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In Nehemiah's Footsteps? Uzziah at the Service of the Chronicler's Ideology

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Article abstract

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IN NEHEMIAH'S FOOTSTEPS? UZZIAH AT THE SERVICE OF THE CHRONICLER'S IDEOLOGY *

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Uzziah ruled in Judah for many years, yet the description in the book of Kings is laconic. On the other hand, the book of Chronicles provides an extensive description of his reign that stems from the author's ideology, theology, and process of identity formation. The book of Ezra-Nehemiah, written several decades before Chronicles, describes a series of confrontations from four directions, while Uzziah's battles with the Philistines, the Arab tribes, and the Ammonites face three of these fronts. The Chronicler was aware of this text or its narrative and developed the figure of Uzziah as a great king, thus serving his own national, economic, ethnic, and religious goals.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that the book of Chronicles was written at the end of the Persian Period or the beginning of the Hellenistic period,[1] several decades after Ezra-Nehemiah. The relationship between the compositions and their phases can be complicated.[2] By

* This paper is based on E. Gluska, "The Description of the Days of Uzziah: In the Service of the Chronicler's Ideology" (MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2021 [Hebrew]). The thesis was prepared under the supervision of Prof. Oded Lipschits from the Department of Archaeology and Ancient Eastern Studies, Tel Aviv University. We wish to thank Prof. Ehud Ben Zvi for his valuable comments on the MA thesis.

[1] K. Peltonen, "A Jigsaw without a Model? The Date of Chronicles," in *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period*, ed. L.L. Grabbe (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic), 225–271; G.N. Knoppers, 2004. *I Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 12 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 101–117; R.W. Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 13–16.

[2] L.C. Jonker, "Levites, Holiness and Late Achaemenid / Early Hellenistic Literature Formation: Where Does Ezra-Nehemiah Fit into the Discourse?," in *Chronicles and the Priestly Literature of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. J. Jeon and L.C. Jonker, BZAW 528 (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 391–

examining the special nature of Chronicles, we shall address the significant differences between the texts related to Uzziah in the books of Chronicles and Kings, and show that the description of Uzziah's period reflects the reality of Persian Period Judah. The inhabitants of Judah were in the midst of an identity formation process between an inclusive approach and separatists, who saw religious, cultural, and social separation as a means of ethnic survival. This process is reflected in Chronicles in general and that chapter in particular.

In this paper, we propose that there is a geographical similarity between Uzziah's rivals (2 Chr 26:6−8) and Nehemiah's adversaries (Neh 4:1 MT, 13:22–24). The Samaritans are no longer a target for an attack at the time of the Chronicler, but the Philistine cities to the west, the Arab tribes to the south, and Ammon to the east are three of the four fronts represented by Nehemiah's rivals. Uzziah's attack expresses an antagonism against economically superior areas, inflicted with idolatry, but also containing a Judahite-oriented population, which was considered a part of "All Israel". We suggest that the Chronicler was aware of this Ezra-Nehemiah text or its narrative, and developed the figure of Uzziah to serve his own ideology. We will argue that the ideological, ethnic, religious, cultural, and economic aspects of the time of composition are reflected in the story of Uzziah.

After presenting a short overview of the biblical narrative and the archaeology of Judah during Uzziah's reign, putting a question mark on his territorial expansion (2 Chr 26 6−8), we will describe the geographical reality of Judah in the Persian Period. We will then elaborate on the figure of Uzziah in the book of Chronicles, suggest a literary connection between Nehemiah and Uzziah, and list the ideological impetuses behind the way in which the literary character of Uzziah was formed.

THE BIBLICAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL SETTING

THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVES OF UZZIAH

Uzziah served as king of Judah for many years without leaving a large mark in the book of Kings. During the first half of the eighth century BCE, the kingdom of Judah continued its gradual development and enjoyed relative peace alongside the kingdom of Israel, which was reaching its peak before the dark clouds of the Assyrian storm started gathering. At some point, Judah was perhaps no longer a subordinate of Israel, and both kingdoms cooperated mainly at the economic level.[3]

416; For dating see E.B. Farisani, "The Composition and Date of Ezra-Nehemiah," *OTE* 17.2 (2004): 208–230.

[3] N. Na'aman, "Azariah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel," *VT* 43.2 (1993): 227–234; N. Na'aman, "Samaria and Judah in an Early 8th-Century Assyrian Wine List," *TA* 46.1 (2019): 12–20.

The description of the reign of King Uzziah[4] in the book of Kings (2 Kgs 14:21–22; 15:1–7) is extremely short,[5] despite lasting a long 52 years (788/7–736/5 BCE).[6] The only specific details of his reign are the construction of Elath (2 Kgs 14:22) and Uzziah's leprosy, which led to a coregency with his son Jotham (2 Kgs 15:5). Uzziah became king at sixteen, after his father, Amaziah, was defeated by Joash (2 Kgs 14:8–14); he probably took the throne under the auspices of the king of Israel.[7]

The relations between the two kingdoms were subject to fluctuation, and Judah was probably under the shadow of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II.[8] The parallel description in the book of Chronicles (2 Chr 26:1–23) was elaborated significantly, giving additional material detailing territorial achievements, building projects, agricultural development, and the formation of a large army. The second part (vv. 16–21) describes Uzziah's sin of vanity, leading to improper incense sacrifice in the temple, a confrontation with the priests, and a punishment in the form of leprosy.[9]

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[4] The name "Azariah" is used in Kings, meaning "God's help," while Chronicles, Amos, and Isaiah use the name "Uzziah" ("God's power"). This can be understood as a variation of the name or a regnal name; see J. Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 2nd ed., OTL (London: SCM, 1970), 569; M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 11 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 165. It could also be a name used by the Chronicler to avoid confusion about the high priest Azariah, as suggested by J.M. Myers, *II Chronicles*, AB 13 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 149. It is probably a Midrash, as suggested by I. Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 105–106. By this name change, the help of God is symbolically transferred to the high priest; see P.C. Beentjes, *Tradition and Transformation in the Book of Chronicles*, SSN 52 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 83. We use the more common name 'Uzziah' in this article, an outcome of the popular adoption of the "more impressive" Chronicles narrative.

[5] Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 158–168.

[6] The chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah raises a lot of problems and debates due to inconsistent data, counting methods, and coregency between a king and his son. We follow N. Na'aman, "Historical and Chronological Notes on the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Eighth Century BC," *VT* 36.1 (1986): 71–92; N. Na'aman, "The Kingdom of Judah in the Ninth Century BCE: Text Analysis versus Archaeological Research," *TA* 40.2 (2013): 247–276. Other methods vary slightly.

[7] N. Na'aman, "The Royal Dynasties of Judah and Israel," *ZABR* 22 (2016): 59–73.

[8] Na'aman, "Azariah"; I. Finkelstein, "State Formation in Israel and Judah," *NEA* 62.1 (1999): 35–52.

[9] S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM, 1993), 873–889; H.G.M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 447–454; L.C. Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 254–257.

The book of Chronicles has become the "Cinderella of biblical research"[10] in recent decades.[11] There are diverse opinions among researchers regarding its historical reliability and its usage of ancient sources besides the obvious Samuel-Kings *Vorlage*.[12] The general opinion is that Chronicles was written in the fourth century BCE, at the end of the Persian Period or the beginning of the Hellenistic Period.[13] While its genre is historiographic, it is accepted that the author either manipulated his sources or provided his own additions (the "*Sondergut*").[14] Therefore, the historicity of Chronicles is controversial, leading to the need to examine each case by itself, specifically taking into account the author's concept of immediate retribution.[15] The goal was to recount "what really happened" not in the sense of historical truth but by casting a new meaning on past events.[16] The Chronicler[17] is usually considered the historian of his generation, not

[10] J.W. Kleinig, "Recent Research in Chronicles," *CurBR* 2 (1994): 43.

[11] For a detailed history of research on the book of Chronicles, see Kleinig, "Recent Research"; R.K. Duke, "Recent Research in Chronicles," *CurBR* 8.1 (2009): 10–50. For detailed thematic introductions covering text criticism, the use of ancient sources, multiple editions, the identity of the author and his time, and its place in the biblical canon, see G.N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 12 (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 37–147; R.W. Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 1–50; R.W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 1–12. For a comprehensive review of identity formation approaches in Chronicles, see L.C. Jonker, *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles: Multi-Levelled Identity Negotiation in Late Persian-Period Yehud*, FAT 106 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 25–64.

[12] K. Peltonen, "Function, Explanation and Literary Phenomena: Aspects of Source Criticism as Theory and Method in the History of Chronicles Research," in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, ed. M.P. Graham and S.L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 263 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 18–69; Knoppers, *1 Chronicles*, 118–126; Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 30–44; Duke, "Recent Research," 23–28, with references.

[13] Peltonen, "Jigsaw"; Knoppers, *1 Chronicles*, 101–117; Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 13–16.

[14] Kleinig, "Recent Research," 44–45.

[15] Peltonen, "Function"; Knoppers, *1 Chronicles*, 126–128; Duke, "Recent Research," 127–128; S. Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*, First Published as BEATAJ 9 (1989) (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 1–8; Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, 1–13.

[16] E. Ben Zvi, "Observations on Ancient Modes of Reading of Chronicles and Their Implications, with an Illustration of Their Explanatory Power for the Study of the Account of Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25)," in *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles*, ed. E. Ben Zvi (London; Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2006), 44–77.

[17] It is unclear whether one or more authors composed the book of Chronicles. There is no real proof that it is a work of a "school"; see S. Japhet, "The Relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Congress Volume Leuven 1989*, ed. J.A. Emerton, VTSup 43 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 298–313. It is therefore conventional to attribute the composition to

just in his use of sources to present history as a sequence of cause and effect[18] but rather by using various sophisticated literary techniques to present an agenda rather than reporting actual events.[19] As we will see, the chapter about Uzziah fits into the description of historiography bearing a theological and territorial agenda.

The description of the days of Uzziah typically follows this pattern of immediate retribution. The first part of his reign is successful, a reward for "seeking God." The second part describes a sin followed by immediate punishment. While researchers debate the historicity of the first section,[20] particularly regarding territorial achievements, the second is considered purely ideological.[21] It is, therefore, necessary to examine what led the author, living in the province of Yehud during the fourth century BCE, to write such a description.

UZZIAH'S TERRITORIAL ACHIEVEMENTS?

The archaeology of the days of Uzziah provides very scant collaborative findings. Uzziah's lifetime, in the first half of the eighth century BCE, was a transition period between the Iron Age IIA and the Iron IIB.[22] Control over the trade routes in the south was of particular importance to the prospering kingdom of Israel with Judah by its side.[23] This may explain the endeavors in the Arabah Valley

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a single author, "the Chronicler."

[18] So S. Japhet, "Chronicles: A History," in *Das Alte Testament – Ein Geschichtsbuch?*, ed. U. Becker and J. van Oorschot, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 17 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005), 129–146.

[19] Kalimi, *Reshaping*, 406–408; I. Kalimi, "Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context: A Closer Examination," *JNES* 68.3 (2009): 179.

[20] For the tendency to accept the historicity of this description, see, for example, Williamson, *Chronicles*, 334–335; Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 879. Some researchers considered Uzziah a prominent king following his identification with the "Azriyau" of Assyrian inscriptions; see H. Tadmor, "Azriyau of Yaudi," *ScrHier* 8 (1961): 232–272; G. Rinaldi, "Quelques remarques sur la politique d'Azarias (Ozias) de Juda en Philistie (2 Chron 26, 6ss)," in *Congress Volume Bonn 1962*, ed. T. Deák, VTSup 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 225–235. This identification is no longer accepted; see N. Na'aman, "Sennacherib's 'Letter to God' on His Campaign to Judah," *BASOR* 214 (1974): 25–39. Others relate this presentation to the reality of the time of the author in the Persian Period; see Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, 6–10.

[21] Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 883–888; Beentjes, *Tradition*, 79–80.

[22] Z. Herzog and L. Singer-Avitz, "Redefining the Centre: The Emergence of State in Judah," *TA* 31.2 (2004): 209–244; I. Finkelstein and E. Piasetzky, "Radiocarbon-Dated Destruction Layers: A Skeleton for Iron Age Chronology in the Levant," *OJA* 28.3 (2009): 255–274; H. Katz, "The Pottery Assemblage of the Eighth Century," in *Archaeology and History of Eighth-Century Judah*, ed. Z.I. Farber and J.L. Wright, Ancient Near East Monographs 23 (Atlanta: SBL, 2018), 307–336; A. Wrathall, O. Lipschits, and Y. Gadot, "Beyond the Southern Horizon," *IEJ* 71.1 (2021): 15–42.

[23] Na'aman, "Azariah"; I. Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel*, ANEM 5 (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 129–139.

against Edom,[24] the construction of Elath,[25] and the establishment of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, an Israelite way-post on the Darb el-Gaza, the trade route leading from Gulf of Eilat to the port of Gaza.[26] Aharoni's map[27] roughly describes the borders of Judah during Uzziah's reign, although it relies heavily on the text in 2 Chronicles 26, with expansion into Edom and control over the Jaffa-Jabneh coastal area (albeit excluding Ashdod).

The territorial achievements of Uzziah (2 Chr 26:6–8) specify several entities: three Philistine cities—Ashdod, Jabneh, and Gath—the Arabs at Gur-Baal and the Meunite tribes, as well as Ammon. Hudon claimed that this story is not entirely impossible[28] but concluded, "The evidence presented above falls short of providing a conclusive confirmation that Judah expanded into Philistia during the reign of Uzziah."[29] It is unlikely that Uzziah had any control over Ashdod or Jabneh; Gath may have perhaps been the only possible expansion. Gath was destroyed around 830 BCE by Hazael, king of Aram-Damascus, and had a Judahite phase during the eighth century BCE.[30] A confrontation with Arab tribes around the trade routes leading to Gaza makes sense as well. The Meunites are also mentioned in an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III as one tribe in that area.[31] The Ammonites (MT v. 8) appear as "Meunite" in the LXX, indicating a possible textual distortion in the MT, and it is unlikely that Judah had control over any areas in Transjordan during the reigns of Jeroboam II or Pekah, just before the Assyrians took over the region.

Building projects and agricultural development are not unreasonable for a king who reigned for so many years.[32] Renovations in

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[24] N. Na'aman, "Judah and Edom in the Book of Kings and in Historical Reality," in *New Perspectives on Old Testament Prophecy and History: Essays in Honor of Hans M. Berstad*, ed. R.I. Thelle, T. Stordalen, and M.E.J. Richardson, VTSup 168 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 197–211.

[25] G.D. Pratico, "Nelson Glueck's 1938–1940 Excavations at Tell el-Kheleifeh: A Reappraisal," *BASOR* 259 (1993): 1–32.

[26] I. Finkelstein, "Notes on the Historical Setting of Kuntillet ʿAjrud," *Maarav* 20.1 (2013): 13–25; N. Na'aman, "A New Outlook at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Its Inscriptions," *Maarav* 20.1 (2013): 39–51.

[27] Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, revised ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 343.

[28] J.P. Hudon, "The Expansion of Judah under Uzziah into Philistia: The Historical Credibility of 2 Chronicles 26:6–7a in Light of Archaeological Evidence" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2016).

[29] *Ibid.*, 318.

[30] J.R. Chadwick and A.M. Maeir, "Judahite Gath in the Eighth Century BCE: Finds in Area F from the Earthquake to the Assyrians," *NEA* 81.1 (2018): 48–54.

[31] H. Tadmor and S. Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726-722 BC), Kings of Assyria*, ed. S. Yamada and J.R. Novotny, RINAP 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 125–128.

[32] E. Ben Zvi, "The Chronicler as a Historian: Building Texts," in *The*

Jerusalem are reasonable, taking into account the breaching of the wall by Joash (2 Kgs 14:13) as well as the strong earthquake that hit the area around 760 BCE, probably causing some damage as well.[33] The wilderness, plain, and Carmel (v. 10) need not necessarily refer to the Negev, the plain of Moab, and Mt. Carmel, but probably to the Judean desert, the eastern Shephelah, and its hills, all inside Judean territory.[34] The description of Uzziah's army, however, seems exaggerated and its numbers schematic,[35] and the number 307,500 is exactly half of 615,000 from the exodus narrative (Num 1:46; 26:51).[36]

Rather than seeking the historical or archeological reality of the description in 2 Chronicles 26, it makes more sense to look at the geopolitical situation and the *Sitz im Leben* of the author. The Jewish/Judahite[37] community was engaged in a continuous identity formation process, with Jerusalem and the temple at its center.

JUDAH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS DURING THE PERSIAN PERIOD

The small and poor province of Yehud was just a remote part of the *'Eber Nari'* ("Beyond the River") satrapy of the Persian Empire.[38] Its

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Chronicler as Historian, ed. M.P. Graham, K.G. Hoglund, and S.L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 238 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 132–149.

[33] S.A. Austin, G.W. Franz, and E.G. Frost, "Amos's Earthquake: An Extraordinary Middle East Seismic Event of 750 BC," *International Geology Review* 42.7 (2000): 657–671; J. Uziel and O. Khalaf, " 'And You Shall Flee as You Fled from the Earthquake in the Days of King Uzziah of Judah (Zechariah 14,5)': Archaeological Evidence for the Earthquake in the Capital of Judah," in *Researches on the City of David and Ancient Jerusalem, vol. 16*, ed. E. Meiron (Jerusalem: Megalim Institute, 2021), 67–78 [Hebrew].

[34] A.F. Rainey, "The Biblical Shephelah of Judah," *BASOR* 251 (1983): 1–22.

[35] N. Klein, "The Chronicler's Code: The Rise and Fall of Judah's Army in the Book of Chronicles," *JHS* 17.3 (1983): 1–20.

[36] F. Bianchi and G. Rossoni, "L'armée d'Ozias (2 Ch 26,11–15) entre fiction et réalité: une esquisse philologique et historique," *Transeu* 13 (1997): 21–37.

[37] It is unclear whether "who is a Jew" or "how to become a Jew" were firm concepts at that time. The usage of the term "Jew" is complex and can be understood in various ways: the inhabitants of Yehud during the Persian Period, an evolution of the Judahites from the Iron Age kingdom of Judah, or those practicing the Yahwistic cult. The distribution of people with an affinity to "Jewish" ethnicity, culture, or religion was no longer confined to the borders of the province of Yehud, and "Jewish identity" was an outcome of a long formation process throughout hundreds of years of the Second Temple period. See, for example, a definition in L.L. Grabbe, *History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, vol. 1*: Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah,* LSTS 47 (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 20.

[38] J. Elayi and J. Sapin, *Beyond the River: New Perspectives on Transeuphratene*, trans. J.E. Crowley, JSOTSup 250 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998),

borders are a subject of debate.[39] Yehud was mainly concentrated around Jerusalem, the only (yet rather small) urban center, while the rest was an agricultural periphery.[40] Around Yehud lay Samaria to the north, the Phoenician coast that was dominated by Tyre and Sidon to the northwest, Ashdod to the west, Ammon to the east, and Idumea to the south.[41] It seems that climate improvement and accelerated urbanization led to the establishment of the province of Idumea during the fourth century BCE.[42]

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah, the main historiographic source for Judah in this period, reflects this geopolitical situation.[43] It is structured as a set of episodes, describing the various stages of Judah's restoration, and reflecting of identity formation process in the context of the Persian Empire as well as the surrounding provinces.[44] The "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" (Ezra 4:1–3) are associated with total foreigners, the Samaritans who were rejected by Zerubbabel and Jeshua from participating in the temple building, but the following verses refer to "the people of the land" ("*ʿam hāʾāreṣ*") and

13–20; P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. P.T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 487–488.

[39] C.E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study*, JSOTSup 294 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); O. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 154–184.

[40] O. Lipschits, "Persian-Period Judah: A New Perspective," in *Texts, Contexts and Readings in Postexilic Literature: Explorations into Historiography and Identity Negotiation in Hebrew Bible and Related Texts*, ed. L.C. Jonker, FAT II/53 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 187–211; O. Lipschits, "The Rural Economy of Judah during the Persian Period and the Settlement History of the District System," in *The Economy of Ancient Judah in Its Historical Context*, ed. M.L. Miller, E. Ben Zvi, and G.N. Knoppers (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 237–264.

[41] E. Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: The Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian Periods 732–332 BC*, vol. 2, ed. A. Mazar and E. Stern, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 366–372; Grabbe, *History*, 355–366.

[42] D. Langgut and O. Lipschits, "Dry Climate during the Early Persian Period and Its Impact on the Establishment of Idumea," *Transeu* 49 (2017): 135–162; contra Y. Levin, "The Formation of Idumean Identity," *ARAM Periodical* 27 (2015): 187–202.

[43] For history of research, see G.A. Klingbeil, "Between the Traditional and the Innovative: Ezra-Nehemiah in Current Research," *RC* 3.2 (2009): 182–199.

[44] T.C. Eskenazi, "Imagining the Other in the Construction of Judahite Identity in Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Imagining the Other and Constructing Israelite Identity in the Early Second Temple Period*, ed. E. Ben Zvi and D. V. Edelman, LHBOTS 456 (London; New Delhi; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 230–256; G.N. Knoppers, *Judah and Samaria in Postmonarchic Times: Essays on Their Histories and Literatures*, FAT 129 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 15–36.

"the people of Judah,"[45] usually identified with internal factors.[46] Samaritan hostility to Judah is not emphasized in particular, and is mentioned among other rivalries.[47] One of the main motifs of the "Nehemiah Memoir"[48] is the adversaries of Nehemiah: Sanballat the Samaritan, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab. They usually appear together, although they are not necessarily contemporary.

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[45] "'*am hāʾāreṣ*" can be literally understood as people living in the land, or specifically in Judah. The common opinion is that, when the kingdom of Judah existed, it referred to an elite group intervening in times of crisis for the preservation of the house of David; see Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 157–158. For a detailed analysis, see C.R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah*, BZAW 176 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 42–65, with literature. Seitz supports the opinion that this was mainly a historiographic construct of the Deuteronomistic author, referring to the population concentrated in Jerusalem in particular. In Ezra, the author portrays them as outsiders, even though they were Judahites that remained in the land, in contrast to returning exiles; see L.L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Hoboken: Routledge, 1998), 134–135. It can still be an influential rich aristocracy, so the term retains some of its meaning, with foreign affiliation taking the place of the former Judahite elite, see L.S. Fried, "The *ʿam hāʾāreṣ* in Ezra 4:4 and Persian Imperial Administration," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. O. Lipschits and M. Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 123–145. On the other hand, see J.T. Thames, "A New Discussion of the Meaning of the Phrase *ʿam hāʾāreṣ* in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 130.1 (2011): 109–125. His conclusion is that no deep meaning should be associated with that term, referring to the public in general. Its meaning is flexible and depends on the textual context.

[46] S. Japhet, "People and Land in the Restoration Period," in *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Highlands of Judah*, ed. S. Japhet (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2006), 96–116.

[47] Knoppers, *Judah and Samaria*, 31–33.

[48] The Nehemiah Memoir consists of the parts appearing in first person; see J. Blenkinsopp, "The Nehemiah Autobiographical Memoir," in *Language, Theology, and the Bible: Essays in Honor of James Barr*, ed. S.E. Balentine and J. Barton (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 199–212. It is usually treated as a solid source for historical reconstruction; see S. Japhet, "Composition and Chronology in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Second Temple Studies 2: Temple Community in the Persian Period*, ed. T.C. Eskenazi and K.H. Richards, JSOTSup 175 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 189–216; S. Japhet, "Periodization between History and Ideology II: Chronology and Ideology in Ezra–Nehemiah," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. O. Lipschits and M. Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 491–508. Its exact content is debated, and the later editorial phases and theological tendencies make such a reconstruction difficult; see detailed analysis by J.L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers*, BZAW 348 (Berlin ; New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 340. A building account was extended by additions of prayers and speeches to reach the desired theological structure, eventually transforming Nehemiah from a builder to a religious reformer, as suggested by M.J. Boda, "Redaction in the Book of Nehemiah: A Fresh Proposal," in *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah*, ed. M.J. Boda and P.L. Redditt, Hebrew Bible Monographs 17 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 25–54.

Ashdod also appears among the opponents of the wall construction (Neh 4:1) and as the origin of foreign women (Neh 13:23–24). Nehemiah's adversaries may have been just personal conflicts, for he was a Persian emissary dropped over the heads of local elites, but they remained engrained in the national memory as hostile entities from four directions threatening the emergent Jewish entity.[49]

Samaria was perhaps the strongest province in the land.[50] The Yahwistic cult there was dominant, and some members of the Sanballat dynasty bore Yahwistic names. In contrast to the rejection of the Samaritans in Ezra-Nehemiah, the book of Chronicles has a more inclusive approach, seeing Samaria as a part of "All Israel"—as long as they fall under the wings of the Jerusalemite temple.[51] The establishment of the temple on Mt. Gerizim[52] and the diminishing economic interaction between Judah and Samaria indicate that the gap between them was widening, but it seems there was no real ongoing conflict between the two during the Persian Period.[53]

At this time, Ammon was recovering from the Babylonian destruction.[54] The Tobiads were a prominent Judahite family in that region for hundreds of years, well into the Hellenistic period.[55] Thus, Tobiah was actually an internal Judahite rival: He had a position among the nobles of Jerusalem and a foothold in the temple, which led to a confrontation with Nehemiah.

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[49] G.N. Knoppers, "Nehemiah and Sanballat: The Enemy Without or Within?," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E*, ed. O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraun, 2007), 305–331; S. Grätz, "The Adversaries in Ezra/Nehemiah — Fictitious or Real? A Case Study in Creating Identity in Late Persian and Hellenistic Times," in *Between Cooperation and Hostility*, ed. R. Albertz and J. Wöhrle, JAJSup 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 73–87; A. Fitzpatrick-McKinley, *Empire, Power, and Indigenous Elites: A Case Study of the Nehemiah Memoir*, JSJSup 169 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015).

[50] G.N. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 103–109.

[51] Grabbe, *History*, 155–159.

[52] E. Stern and I. Magen, "Archaeological Evidence for the First Stage of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim," *IEJ* 52.1 (2002): 49–57.

[53] B. Hensel, "On the Relationship of Judah and Samaria in Post-Exilic Times: A Farewell to the Conflict Paradigm," *JSOT* 44.1 (2019): 19–42.

[54] Stern, *Archaeology*, 454–460; O. Lipschits, "Ammon in Transition from Vassal Kingdom to Babylonian Province," *BASOR* 335 (2004): 37–52.

[55] B. Mazar, "The Tobiads," *IEJ* 7 (1957): 137–145; 229–238; D.V. Edelman, "Seeing Double: Tobiah the Ammonite as an Encrypted Character," *RB* 113.4 (2006): 570–584.

To the west, the province of Ashdod prospered during the Persian Period, particularly since the port cities were strategically significant to the empire.[56] *Favissae* were discovered in Ashdod,[57] Jabneh,[58] and Gath[59] indicating that the main cult in this area was Phoenician-oriented. Ashdod also appears as a cultural-linguistic threat (Neh 13:24). It is not clear what the "Ashdodite" language was, although it was probably a Phoenician-Aramaic dialect. Nehemiah might have fought the tendency to abandon the "Yehudit" language of the First Temple period (2 Kgs 18:26–28) for national-religious reasons, but actually, the Aramaic language was the one that became more and more widespread, and there was actually a transition from a bilingual to a monolingual society.[60]

The Arab tribes controlled the southern area, which retained its importance along the trade routes from Arabia to the Mediterranean coast. Analysis of theophoric names on ostraca findings has shown that the population was ethnically diverse.[61] The existence of the Meunite and Gur-Baal tribes reflects the reality of the Persian Period as well. Not only was the area superior from an economic aspect; it also contained a Judahite-oriented population, which was considered a part of "All Israel" from the Jerusalemite point of view.

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[56] Grabbe, *History*, 159–162; O. Lipschits, "Achaemenid Imperial Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the Fifth Century BCE," in *Judah and Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. O. Lipschits and M. Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 26–29.

[57] A. Fantalkin, "Ashdod-Yam on the Israeli Mediterranean Coast: A First Season of Excavations," *Skyllis Zeitschrift für Unterwasserarchäologie* 14.1 (2014): 45–57.

[58] R. Kletter, I. Ziffer, and W. Zwickel, "Cult Stands of the Philistines: A Genizah from Yavneh," *NEA* 69.3/4 (2006): 147–159.

[59] R.S. Avissar, J. Uziel, and A.M. Maeir, "Tell es-Sâfi/Gath during the Persian Period," in *A Time of Change: Judah and Its Neighbours in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods*, ed. Y. Levin, LSTS 65 (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 65–115.

[60] I. Kottsieper, " 'And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit': On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E*, ed. O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 95–124.

[61] A. Kloner and I. Stern, "Idumea in the Late Persian Period (Fourth Century BCE)," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E*, ed. O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 139–144; I. Stern, "The Population of Persian-Period Idumea According to the Ostraca: A Study of Ethnic Boundaries and Ethnogenesis," in *A Time of Change: Judah and Its Neighbours in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods*, ed. Y. Levin, LSTS 65 (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 205–238; B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea, Vol 1: Dossiers 1–10: 401 Commodity Chits* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 73–76.

DEVELOPING THE FIGURE OF UZZIAH IN CHRONICLES

Looking at the biblical description of Uzziah's reign in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, it seems that the Deuteronomistic author did not express a great interest in the long reign of Uzziah and possibly did not possess much knowledge about him. Uzziah and Jotham belong to the list of "good kings," a precursor to the recession through the sins of Ahaz.[62] Only the cumulative generic sin of the "high places" was attached to them.[63] Despite the diverse opinions among researchers regarding the historicity of 2 Chronicles 26, it is doubtful that the author had an ancient source that survived hundreds of years and provided such details about Uzziah. Assuming the existence of such a source underestimates both the historical background and the literary aspects of Chronicles.[64] We presently know nothing more about the sources of the book beyond its Deuteronomistic *Vorlage*. Both compositions existed in parallel, complemented each other, emphasized different aspects, and did not aim to contradict each other.[65] According to what we know of the Persian Period, and from the book of Ezra-Nehemiah in particular, we can now examine the special description of the days of Uzziah in Chronicles, which was probably written after the book of Ezra-Nehemiah[66] and reflects a dynamic and ongoing process of identity formation.

The topos of war is a direct means for describing the relations between foreigners and the emerging Jewish identity. One way to define identity is a negative portrayal of the "other," particularly via military and political confrontations. The book of Chronicles is full of such cases, dealing with attitudes toward other peoples and the relationship between physical and ethnic borders.[67] Uzziah's wars, alongside other wars that are part of the Chronicles additions, can be understood theologically as the rule of Yahweh over territories outside Judah.[68] The list of weapons, particularly in 2 Chronicles 26:14–15, fits the Persian Period and resembles the Greek phalanx.[69]

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[62] T. Römer, *The So-called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 157–158.

[63] Japhet, *Ideology*, 170–174.

[64] Peltonen, "Function."

[65] E. Ben Zvi, "Chronicles and Samuel-Kings: Two Interacting Aspects of One Memory System in the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Period," in *Rereading the Relecture? The Question of (Post)Chronistic Influence in the Latest Redactions of the Books of Samuel*, ed. U. Becker and H. Bezzel, FAT II/66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 41–56.

[66] Farisani, "Composition"; Japhet, "People," 108.

[67] A. Siedlecki, "Foreigners, Warfare and Judahite Identity in Chronicles," in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, ed. M.P. Graham and S.L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 263 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 229–266.

[68] Ben Zvi, "Observations."

[69] J. Blenkinsopp, "Ideology and Utopia in 1–2 Chronicles," in *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?*, ed. E. Ben Zvi and D.V. Edelman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 95, n. 1.

The sizes of the armies of Amaziah, Uzziah, and Ahaz express a process of gradual degradation in comparison with the kings before them, until returning to the original count of 180,000 in Rehoboam's army.[70] Judah's borders with its neighbors are rather vague, and the memory of battles contributes to the ethnic-ideological distinction at a time when Yehud had neither independence nor an army.[71] This fits well with the Uzziah narrative, expressing the need for such ethnic and territorial distinction according to the ideal established in the description of the Solomonic kingdom.

Military organization and administration appear in conjunction with several kings, and Uzziah in particular. This is the way to make use of peaceful periods, by preparing for troubled times, and it shows that concern for security is one of the king's major duties.[72] The divine reward for loyalty is success on the battlefield, and several kings' idolatry results in punishment in the form of foreign attack and defeat. In the case of Uzziah, his military strength leads to vanity and weakness.[73] The symbolic representation of inferiority toward foreign cultures, afflicted with idolatry, triggers an invasion by Uzziah into neighboring areas.

The description of Uzziah's construction projects is general and vague.[74] Construction of towers or cisterns during a long-reigning king like Uzziah is not particularly dramatic, and it does not seem that the description is based on an ancient source. Regarding the cities built "in the territory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines" (2 Chr 26:6), Williamson assumed the existence of such a source,[75] also because of the singular reference to Jabneh. Nevertheless, Jabneh was significant both in the Persian Period and afterward, thus reflecting the time of the author, similar to other lists in Chronicles. Uzziah's reign was contemporary with the fourth dynasty of Israel (the house of Jehu) and its peak during the reign of Jeroboam II, and Jotham ruled in parallel with Pekah. Thus, each (hopeless) renovation period of the kingdom of Israel is associated with a similar (yet blessed) activity in Judah. Building projects in Judah disappear from the text altogether after the destruction of Israel and during the entire seventh century BCE.[76]

To explain Uzziah's long reign and punishment, the author added two long paragraphs, showing a period of loyalty and success followed by a period of sin and punishment. Uzziah was warned by the priests, refused to obey, and was stricken on the spot, thus showing God's total control over events.[77] The schematic structure in

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[70] Klein, "Code," and table on p. 17.

[71] Siedlecki, "Foreigners," 265–266.

[72] Japhet, *Ideology*, 337–342.

[73] T.D. Cudworth, *War in Chronicles: Temple Faithfulness and Israel's Place in the Land*, LHBOTS 627 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 200–202.

[74] Ben Zvi, "Building Texts," 135.

[75] Williamson, *Chronicles*, 334–335.

[76] Ben Zvi, "Building Texts," 107–108.

[77] S. Japhet, "Theodicy in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles," in *Theodicy*

Chronicles contains a reform or a successful war, a prophetic speech, a sin, and a punishment in the form of defeat or illness.[78] The text about Uzziah follows this scheme. A king participating in cultic activities is a problematic memory, and Uzziah's story fills this void with a clear desire to separate kingship from priesthood.[79]

Use of direct speech is one of the characteristics of Chronicles, like in the case of the high priest accompanied by eighty priests reproaching Uzziah.[80] Such a confrontation is unlikely to have occurred and conveys the message of the diminishing status of the king and the rising status of the priesthood and the people.[81] In the confrontation between the "civil" leadership and the temple priests, Chronicles represents the latter.[82] The rejection of cultic activity by a political entity does not necessarily reflect the situation in the Persian Period but is perhaps an idealistic view of the relations between religion and state.[83]

The book of Chronicles shifts literary focus to Jerusalem, Judah, and the house of David. This is also true for Uzziah, who is no longer in the shadow of Jeroboam II.[84] Uzziah's case is important for showing a gradual territorial expansion, as his achievements are not only a victory in battle but city building and infrastructure development as well. The pan-Israelite vision sees Israelites residing in Judah, Samaria, and other areas and perceives the Jerusalemite temple as their religious authority, an authority reaching beyond the borders of Judah. Therefore, the Chronicler appeals to these Israelites to endorse the temple and preserve the rules of the Torah.[85]

Biblical literature reflects political thinking, taking into account the geopolitical background. Judah was a poor and small province within the Persian Empire, and the challenges facing the higher layers of society were different from before. Faced with the political

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in the Word of the Bible, ed. A. Laato and J.C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 445–469; Japhet, *Ideology*, 129–131.

[78] I. Amar, "Form and Content in the Story of Asa in 2 Chr 13:23b–16:14: A Diachronic-Synchronic Reading," *VT* 69.3 (2019): 337–360.

[79] Ben Zvi, "Aspects."

[80] L.C. Jonker, "Who Constitutes Society? Yehud's Self-Understanding in the Late Persian Era as Reflected in the Books of Chronicles," JBL 127.4 (2008): 703–724.

[81] Japhet, *Ideology*, 333.

[82] Y. Levin, "The Chronicler's Rewriting of the History of Israel: Why and How?" in *Writing and Rewriting History in Ancient Israel and Near Eastern Cultures*, ed. I. Kalimi (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020), 173–188.

[83] S.J. Schweitzer, *Reading Utopia in Chronicles*, LHBOTS 442 (New York; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 106–108.

[84] E. Ben Zvi, "Chronicles and Social Memory," *ST* 71.1 (2017): 69–90.

[85] G.N. Knoppers, "Israel or Judah? The Shifting Body Politic and Collective Identity in Chronicles," in *Rethinking Israel: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Honor of Israel Finkelstein*, ed. O. Lipschits, Y. Gadot, and M.J. Adams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 173–188.

power of the provincial governor, the temple stood as a social-religious center, and political thought came in the form of defining "Israel" based on past memories. The leaders were struggling with the tendency to forsake Yahweh and his law, and the text of the book of Chronicles served this educational purpose. Divine providence and prophetic guidance are superior, whether Judah is independent or subject to a foreign king, for the assurance of stability, prosperity, and happiness.[86]

A "site of memory" (Fr. "*lieux de mémoire*") is not necessarily a physical place. It can be a space, an event, a character, a text, etc. Most sites related to Judah no longer existed and were replaced by authoritative textual codes such as "Sinai", "Moses" or "David." The book of Chronicles was not composed to replace the Deuteronomistic history but to reflect the conflicts of its time, and the shaping of past memories served to shape hopes for the future. The two "national histories" coexisted within a small literate class in the small community of Judah and balanced each other out.[87] The expanded description of Uzziah is such a two-sided memorial monument, with a side of success and a side of failure.

The Adversaries of Uzziah and Nehemiah

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah describes confrontations with the entities surrounding the province of Yehud by adopting a separatist tone toward the people of the land and foreign women,[88] as well as the temple purification action against Tobiah, "the Ammonite servant."[89] The list of adversaries represents all four directions: Sanballat from Samaria to the north, Tobiah the Ammonite to the east, the Arabs to the south, and Ashdod to the west. There is a striking geographical similarity between Uzziah's rivals and Nehemiah's adversaries.

Ezra-Nehemiah emphasizes the separatist view while Chronicles emphasizes the restoration of Israel in its homeland, which takes the form of territorial takeover and military power. Such aspirations are inherently utopic during the Persian Period, but unlike the Deuteronomistic line of the book of Kings, the post-exilic author of

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[86] E. Ben Zvi, "Memory and Political Thought in the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah: Some Observations," in *Leadership, Social Memory and Judean Discourse in the Fifth-Second Centuries BCE*, ed. D.V. Edelman and E. Ben Zvi (Sheffield; Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2016), 9–26.

[87] Ben Zvi, "Social Memory."

[88] M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament*, Lectures on the History of Religions New Ser. 9 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 126–147.

[89] M. Weinfeld, "Universalistic and Particularistic Trends during the Exile and Restoration," in *Normative and Sectarian Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, LSTS 54 (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 251–266 [translation from Hebrew (1963, 1979)].

Chronicles offers a more optimistic vision of a political reality already distant from the 586 BCE destruction.[90] The proximity to the Idumean population is significant, leading to a more pressing need for separation.[91] Uzziah's conquests ideologically aim to annex these areas to Judah. Uzziah conquered three cities, while Ahaz lost six. Uzziah prospered in the Negev, while Ahaz was defeated there as well. Uzziah and Ahaz are therefore symbolic contrasts to one another.[92]

It is uncertain whether the adversaries in Ezra-Nehemiah indeed represented constant rivalry during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. Nehemiah's adversaries are classified by their ethnicity. These descriptions depict obstacles during a time of construction and restoration, but they also define the foreign elements that are hostile to the interests of Judah.[93] The enemies of Uzziah, according to 2 Chronicles 26, represent three of the four directions in Nehemiah's case: west (Ashdod, Jabneh, and Philistia in general), south (the Arab tribes and the Meunites), and east (Ammon). The northern entity, Israel, does not fit the Uzziah narrative, since there was probably some sort of cooperation between the two kingdoms during his time and since the book of Chronicles is not fundamentally anti-Samaritan. The conclusion is that the enemies of Uzziah and Nehemiah are a symbolic representation of the circle around Judah in the Persian Period, except for Samaria to the north, as a direct confrontation with it does not fit with the author's concept of "All Israel."

The Philistines and Ashdod: The explicit mention of Ashdod among Uzziah's conquests (2 Chr 26:6) is a direct connection to the Persian Period, a reality that is also reflected in Nehemiah (4:1 MT; 13:23). The controversy over foreign women and the resistance against cultural assimilation and the Ashdodite language (Neh 13:24) express a negative attitude toward Ashdod, as a means to express the solidarity of the community and its borders.[94] "Ashdod" was the

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[90] S. Japhet, "Postexilic Historiography: How and Why?," in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, ed. A. de Pury, T. Römer, and J.D. Macchi, JSOTSup 306 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 144–173.

[91] L.C. Jonker, "Refocusing the Battle Accounts of the Kings: Identity Formation in the Books of Chronicles," in *Behutsames Lesen: Alttestamentliche Exegese In Interdisziplinären Methodendiskurs – Christof Hardmeier zum 65. Geburtstag.*, ed. C. Hardmeier and S. Lubs, ABG 28 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 255–259.

[92] N. Na'aman, "In Search of Reality behind the Account of the Philistine Assault on Ahaz in the Book of Chronicles," *Transeu* 26 (2003): 47–63.

[93] Grätz, "Adversaries."

[94] A. Lemaire, "Ashdodien et Judéen à l'époque perse: Ne 13,24," in *Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East – Festschrift E. Lipinski*, ed. K. van Lerberghe and A. Schoors, OLA 65 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 153–164; K.E. Southwood, " 'And They Could Not Understand Jewish Speech': Language, Ethnicity, and Nehemiah's Intermarriage Crisis," *JTS*

name of the province west of Yehud, so it is a representative entity, and Gath (Tell es-Safi) was within its region as well.[95] Based on the biblical text, Ashdod Stratum IX was attributed in the past to Uzziah,[96] but this layer is hardly distinguishable from Stratum VIII, which belongs to the Assyrian period.[97] Ashdod recovered and flourished during the Persian Period, its population was Phoenician, and its importance is shown through its position as a coin-minting authority.[98]

Jabneh and the Phoenicians: It is possible that Jabneh, appearing only once by that name (2 Chr 26:6), is just an annex of Ashdod. Perhaps the memory of Jabneel, which appears in the Judean city list (Josh 15:11), triggered some desire to preserve the memory of the adjacent Levite city of Eltekeh, which was no longer inhabited in the Persian Period.[99] A more reasonable suggestion for the reference to Jabneh is its characterization as a cultic site,[100] as well as being a flourishing port city, thus representing an economic and religious antithesis of Judah.

Gath: Gath was the main Philistine site in the Shephelah in the Iron IIA until its destruction by Hazael around 830 BCE.[101] The site

62.1 (2011): 1–19.

[95] See map in Lipschits, *Fall and Rise*, 183.

[96] M. Dothan, "When Was Ashdod in Israelite Hands? The Archaeological Evidence," *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 6.1 (1973): 89–91.

[97] I. Finkelstein and L. Singer-Avitz, "Ashdod Revisited," *TA* 28.2 (2001): 242–246.

[98] Stern, *Archaeology*, 316–319; A. Fantalkin, M. Johananoff, and S. Krispin, "Persian-Period Philistian Coins from Ashdod-Yam," *Israel Numismatic Research* 11 (2016): 23–28.

[99] B. Mazar, "The Cities of the Territory of Dan," *IEJ* 10 (1960): 65–77.

[100] Kletter, Ziffer, and Zwickel, "Stands"; M. Fischer and T. Taxel, "Ancient Yavneh: Its History and Archaeology," *TA* 34 (2007): 219; R. Kletter, I. Ziffer, and W. Zwickel, eds., *Yavneh I: The Excavation of the "Temple Hill" Repository Pit and the Cult Stands*, OBO.SA 30 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); R. Kletter, I. Ziffer, and W. Zwickel, eds., *Yavneh II: The "Temple Hill" Repository Pit: Fire Pans, Kernos, Naos, Painted Stands, "Plain" Pottery, Cypriot Pottery, Inscribed Bowl, Dog Bones, Stone Fragments, and Other Studies*, OBO.SA 36 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

[101] A.M. Maeir, "The Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project 1996–2010: Introduction, Overview and Synopsis of Results," in *Tell es-Safi/Gath I: The 1996–2005 Seasons*, ed. A.M. Maeir, ÄAT 69 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 1–88; A.M. Maeir, "Introduction and Overview," in *Tell es-Safi/Gath II: Excavations and Studies*, ed. A.M. Maeir and J. Uziel, ÄAT 105 (Münster: Zaphon, 2020), 3–52.

also had a cultic significance during the Iron Age.[102] There is evidence for a Judahite phase around the mid-eighth century BCE,[103] as well as indications of two seismic events.[104] Gath showed signs of recovery and cultic activity in the Persian Period,[105] which is consistent with the finds from Jabneh and may be the background for the reservations of the Judahite biblical text writers toward these sites.

The Meunites and the Arab Tribes: This region was of great importance due to the southern trade routes and the port of Gaza. The Meunites and other tribes resided in the region in both the Iron Age II and the Persian Period. During the Iron IIA, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah controlled the trade over the Elath – Kuntillet ʿAjrud – Kadesh Barnea route.[106] The region contained an ethnically mixed population in the Persian Period, and Jews resided there as well. Thus, the south, which at some point became part of Idumea, was an ethnic and economic challenge to Judah. It is doubtful that the Chronicler had an ancient source for a marginal issue such as the Meunites, with all of his other additions being ideological in nature. The Arab tribes represent the southwestern enemies of Uzziah, joining Ashdod and Jabneh in the west. This geographical connection may be the inspiration for the author to extend Uzziah's expansion beyond Gath.

Ammon and Tobiah: Ammon and Moab are typological biblical representatives of foreign entities (Neh 13:23). Ammon is allegedly controlled by Uzziah and Jotham and is thus a representative of the eastern front of both Uzziah and Nehemiah. The "Ammonites" (2 Chr 26:8) is a distortion in the MT and appear as "Meunites" in the Septuagint, and a confrontation with Ammon during the time of Uzziah and Jotham is unlikely. During the time of Nehemiah, Tobiah represented a rich Transjordanian family, an old elite refusing to accept the changes that Nehemiah tried to impose. It is also possible that the distortion "Meunites-Ammonites" was intentional in order to include an adversary from the east, but since this distortion is present in the MT but not in the LXX, which is older, it is difficult to determine its goal or when it originated.

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[102] A. Dagan, M. Eniukhina, and A. Maeir, "Excavations in Area D of the Lower City: Philistine Cultic Remains and Other Finds," *NEA* 81.1 (2018): 28–33; D. Ben Shlomo, "Philistine Cult and Religion According to Archaeological Evidence," *Religions* 10.2/74 (2019): 1–29.

[103] Chadwick and Maeir, "Judahite Gath."

[104] Maeir, "Introduction and Overview," 35.

[105] Avissar, Uziel, and Maeir, "Tell Es-Sâfi/Gath"; Maeir, "Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project," 35.

[106] N. Na'aman, "Pastoral Nomads in the Southwestern Periphery of the Kingdom of Judah in the 9th–8th Centuries BCE," *Zion* 52.3 (1987): 261–278 [Hebrew]; A. Lemaire, "Les Minéens et la Transeuphratène à l'époque perse: une première approche," *Transeu* 13 (1997): 123–139.

THE IDEOLOGICAL REASONS FOR UZZIAH'S ATTACK ON THE NEIGHBORS OF JUDAH

The similarity between the adversaries of Uzziah and Nehemiah leads to the hypothesis that the Chronicler was familiar with the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, adopted this narrative of enemies surrounding Judah, and used it for his own purposes. Based on the discussion so far, several ideological reasons for it can be suggested:

- *The national-territorial reason*: The desire to see areas around Judah as part of an idealistic and aspirational Land of Israel. These territories were once under the control of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, such as the Negev and, during Uzziah's reign, perhaps also the area of Gath. It is not an anti-imperial approach, but since the borders between provinces were vague, a desire to gain influence is reasonable. These Deuteronomistic ideas were not lost in the Persian Period, and Chronicles displays a broad view of the borders of Israel. This ethnic-territorial distinction is very prominent in Chronicles' war descriptions.
- *The religious reason*: An attack on the impact of idolatry, foreign culture, and foreign trade. The Phoenician coast was particularly rich in cult-oriented finds from the Persian Period. The coastal region, Philistia, and Idumea were pagan in nature, while the Yahwistic cult was dominant in Samaria.
- *The economic reason*: Moreover, these areas flourished in contrast to the relatively poor province of Yehud. The period of Uzziah, who reigned parallel to the peak of Israel under Jeroboam II, was engraved in memory as a period of development and prosperity. The alleged attack on rich neighbors expresses a desire for a better economic reality.
- *Separation vs. assimilation*: The former is very dominant in Ezra-Nehemiah. It is indeed possible that Nehemiah's conflicts were personal and temporary and only later became an ideological perception of separation from the rest of the inhabitants of the land. It seems that the first stage of adopting this narrative of identity formation took place during the composition of Chronicles.
- *An ethnic war*: An attack on areas where a Jewish-affiliated population resided, particularly in Idumea, expressing the desire to see them as part of "All Israel."
- *A governor against elite*s: A struggle between center and periphery, the aim of the Jerusalemite leadership to

> position the city and the temple at its center and to diminish the status of the elites around them.

Nationalism is usually perceived as a new phenomenon of the last two centuries. It is evident that the characteristics of modern nationalism did not exist in the ancient era, specifically the education and media systems that convey this consciousness to the masses.[107] Nevertheless, one can certainly discuss such awareness in specific layers of society. A national identity strives to "possess or claim the right to political identity and autonomy as a people, together with the control over a specific territory."[108] Ethnic identity, on the other hand, gives priority to cultural connections and blood ties. The Deuteronomistic project is surely a cornerstone of identity formation.[109] The identity formation process continued during the Persian Period, and while Ezra-Nehemiah emphasized ethnic identity, the book of Chronicles emphasized common cult as an ideal. Uzziah's actions reflect such territorial, cultural, and religious characteristics. The Chronicler expected an ideal king not to settle for the existing state but to hold religious and judicial reforms and to remove any threat of foreign culture to the political and religious stability of the land.[110]

The separation of Judah from Samaria was successful, as can be judged by the reduced economic interaction between the regions.[111] The ethnic borders were sharpened by rising economic competition during the fourth century BCE. In the story of Uzziah in Chronicles, the focus shifted to other zones. The separatist Jewish group barely accepted the religious and ethnic assimilation process in the Shephelah and the south. The connection between the sins of Uzziah and Uzza (1 Sam 6) is appealing from the aspects of cultic impurity, immediate retribution, and the similarity of the names. The existence of the "Uzza Temple" in Idumea[112] is another contemporary element that might have caused the author to tie such a sin to Uzziah.

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[107] Discussion of nationalism is beyond the scope of this work. On ethnicity and nationalism, see C.L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, VTSup 162 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014), 83–93, and references on p. 88, n.13. See also A.D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); D.M. Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–27. Anthony Smith, for example, emphasized the ethnic origin of nations, and the formation of identity through sacred symbols.

[108] Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 88, with references.

[109] *Ibid.*, 223–225.

[110] Amar, "Form and Content."

[111] Stern, "Population," 233–238.

[112] Levin, "Formation."

THE LITERARY CHARACTERS OF UZZIAH AND NEHEMIAH

The character of Nehemiah is that of an ideal king, as envisioned in Chronicles and beyond. Nehemiah begins with a prayer about the condition of Jerusalem, similar to Solomon's prayer about the temple. Nehemiah was the builder of the wall, a recurring theme in Chronicles. The wall construction became a holy war, involving enemies, trumpet-blowing, and divine intervention. Nehemiah was a leader with an economic and social agenda (Neh 5). He outlined the path to the right cult but avoided crossing the line. The author did not wish to introduce Nehemiah as a successor to the Davidic throne, and Nehemiah himself rejected such a notion (Neh 6:7–8). Out of continuity with past kings, he was decorated with a collection of positive attributes, but only partially received godly rewards. There is limited satisfaction with the restoration under Persian rule, but there is hope that the situation of those following the way of God will improve.[113]

The historical Nehemiah was perhaps just a "spark" in the Persian Period. He was not a king, but his character was shaped in that spirit, and no other governor of that time received such a reflection. During the Hasmonean Period, he was a royal figure connecting past priests/prophets and the Hasmonean priests (2 Macc 1:18–2:15). His roles as an establisher of borders and as a combination of a king and a priest were of particular importance.[114] Uzziah, on the other hand, was associated with a cultic sin. The Chronicler, who graded Uzziah positively from his nationalistic point of view, reflected the rising status of the high priest of his time and attached a sin to explain Uzziah's illness as part of his retributive approach.

Persian ideology and imperial activities did not escape the eyes of the Chronicler. Military forces crossed the land on their way to Egypt, administrative centers were erected, and measures were taken to assure that the periphery would serve the empire's needs. Despite the peaceful image of the *Pax Persica* and the low level of involvement of the empire in the provinces, the imperial policy did have an impact on ideological perception.[115] Uzziah as a conqueror, a builder, an army assembler, and an agriculture developer reflects such qualities.

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[113] I.M. Duguid, "Nehemiah, the Best King Judah Never Had," in *Let Us Go Up to Zion: Essays in Honour of H.G.M. Williamson on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. I.W. Provan and M.J. Boda, VTSup 153 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 261–272.

[114] E. Ben Zvi and S. Honigman, "Remembering Three Nehemiahs in Late Second Temple Times: Patterns and Trajectories in Memory Shaping," *JHS* 18.10 (2018): 1–35.

[115] Jonker, *All-Israel*, 115–116.

Large construction projects, such as those associated with Uzziah, are not characteristic of the Persian Period. Nevertheless, assuming that the Chronicler envisioned the figure of Nehemiah and the memory of the (perhaps symbolic) wall-building, one can find a connection between the stories. The finds from the Ophel from the Persian Period are possible evidence for Jotham's construction (2 Kgs 15:35; 2 Chr 27:3) in that area.[116] The cavalry accompanying Nehemiah (Neh 2:9) was perhaps an inspiration for the description of Uzziah's army, and the many estates built during the Persian Period are reminiscent of Uzziah's agricultural endeavors.[117] Such estates might be related to the "forts" established during the period,[118] as are the "forts and towers" built by Jotham (2 Chr 27:4).

Agricultural development and reference to gardens and orchards (Neh 2:8; 3:15) are typical characteristics of royal ideology. The lavish garden in the Ramat Rachel residence is an expression of such.[119] The Chronicler amplified Uzziah's character as a "lover of the soil" (2 Chr 26:10), following the character of the "gardener king" of the Persian Period.[120] Nehemiah too dealt with the uninhabited land and the debt crisis (Neh 5:1–5), and his response (Neh 5:11) is literarily similar to Uzziah's "farmers and vinedressers" (2 Chr 26:10). The "Carmel" mentioned in the MT of that verse is usually identified with the southern Hebron mountain (Josh 15:55),[121] an area that was outside the borders of Persian Period Judah.[122] Therefore, this area is another symbol of territorial desire. Another option is Mt. Carmel in the north, which is certainly far from Judah but was

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[116] O. Lipschits, "Between Archaeology and Text: A Reevaluation of the Development Process of Jerusalem in the Persian Period," in *Congress Volume Helsinki 2010*, ed. M. Nissinen, VTSup 148 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 145–165.

[117] D. V. Edelman, *The Origins of the Second Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem*, Bible World (London; Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2005), 311–312.

[118] A. Faust, "Forts or Agricultural Estates? Persian Period Settlement in the Territories of the Former Kingdom of Judah," *PEQ* 150.1 (2018): 34–59; R. Kletter and J.M. Silverman, " 'Estates' or 'Forts' in Persian Period Yehud?," *PEQ* 153.1 (2021): 42–61.

[119] B. Gross, Y. Gadot, and O. Lipschits, "The Ancient Garden and Its Water Installations," in *Ramat Raḥel IV: The Renewed Excavations by the Tel Aviv-Heidelberg Expedition (2005–2010)*, ed. O. Lipschits, M. Oeming, and Y. Gadot, The Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology Monograph Series 39 (Tel Aviv; Univeristy Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), 459–468.

[120] D. V. Edelman, "City Gardens and Parks in Biblical Social Memory," in *Memory and the City in Ancient Israel*, ed. D. V. Edelman and E. Ben Zvi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 115–155.

[121] A.F. Rainey, "Wine from the Royal Vineyards," *BASOR* 245 (1982): 57–62.

[122] Lipschits, *Fall and Rise*, 149.

a symbol of the confrontation with idolatry (Elijah and the priests of Baal) as well as a pagan Phoenician temple to Zeus.[123]

To summarize, in the Chronicler's description of Uzziah, we can see reflections not only of Nehemiah but also of the Persian imperial activities in the fourth century BCE. Construction, military, and agricultural enterprises serve to offer a better future as well as to emphasize the ethnic borders in areas outside Judah, where Jews, Phoenicians, former Philistines, Edomites, and Arabs resided.

The Leprosy Punishment and the Priestly Cult Polemic

The Chronicler described a confrontation between the priests, who were chosen to do the cult work at the temple, and political power holders, who were not so entitled. This seems like an addition that belongs to the time of the author, who rejected such figures.[124] Nehemiah, contrary to Uzziah, refused to enter the temple, as he considered such an act to be a sin (Neh 6:13).[125] It may be tempting to interpret Nehemiah's attitude as concerning the memory of Uzziah's sin,[126] but this contradicts the assumption that Chronicles was composed after Ezra-Nehemia. The story of Uzziah's punishment is full of biblical motives: the sins of Miriam (Num 12:10), Aaron's sons (Num 16–17), and Jeroboam son of Nebat (1 Kgs 12:33–13:5).[127]

Unlike Nehemiah, Uzziah is molded according to the "good" and "bad" periodization scheme. Nehemiah also confronted Tobiah and abolished his "impure" chambers in the temple (Neh 13:7–9). In this case, Nehemiah was the protector of the cult, and Tobiah was the foreign political power entering the temple. This sort of antagonism against "bad kings" is propaganda against idolatry and denial of true prophecy.[128] The Uzziah narrative is such propaganda, defining the king and his roles, as well as the true cult under the leadership of the priests.

The book of Chronicles presents a concentric model of the cult, with the temple at its center and Jerusalem around it, all within the land of Israel as the center of the world. Concerning the temple in Jerusalem, it was reportedly built "in order that my name may be there" (2 Chr 6:6), thus preventing any other interpretation of the books of Deuteronomy, Samuel, and Kings. Judging by the existence

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[123] N. Na'aman, "The Contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19-40) as a Reflection of a Religious-Cultural Threat," *BZ* 64.1 (2020): 85–100.

[124] Jonker, *All-Israel*, 261–263.

[125] Wright, *Identity*, 145, n. 47.

[126] A.L. Ivry, "Nehemiah 6,10: Politics and the Temple," *JSJ* 3.1 (1972): 37, n. 4.

[127] I. Cranz, "The Motif of Uzziah's צרעת in the Deuteronomistic History, Chronicles, and Beyond," *JSOT* 44.2 (2019): 233–249.

[128] J.M. Bos, "Memories of Judah's Past Leaders Utilized as Propaganda in Yehud," in *Leadership, Social Memory, and Judean Discourse in the Fifth-Second Centuries BCE*, ed. D. V. Edelman and E. Ben Zvi (Sheffield; Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2016), 27–40.

of Yahwistic temples in Samaria and Elephantine, the temple in Jerusalem was not the only religious approach out there.[129] The books of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles express intolerance of the "other" in different ways.[130] During the time of Uzziah, an attack against Samaria is historically irrelevant, but the pan-Israelite view and cult centralization still coincide with each other.

THE BIBLICAL OPINION ON UZZIAH: PERSIAN OR HELLENISTIC PERIOD?

Some researchers date the composition of Chronicles to a late editorial phase during the Hasmonean Period, either as a rejection of Hellenism during the Hasmonean revolt[131] or during the great territorial expansion under John Hyrcanus (134–104 BCE).[132] Finkelstein also considers the Nehemiah adversaries to be late additions conveying the Hasmonean narrative, and in his opinion, any attempt to date them to the Persian Period, based on the assumed date of composition, leads to circular argumentation.[133] The building of the wall also matches the Hasmonean construction projects in Jerusalem.[134]

Nevertheless, Nehemiah's building of the wall was probably a symbolic political act not necessarily expressed in archaeological finds.[135] Jerusalem was indeed small during the Persian Period, but the pottery and storage jar stamps are evidence of significant activity.[136] There is little reason for the Hasmoneans to attribute to someone else the wall they themselves built, a wall that was more ideological and theological than physical.[137] Most of the biblical texts were

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[129] Smith, *Palestinian Parties*, 82–98.

[130] B. Hensel, "Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles: New Insights into the Early History of Samari(t)an–Jewish Relations," *Religions* 11.2/98 (2020): 1–24.

[131] G. Steins, "Torah-Binding and Canon Closure: On the Origin and Canonical Function of the Book of Chronicles," in *The Shape of the Writings*, ed. J. Steinberg and T.J. Stone, Siphrut 16 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 237–280.

[132] I. Finkelstein, "The Expansion of Judah in II Chronicles: Territorial Legitimation for the Hasmoneans?" *ZAW* 127.4 (2015): 669–695; I. Finkelstein, *Hasmonean Realities behind Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles*, AIL 34 (Atlanta: SBL, 2018).

[133] I. Finkelstein, "Nehemiah's Adversaries: A Hasmonaean Reality?," *Transeu* 47 (2015): 47–55.

[134] I. Finkelstein, "Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah," *JSOT* 32.4 (2008): 501–520.

[135] D. Ussishkin, "On Nehemiah's City Wall and the Size of Jerusalem during the Persian Period," in *New Perspectives on Ezra-Nehemiah*, ed. I. Kalimi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 101–130.

[136] O. Lipschits, "Persian Period Finds from Jerusalem: Facts and Interpretations," *JHS* 9.20 (2009): 2–30.

[137] M. Oeming, "The Real History: The Theological Ideas behind Nehemiah's Wall," in *New Perspectives on Ezra-Nehemiah*, ed. I. Kalimi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 131–149.

composed during the Persian Period, there is evidence of the growing status of the high priest, and the Hasmoneans would have had no reason to glorify the Davidic kings when a new lineage of priests took their place.[138] It cannot be ruled out that some editing of the texts was done in later periods. Nevertheless, the Hasmoneans assumed the power of combining the offices of the high priest and political leader (1 Macc 14:27–49), the exact reason for Uzziah's punishment, so at least this section does not seem to fit the Hasmonean period. It is possible that Chronicles was composed during the early Hellenistic period (end 4th – 3rd century BCE),[139] but it shows no Greek influence on its language or contents, it was part of the Septuagint and already used around 200 BCE by writers such as Ben Sira.[140] Dating to the 3rd century BCE should not affect our conclusions.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The depiction of Uzziah's reign in 2 Chronicles 26 contains extensive additions that stem from the ideology, theology, and identity negotiation process of the Chronicler. It seems unlikely to assume the existence of an obscure source that survived for hundreds of years, allegedly used by the author, particularly in this chapter, while the rest of his *Sondergut* is considered ideological in nature. There is no solid archaeological or historical evidence supporting the vast expansion of Judah into Philistia, and the description seems to correspond to the time of the author. The schematic description and tendentious data illustrate the first phase of Uzziah's reign, a phase of success and greatness. The story of Uzziah's cultic sin and punishment is an expression of the Chronicler's desire to emphasize the position of priests and Levites in the Persian Period when the province of Yehud was forming its identity around the temple at its center.

The small and poor province of Yehud had been in the midst of an identity negotiation process since the restoration period. Yehud was surrounded by neighboring entities, and there were internal conflicts within the emergent Jewish society as well, between those supporting globalization and integration within the region versus separatists who viewed religious, cultural, and social disengagement as a means of ethnic survival among the various identities in the empire. The priesthood strived to position itself as a leading class, with Jerusalem and its temple positioned at the center of a world consisting of surrounding concentric circles.

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah is one of the most prominent expressions of this separatist approach, emphasizing ethnic, cultural, and religious separation. Within this context, the Nehemiah Memoir describes a series of conflicts between Nehemiah and other regional

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[138] Knoppers, "Israel or Judah."
[139] Peltonen, "Jigsaw."
[140] Knoppers, *1 Chronicles*, 101–117.

leaders – Sanballat from Samaria, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab, alongside Ashdod, a symbol of the ethnic and cultural danger of assimilation. This narrative became a vivid part of national memory as threats from four directions loomed over the emergent Jewish entity. The book of Chronicles, written several decades after Ezra-Nehemiah, bears a different ideology but certainly shares similar national sentiments. The separatist approach was less prominent, and the approach of "All Israel" was growing, wishing to see Yehud as the center of that world with the *Yahweh* temple at its center, as well as the inclusion of nearby territories and population as part of it.

Consequently, it seems that the description in Chronicles of Uzziah's reign fits well into this period of identity formation and expresses the reality that the author wished to describe. The Samaritans were less of a rival to attack, but the Philistine cities to the west, the Arab tribes to the south, and Ammon to the east represent three out of the four fronts. Ashdod, the province west of Yehud, represents the archenemy of old times and the rich and dominant Phoenician-Philistine entity of the author's contemporary time. Cultic activity in Ashdod, Jabneh, and Gath portrays them as centers of idolatry. The Ammonites were added (perhaps by textual distortion) to this story to include the eastern front as well.

Uzziah's literary character corresponds with Nehemiah's ideal royal-like figure—the builder of the walls of Jerusalem, an economic, demographic, and religious reformer, and a protector of the right cult while refraining from directly involving himself in it. Tobiah, on the other hand, is the "Uzziah" of that part of the story, requesting a foothold in the temple, eventually leading to the need for its purification. Thus, the story of Uzziah corresponds well with the character of Nehemiah, suggesting that the Chronicler was familiar with the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, or was aware of the national narratives embedded in it, and found a way to convey this mindset in his own composition.

Hence, there are several reasons, all existing in parallel, that led to this Uzziah story in Chronicles, and they are consistent with the Ezra-Nehemiah narrative: The national-territorial reason, the religious reason, the economic reason, the ethnic reason, the struggle between center and periphery, and finally, the ongoing tension between the bold separatist approach of Ezra-Nehemiah and the more integrative one. This is expressed as a wish to disengage from neighboring ethnic groups, cultures, and religious practices on the one hand while not giving up on them as part of "All Israel" on the other.

Although the Chronicler used the Deuteronomistic text as his base, it appears that he considered the character of Nehemiah and his narrative as well. He used these to establish Uzziah as a great king, a figure that came to serve his ideological, ethnic, religious, cultural, and economic views. As part of the Chronicler's desire to highlight the piety of King Hezekiah, Uzziah is also portrayed as a sinner, yet this portion also serves the priestly and Levitical class to which

he belonged. The entire story was well formed and destined for the book's target audience at the end of the Persian Period, as part of the ongoing identity formation process in the small, poor, yet central province of Yehud.

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