message to the king that he was impure. This point seems a bit of a reach, since, while Ezra-Nehemiah does on occasion employ purity terms, none are mentioned in Nehemiah's request.

Mark Boda's contribution rounds out the palette of essays with a literary analysis of Nehemiah focusing on its prayers. He argues that the first part of Nehemiah (Neh. 1–6) focuses on his development of the community's infrastructure, while the second part (Neh. 7–13) treats the spiritual renewal of the community. He points out that the two longest prayers (Neh. 1 and 9) accentuate this shift in the shape of the book and he raises the question as to the possibility of "inner rhetorical logic" and even separate authorship for Nehemiah and Ezra (p. 276).

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In the failed hope of preserving the "Languages and Cultures of the Christian Orient" chair at Tübingen beyond the anticipated retirement of Stephen Gerö (chair, 1980–2008), the university's Catholic and Protestant faculties organized a series of conferences on "The Christian East in Late Antiquity." This collection of essays gathers nine papers from the first of these conferences: "*Syrien im*