

A Gospel of Exclusion? Implications of Employing Nehemiah as Exemplar in American Political Rhetoric

Michael Huffman

Abstract

Nehemiah and his wall appeared at key junctures in American political rhetoric over the past several years, most notably by Rev. Franklin Graham and Rev. Robert Jeffress in 2016 during Donald Trump's first campaign for the presidency. Nehemiah was presented as an exemplar for faithful Christian political involvement. This article challenges this use of Nehemiah as such by critically examining his political aims vis a vis those to which Christians are called in the New Testament. It uses Ezra and Nehemiah's absolute prohibition of exogamous marriage as a window into their overall political posture toward the residents of the land of Israel at the time of their return from exile. Despite their claims, Ezra and Nehemiah did not have a basis in their scriptural tradition for this prohibition. Their willingness to go beyond the stipulations present in Israel's sacred texts reveals a special concern, made urgent by the exile, for maintaining the ethnic separateness of its surviving remnant. This goal, though understandable given the circumstances of the exile, nevertheless disagrees starkly with authentically Christian discipleship as it is taught in the New Testament. Both Ezra-Nehemiah and the New Testament appropriate Israel's sacred texts in creative ways. However, while the New Testament interprets Israel's story as climaxing in the inclusion of the gentiles among God's elect people, Ezra-Nehemiah narrows the perimeters of Israel's social possibilities even beyond what was stipulated even in the Torah.

Introduction: Nehemiah in Recent American Political Rhetoric

The story of Nehemiah played a key role in political rhetoric aimed at American Christians in Donald Trump's first campaign for the U.S. presidency. In August of 2016, just a few months after the "build-the-wall" chant had begun to gain popularity at then-candidate Trump's campaign rallies, the Rev. Franklin Graham announced in an online letter that he would be embarking on a tour of America. He planned to visit every state's capitol, and to speak to crowds of American Christians about the need for their involvement in political action, as well as the need for their prayers for the nation. In his announcement of the tour, Graham wrote, "America's walls of biblical morality are crumbling. Almost everyone I speak with is distraught over the direction our nation is taking. Christianity and our religious freedoms are under siege. Progressives and secularists want to see God

removed from everything and to burn every gate of protection.”¹ Then, as preachers are wont to do, Graham employed a metaphor borrowed from the Bible: the walls of Jerusalem, he decided, would stand for America’s “walls of biblical morality.” Graham then pointed to Nehemiah’s effort to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem as the biblical precedent for a rebuilding of those walls. Though Graham did not make the connection explicit in his letter, it would be difficult for the biblically literate not to draw a parallel between the “progressives and secularists” Graham feared were burning “every gate of protection” and those inhabitants of Judea with whom Nehemiah contended in his day.

Graham also never made an explicit connection between Nehemiah’s wall and Trump’s promised border fence. But in a sermon later heard by then-President-Elect Trump before his inauguration, the Rev. Robert Jeffress did. “God instructed Nehemiah to build a wall around Jerusalem to protect its citizens from enemy attack. You see, God is NOT against building walls,” Jeffress preached. For Jeffress, Nehemiah’s opponents were “the mainstream media of [the] day.”² Nehemiah’s response to them in 6:3 provided a perfect, Trump-esque comeback for his critics: “I’m doing a great work ... Why should I stop the work and come down to you?”

Four years later other American evangelical leaders traded Nehemiah for another biblical character, and the Jerusalem wall for a different biblical wall. On January 5th and 6th of 2021, popular Christian author and speaker Eric Metaxes, along with others, asked American Christians to consider what God had done to the walls, not of Jerusalem in Nehemiah’s day, but of Jericho in Joshua’s. Like Graham, these leaders decided that the Capital was the right place to gather for such a meditation. The goal was to march around the U.S. Supreme Court Building and the U.S. Capitol Building seven times, prayerfully, while blowing shofars—just as the Israelites had done as they encircled the walls of Jericho at the beginning of their conquest of Canaan.³ This time, the wall of Jericho was used as a metaphor for the alleged “walls of corruption” in Washington, D.C.⁴

The violence that ensued on January 6th has captured American attention again in recent months as the U.S. congressional committee investigating the events of that day present their findings in live, televised hearings. Despite the biblical imagery that it chose to employ, the Jericho

¹ “Franklin Graham: ‘God Hears the Prayers of His People, and Walls Can Be Rebuilt,’” Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, August 31, 2015, accessed November 7, 2021, <https://billygraham.org/story/franklin-graham-god-hears-the-prayers-of-his-people-and-walls-can-be-rebuilt/>.

² “Read the Sermon Trump Heard Before Becoming President,” *Time Magazine*, January 20, 2017, accessed November 7, 2021, <https://time.com/4641208/donald-trump-robert-jeffress-st-john-episcopal-inauguration/>. Emphasis original.

³ Bob Smietana, “Jericho March Returns to DC to Pray for a Trump Miracle,” *Christianity Today*, January 5, 2021, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/january/jericho-march-dc-election-overturn-trump-biden-congress.html>.

⁴ Emma Green, “A Christian Insurrection,” *The Atlantic*, January 8, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2021/01/evangelicals-catholics-jericho-march-capitol/617591/>.

March insists its protests were peaceful, and their website condemns the violence—indeed, the *literal* breaking of walls—that subsequently occurred on January 6th.⁵ I have no reason to contradict their statement, or to doubt the sincerity of their intention to be non-violent. Nevertheless, given what *did* happen that day, it seems (troublingly) necessary for someone to say loudly and clearly that Joshua’s example, with respect to what he did at Jericho, is unworthy of emulation by Christians under any circumstance. Certainly, some walls *should* come down. It was good, for example, that the Berlin Wall came down. I, for one, would like to see the steel and concrete being used to construct a wall along the U.S.’s southern border put to better uses. But what is often ignored in the Sunday school lessons, the children’s Bible story books and cartoons is that the reason the walls of Jericho came down was so that Joshua and the Israelites could enter the city and slaughter its inhabitants. Every Christian should know enough about Jesus and, as a result, about the character of God to see that Joshua’s behaviour is unfit as a model for Christian discipleship. Tragically, January 6th in Washington D.C. echoed the biblical Joshua’s exploits more than the organizers of the Jericho March imagined it might.

But Nehemiah, unlike Joshua, did not physically assault or kill against his enemies. How are Christians to assess, then, the ethical efficacy of positing Nehemiah, along with his contemporary, Ezra, as exemplars of righteous political engagement in societies today? Does following Nehemiah’s example orient the Christian behind Jesus, or does it lead in a different direction?

Extracted from its context, Rev. Jeffress’s observation that God is not against building walls seems true. There is no biblical prohibition against it *per se*. However, context is important. The question is, what did Nehemiah’s wall represent? What was its symbolic function? Because Ezra-Nehemiah records no actual physical altercation between the returning Jews and their neighbours in Judea, it is difficult to determine the practical efficacy of Nehemiah’s wall. Did it *actually* provide refuge from an attacking enemy? There is no record that it did. This fact suggests that recent appeals to Nehemiah’s wall in American political rhetoric are not merely about the relative effectiveness of a physical barrier between Mexico and the USA. Rather, “the wall” became a symbol for a deeper anxiety about maintaining a perceived “us-them” distinction. If the wall was there, it would prove to Americans that “we” were still “us” and “they” were still “them.”

The hermeneutical approach of mapping biblical stories onto contemporary situations is, for better and for worse, ubiquitous in Christian circles. Still, all Christians acknowledge that biblical saints are imperfect. Approaching Nehemiah’s wall-building effort critically, therefore, should come naturally. Moreover, using Jesus and his gospel as a rubric for measuring its worthiness as a pattern

⁵ “Statement from Jericho March,” January 8, 2021. <https://jerichomarch.org/>.

for Christian discipleship should be likewise a matter of course. My questions about Nehemiah's role in recent American political rhetoric, then, are these: First, who were Nehemiah's "them," and was his goal of maintaining a line between his "us" and his "them" justified by his appeals to scripture? Second, if we suppose that American Christians can imagine themselves in parallel to Nehemiah and his companions, while some other contemporary group parallels Nehemiah's perceived opponents, would doing so lead a faithful disciple of Christ to behave as Nehemiah did?

As noted, it is not possible to perceive a practical function of Nehemiah's wall in the biblical narrative as we have it. We are forced, therefore, to look to other elements of the story in order to understand the nature of the "us-them" distinction in Nehemiah's imagination. In the following, therefore, I will examine critically Ezra and Nehemiah's reaction to exogamous marriage, treating it as a window into how they saw themselves in relation to those they did not see as part of their group.

Ezra and Nehemiah's Biblical Bases for Prohibiting Exogamous Marriage

Upon returning to the land of Israel from Mesopotamia, both Ezra and Nehemiah discovered that some of the men of Israel had married women of other ethnicities.⁶ In the biblical narrative, these two leaders react to this problem immediately and desperately. Ezra tears his clothing, pulls out his hair and kneels before God to offer a prayer of repentance on behalf of the nation (Ezra 9). Nehemiah rebukes the men who had partaken in these marriages, beats and curses some of them, and pulls out *their* hair (Neh 13:25). Ezra finds it necessary to lead the offenders in corporate, mass divorce, requiring that all foreign wives and their offspring be sent away (Ezra 10:10-11). Nehemiah requires that the offenders swear not to give their children in marriage to outsiders (Neh 13:25), thereby hoping to forestall the problem from passing on to the next generation.

But what precisely was problematic about exogamous marriages for Ezra and Nehemiah? While the answer to this question was apparently quite clear to them, modern readers have not found it so.⁷ This question has received several constructive responses in recent scholarship. Some

⁶ I take the traditional date of 458 BCE for the arrival of Ezra in the land. Nehemiah arrived ca. 445. This allows me to date the work early, perhaps close to the beginning of the 3rd century. The sources, at least, are early as there is no hint of knowledge about the Macedonian conquest. The book's present form, nonetheless, may be dated to the early Hellenistic Period (See H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985], xxxvi. and Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* [New York: Doubleday, 1965], LXIX-LXX).

⁷ It is perhaps worth noting that circumcision is not a factor in the marital problem presented in Ezra-Nehemiah. While one assumes that Judean women had also been married to neighboring peoples, Ezra and Nehemiah are either unconcerned about them or have resigned them to permanent loss. Because Ezra and

of these responses look directly at the text of Ezra-Nehemiah in search of allusions to a motivation undergirding Ezra and Nehemiah's reaction in Israel's authoritative texts.⁸ While this approach has proven productive, those scholars who employ it generally try to narrow Ezra and Nehemiah's motivation to the application of particular precedents from the Torah that restrict exogamous marriage with a view to uncovering the *singular* theological impetus behind Ezra and Nehemiah's reaction. It seems to me, however, that no single instance of exogamous marriage proscription in Israel's authoritative texts can account for these two reformers' absolute prohibition of it in their context. Instead, Ezra and Nehemiah's outcry is best explained as the convergence of several theological ideas resulting in what Katherine Southwood has called "the democratization of holiness."⁹ That is, Ezra and Nehemiah normalized and perpetuated strictures on exogamous marriage in the Torah that were, in their original settings, limited by either time or extent. Whereas in its history Israel kept itself separate from social unions with outsiders only partially and temporarily, Ezra and Nehemiah seem to collapse all past commands toward separation into a single, normative restriction on all such unions with those considered to be outsiders to the Jewish nation.

In the following, I will engage the four scripturally attested bases Ezra and Nehemiah cite as reasons for their prohibition of exogamous marriage. Each of these four reasons has been individually posited by scholars in recent years as the primary concern behind Ezra and Nehemiah's reaction to mixed marriages. However, examining each of them in turn will lead us to the conclusion that no one of them, in fact, adequately provides biblical justification for Ezra and Nehemiah's actions. In the absence of a clear divine command to back their program, Ezra and Nehemiah provided original and *innovative* interpretations of—and, arguably, additions to—authoritative texts to answer their worry about Israel's continued ethnic unity, as well as the threat they justifiably felt of Israel's ethnic and cultural engulfment.¹⁰

Nehemiah's concern is specifically with men who, presumably, were circumcised Israelites, the reason for their anxiety does not have to do with that sign of the covenant.

⁸ I use the term "authoritative texts" simply to refer to what later became recognized as Scripture in the Jewish community, but which in the time period in which Ezra-Nehemiah was written may not have had quite the same role. By this term I basically mean the Hebrew Bible.

⁹ Katherine Southwood, "The Holy Seed: Significance of Endogamous Boundaries and Their Transgression in Ezra 9-10," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 201.

¹⁰ That being said, I do not accept the theory that Ezra and Nehemiah excluded Israelites who had remained in the land during the exile. These are referenced in Ezra 6:21. Ezra recognized these as also part of Israel and heirs of the land. On the other hand, Sparks' inference that Ezra 6:21 meant Ezra was open to proselytes is not entirely clear, particularly in light of Zerubbabel and Jeshua's brisk rejection of the local YHWH worshippers in Ezra 4:1-3 (Kenton Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998], 295).

Four Reasons for Prohibiting Exogamous Marriage in Ezra-Nehemiah

Reason #1: Idolatry

The first of the four textually based reasons used to support Ezra and Nehemiah's prohibition is found in Nehemiah 13:26 where Nehemiah states his fear that foreign wives will lead to the demise of the renewed community just as they allegedly had done through Solomon.¹¹ Here Nehemiah is alluding to 1 Kings 11:1–2, which states,

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the Israelites, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you; for they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods"; Solomon clung to these in love. (NRSV)

It is important to observe right away that the Deuteronomistic History's denunciation of Solomon for marrying foreign women in 1 Kings 11 is based on Deuteronomy 7:1–4. There, on the eve of the conquest of Canaan, YHWH forbids the Israelites from forming any alliances with members of the seven Canaanite nations, including marriages. This is a strange command, for in Deuteronomy 20 YHWH commands that these nations be utterly wiped out, which would seem to make a prohibition of intermarriage with them superfluous. Nevertheless, the prohibition is delivered amid language highlighting YHWH's concern with Israel's cultic and moral—*not* ethnic—holiness. YHWH demands exclusive allegiance, and marriage with foreigners could compromise that exclusivity. Those seven Canaanite nations, however, were no longer extant during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah¹² and, therefore, there is no immediately clear reason why Nehemiah should be compelled to directly apply the proscription from Deuteronomy 7 to his situation.

At first blush, one might think Nehemiah is responsible for this radical reapplication. However, such a judgment would be premature, for in 1 Kings 11 the prohibition from Deuteronomy 7 against intermarriage with the seven Canaanite nations is applied to Solomon who, the text says, married Egyptian, Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women. None of these, with the exception of the Hittites, was among the nations cited in YHWH's marriage prohibition in Deuteronomy 7 (cf. Exod 34:11–16). Thus, it seems that the prohibition in Deuteronomy 7 has already been broadened in its application to Solomon in 1 Kings 11 long before Nehemiah adopted

¹¹ For a well-articulated defense of the primacy of this motivation for Ezra and Nehemiah's reaction, see A. Philip Brown II, "The Problem of Mixed Marriages in Ezra 9-10," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October-December 2005): 437-58.

¹² Brown, 438.

it. Thus, Nehemiah actually *does* have precedent for widening his application of this prohibition a bit more broadly in his context half a millennium later.

That being said, there is an important factor that seems to distinguish Nehemiah's use of the proscription on intermarriage with Canaanites from the Deuteronomistic History's use of it in 1 Kings 11. While 1 Kings 11 maintains the emphasis from the book of Deuteronomy on the cultic and moral reason behind the denunciation of Solomon's marriages with foreign women, that emphasis is all but absent in Nehemiah. It is worth noting that Solomon's mother may have been of Hittite birth, given that her fated first husband Uriah was a Hittite. Uriah's name seems to show that he was a worshipper of YHWH, and given Uriah's clearly laudable portrayal in 1 Samuel and the Deuteronomistic History's continued indictment of David for killing him (1 Kings 15:5), there seems to be no good reason to think that the problem with Solomon's wives was their foreignness *per se*.¹³ Instead, the Deuteronomistic History is concerned primarily with the moral and cultic perils of unions with outsiders. Further, the story of Elijah's interaction with the faithful widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17 shows that the Deuteronomistic History was not unable to imagine foreign women whose faith in YHWH trumped that of the most devout Israelite. The Queen of Sheba is another positive image of a foreign woman in Israel's memory. Far from being defiling, these foreign women positively affirmed Israel's faith in YHWH.¹⁴ Thus, Nehemiah's rage over exogamous marriages, seemingly with little to no attention given to whether or not the particular foreign women involved posed cultic or moral dangers, betrays dynamics at work that went deeper than the biblical precedent Nehemiah finds in the indictment of Solomon in 1 Kings. Therefore, Nehemiah's reference to Solomon and the dangers of idolatry cannot adequately explain Nehemiah's zealous reaction.

Reason #2: Profanation of the "holy seed"

A second rationale provided by the text for Ezra and Nehemiah's negative reaction to exogamous marriage is manifest in the phrase, "holy seed" in Ezra 9:2.¹⁵ This phrase is rare, appearing only once elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (see Isa 6:13).¹⁶ Sanctification of Israel's "seed"

¹³ Though the number of Solomon's wives was certainly viewed as a problem in its own right (Deut. 17:17).

¹⁴ While it is true that no marriages occur in these examples, this cannot serve as an objection to their use as counterpoints to Nehemiah's prohibition of marriage specifically simply because Nehemiah's *stated* concern has to do with idolatry, not marriage with foreign women *per se*. Hypothetically speaking, therefore, Nehemiah could not have objected to marriage to non-idolatrous foreign women. The point here is that such women exist within the stories in Israel's authoritative texts.

¹⁵ For the best defense of holiness and profanation as the prime reason for Ezra and Nehemiah's prohibition of exogamous marriage, see Christine Hayes, "Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources," *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999): 3-36.

¹⁶ The "holy seed" in Isaiah 6:3 also refers particularly to Israel *in exile*.

here seems to be applied in an unprecedented way in Israel's sacred story. At a former time, it had been possible for a foreigner to be sufficiently sanctified so as to justify his or her participation in the community, even to the point of a foreigner's being able to offer sacrifices. In fact, certain foreigners could even eat the holy food otherwise only reserved for the priests (see Lev 22:10–16). But in Ezra it seems that Israelite biological descent has become an indispensable criterion for holiness. Southwood is correct in observing that “through the semantic ambiguity of the term [zēra'] (‘seed/race’), election is reformulated according to ethnicity and to biological descent from Abraham.”¹⁷ This is the difference between calling Israel a “holy people” or “nation” and referring to their “seed” as holy. Concern with mixture of the “holy seed” with that of outsiders seems to allude to the law against mixing two kinds of seed when planting in a field (Lev 19:19). In the Torah, however, no parallel is drawn between the mixing of seeds for planting and marriage across ethnic identities.

Nevertheless, this basis for the exogamous marriage restriction in Ezra-Nehemiah is, again, not without partial precedent. Leviticus outlines particular marital boundaries for priests in chapters 21 and 22. There, priests are told to restrict their marriages to women from among their own people who have never been married before (Lev 21:14). Thus, the officers' association of exogamous marriage with the profanation of a holy “seed” in Ezra 9 is not entirely novel. But again, in Ezra this restriction has expanded. Whereas in Leviticus the prohibition on exogamous marriage is given only to the Levitical priests, in Ezra the priests and Levites are only the pinnacle of the problem, and the marriage stricture is applied to everyone. Here we find another example of Southwood's “democratization of holiness”—a universalizing of a restriction formerly only applicable to a limited extent. This connection of holiness to biological descent is, of course, necessary if Israel's *ethnic* identity is to be preserved on cultic grounds. But biological descent had never previously led Israel to categorically avoid social unions with foreigners, for such unions in and of themselves—apart from extenuating circumstances—did not compromise Israel's moral or cultic holiness.

Reason #3: Ritual impurity

A third reason for Ezra and Nehemiah's reaction to mixed marriages provided in the text is worry about ritual impurity.¹⁸ This reason is related to the above discussion on holiness, but the two

¹⁷ Southwood 2011, 199.

¹⁸ Here I am indebted to Saul Olyan, who argues persuasively contra Hayes that both purity *and* holiness ideas are at work in Ezra-Nehemiah 2 (Saul M. Olyan, “Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 35, no. 1 [2004]: 1-16.).

should be kept distinct. Christine Hayes explains the relationship between the two words pairs pure/impure and holy/profane well. She writes,

The term “impure” denotes a state of cultic disability and is the antonym of “pure.” The term “holy” denotes that which has been consecrated and thus belongs to God and is the antonym of “profane” which designates ordinary nonholy entities. The default state for most entities is profane and pure. Something must happen to render a profane object holy—an act of consecration—or to render a pure object impure—an act of defilement. If a pure, profane object becomes defiled (which is not a sin and happens frequently), its purity can be restored by a ritual of purification. However, holy entities should never be defiled. The holy is always pure. If defiled, holy entities are automatically profaned or desecrated and must be purified before being reconsecrated. Thus holiness and impurity, while not antonymic, are inimical states.”¹⁹

To repeat the key point, a thing can be simultaneously profane and pure. When a pure, profane thing is defiled and thus becomes impure, a simple ritual cleansing will restore its purity. This is normal, expected, and unproblematic.²⁰ But when a holy thing is defiled, a state of affairs is introduced that ought never to have come into existence. This is an “abomination” (*tô’ēbâ*). Hayes argues that Ezra and Nehemiah’s concern is exclusively about the holy/profane word pair, not about purity and impurity.

But this is not quite so, as Saul Olyan rightly argues in his response to Hayes. Concern with purity—not just holiness—is indeed present in Ezra-Nehemiah, as Ezra’s use of the word “impure” (*niddâ*) shows.²¹ Here again Southwood’s observation about the tendency in Ezra-Nehemiah for holiness to be democratized holds true. As Olyan observes, Ezra-Nehemiah links earlier priestly texts that stress ritual purity for priests and Levites in marital relations with other texts such as Deuteronomy 7:1–4 that have to do with abstaining from intermarriage with the Canaanite nations due to their aberrant religious practices. The conflation of these two occurrences of marital restriction in Israel’s authoritative texts has a universalizing effect in Ezra-Nehemiah to the effect that intermarriage—or other social contact—with foreigners becomes not only morally perilous but

¹⁹ Christine Hayes, “Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999): 6.

²⁰ Jonathan Klawans explains, “Ritual impurity results from primary or secondary contact with any one of a number of natural processes and substances ...The causes of ritual impurity generally share the characteristics of being natural and more or less unavoidable” (Jonathan Klawans, “Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism,” *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 20, no. 2 [1995]: 289).

²¹ See e.g., 9:1-2, 10-12, 14.

also ritually defiling *in and of itself*.²² Thus, an Israelite's marriage to a foreigner would result in his or her perpetual ritual impurity and, hence, permanent inability to approach holy things lest they become defiled.

Another anecdote highlights this development. In Nehemiah's absence, Eliashib the priest had allowed Tobiah the Ammonite to store some of his household goods in a temple storage facility (13:6-9). Upon hearing about this, Nehemiah removes these items forthwith and then gives orders for the rooms to be ritually purified. It seems that the presence of Tobiah's possessions had defiling capacity according to Nehemiah. Meanwhile, Eliashib the priest did not think so. Tobiah's contact with the Temple or with those who served in it put the Temple in danger of desecration. It seems that, in Nehemiah's understanding, an Ammonite's defiling capacity extended even to his possessions. This serves to emphasize how objectionable intermarriage with an Ammonite would have been for Nehemiah.²³ Once again, the level of aversion for contact with foreigners has been raised considerably in comparison to former standards in Israel's memory.

Reason #4: Hereditary Punishment

The fourth reason for Ezra and Nehemiah's negative reaction to intermarriage with outsiders has only recently been given its due attention in published scholarship. In his article, "Their Peace or Prosperity': Biblical Concepts of Hereditary Punishment and the Exclusion of Foreigners in Ezra-Nehemiah,"²⁴ Brian Rainey argues that the concept of "hereditary punishment" is the central rationale at work in Ezra and Nehemiah's absolute prohibition of exogamous marriage. Hereditary punishment is applied when a representative of an ethnic group commits an offense against another so grave that his or her punishment is applied to future generations and, in some cases, is extended to the entire ethnic community. For Israel, meting out this "punishment" to other nations sometimes took the form of a prohibition on intermarriage with members of the offending ethnic group. In Deuteronomy 23:3-6, for example, YHWH forbids Israel from accepting the descendants of Ammon and Moab into their assembly because of how Ammon and Moab had treated Israel during their journeys in the wilderness after the Exodus. Ezra, in fact, refers to this pronouncement of hereditary punishment in Deuteronomy 23 in his prayer of repentance. The command Ezra quotes in 9:12, "You

²² Olyan, 6-7, 9.

²³ Olyan, 10-11.

²⁴ Brian Rainey, "Their Peace and Prosperity': Biblical Concepts of Hereditary Punishment and the Exclusion of Foreigners in Ezra-Nehemiah," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 6 (2016): 158-181.

shall not seek their peace or prosperity” is a direct citation of Deut. 23:6.²⁵

Rainey argues that Ezra’s rationale comes from his reading of hereditary punishment in the Holiness Source (see e.g., Lev 18:24, 28; 20:23; 25:44; 26:33, 38, 45), while Nehemiah’s rationale comes from his reading of Deuteronomy cited above. While it may be true that hereditary punishment is a dynamic at work behind the passages in Leviticus that seem to bolster Ezra’s reasoning, those texts do not clearly delineate this as does Deuteronomy 23. Still, whether or not Ezra derives his application of hereditary punishment from the Holiness Source *as well as* from Deuteronomy is beside the clear point that hereditary punishment is a key rationale being employed in Ezra-Nehemiah to restrict social contact—marriage in particular—between Israelites and outsiders.

Yet again, however, this marriage restriction falls short of providing a clear justification for Ezra and Nehemiah’s proscription on exogamous marriage. While it is true that Deuteronomy 23 seems to prohibit marriages between Israel and their neighbours the Moabites and Ammonites permanently, the book of Ruth tells the story, in obviously approbatory terms, about a Moabite woman who marries an Israelite man. She, in fact, becomes the great-grandmother of King David! Moabite “seed,” therefore, is part and parcel to Israel’s messianic hope. This seems to at least hint toward the possibility of reconciliation in Moab and Israel’s relationship, a notion that clearly counters Ezra’s absolutist approach to intermarriage with Moabites, let alone with other foreigners. As Dan Mendelsohn Aviv observes, “[If] Ezra’s policy had been applied in the ‘time of the Judges,’ both the Jews’ most beloved king and their future saviour might never have been born as Boaz would have been compelled to send Ruth and their children away.”²⁶ Further, YHWH expressly tells the Israelites in Deuteronomy 23:7–8 that they should *not* despise the Egyptians and the Edomites after a period of only three generations, thereby opening the possibility of future social interaction, including intermarriage. In addition, Deuteronomy 20:14 allows the taking of foreign wives during wartime while Numbers 31:13–20 explicitly commands the practice. This is not to mention that Moses, the greatest of all Israelites, may have had two foreign wives—one Midianite and the other Cushite. In fact, when Mariam and Aaron confront Moses about his Cushite wife, YHWH roundly castigates them (Num 12). Yet, the text says that Nehemiah drove a grandson of Eliashib from the Temple (13:28) because he had married one of the daughters of Sanballat. Sanballat is an Akkadian name, which suggests that he was neither of Moabite nor Ammonite descent. Sanballat’s people had never been subjected to hereditary punishment even in the distant past. This seems to imply that

²⁵ Rainey, 162.

²⁶ Aviv, *End of the Jews: Radical Break, Remakes and What Comes Next* (Toronto: The Key, 2012), Ch. 4, par. 32, Kindle.

Nehemiah had so universalized his prohibition of exogamous marriage that he was applying it even to peoples from across the Euphrates River. In the Elephantine papyrus that identifies Sanballat as the governor of Samaria in the latter half of the fifth century, his two sons are called Delaiah and Shelemiah, perhaps suggesting that Sanballat professed allegiance to YHWH.²⁷ This shows that Nehemiah did not recognize the original limitations of Israel's employment of hereditary punishment in past circumstances in Israel's memory. Rather, this universal application of hereditary punishment to all foreigners living in the land of Israel is new in the biblical tradition up to this point, as is the use of authoritative texts to support it.

If Not These Four, Then What?

Olyan gives a good summary of our observation regarding these four reasons for exclusion of foreigners in Ezra-Nehemiah. He writes,

Interpreters, presumably from the circles ultimately responsible for Ezra-Nehemiah, combined several originally unrelated biblical texts characterized by negative views of foreigners ...Each text was then read with reference to the others, the passages thereby generating an expansive exegesis that could be marshalled to buttress the removal of all aliens without exception from the Judean community ...²⁸

This seems the best explanation for the phenomenon the text presents. Having failed to uncover an adequate explanation in Israel's authoritative texts to explain Ezra and Nehemiah's prohibition of intermarriage with outsiders, it remains to be asked what their "real" motivation might have been. This, of course, is to hazard the edges of presumptuousness. But rather than halting the inquiry, awareness of the hazard reminds us to spurn flippancy when venturing an answer.

Because a basis for Ezra and Nehemiah's stricture on Israel's intermarriage with other ethnic groups cannot be derived from any coherent reading of previous marriage prohibitions in Israel's authoritative texts, our only recourse is to propose an alternative explanation. Ezra and Nehemiah's experience of the exile provides the context for such an explanation. Jews in exile were pressured to adopt a level of separation from their surrounding communities that had never seemed necessary

²⁷ But not necessarily. The Samaria papyri betray recognition of a variety of deities in Samaria, suggesting a "syncretistic" religion in Samaria (Edwin Yamauchi, "Archaeological Backgrounds of the Exilic and Postexilic Era, Pt. 4: The Archaeological Background of Nehemiah," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137, no. 548 [October-December 1980]: 308).

²⁸ Olyan, 3.

before, and Ezra and Nehemiah brought this exile-shaped view of holiness back to Israel with them.²⁹ In the exile, the danger of assimilation and loss of identity was more imminent than it had ever been. If one observes what happened to the Northern Kingdom in 2 Kings 17, where one witnesses its tragic subjection to Assyria's aggressive assimilation-by-forced-immigration-and-emigration policy (see 2 Kings 17), it is not difficult to gain a sense of why concern about assimilation was so urgent for Ezra and Nehemiah. Other biblical exilic literature also pictures the Jewish community struggling against this threat. Daniel and his three friends' Yahwistic/Elohistic names are changed immediately upon their arrival in Nebuchadnezzar's court (Dan 1:7) and their education was tailored to their acclimation—or perhaps indoctrination—into their new exilic home in service of their own people's conquerors. The conflicts between the Jew Mordechai in Esther with his archnemesis Haman also exhibits an exilic struggle for the survival of Israel as an identifiable group distinct from—or *holy* in relation to—*all* others. Ezra and Nehemiah's zeal for separation may be understood as the systematization of an ethnic survival instinct bolstered by theologically innovative applications of holiness requirements from the Torah. Their application of past marriage prohibitions to their context as the returning remnant is an example of sacred history put to the service of an emerging exclusivist theology of the surviving remnant of Israel that did not include members of other ethnic groups. Put in today's terms, Ezra and Nehemiah are employing a "practical theology" of holiness. In their view, what was needed for their day was absolute separation from all outsiders. The stakes were high since the promises of God depended on the survival of Israel as a distinguishable bloodline. Thus, we conclude that Ezra and Nehemiah did not do as they did because of careful exegesis of the Torah, but instead exploited a variety of theretofore unrelated texts for what they discerned would best facilitate Israel's survival as a people.

This willingness to expand upon biblical strictures out of a concern for ethnic holiness is even more audacious in *The Book of Jubilees*, another exilic work. Several examples stand out. First, *Jubilees* advocates strict adherence to a solar—as opposed to a lunar—calendar, even though the Torah does not specify either way, and likely had a lunar calendar in mind.³⁰ The author makes the purpose clear—it is to help safeguard the separateness of Israel from its exilic neighbours (see 6:36–37). But second—and most relevantly to our present study—despite what we observed above regarding the limited nature of prohibitions against exogamous marriage in the Hebrew Bible, *Jubilees* openly and unapologetically prohibits *all marriages between Israelites and Gentiles*. Not

²⁹ Gary Knoppers is probably right to claim that the extensive genealogical lists in Ezra-Nehemiah had the function of delineating the boundary of Judean blood (Gary N. Knoppers, *Jew and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2013], 136).

³⁰ See Sacha Stern, "What is the Bible's Calendar?" *TheTorah.com*, <https://www.thetorah.com/article/what-is-the-bibles-calendar>.

only does *Jubilees* prohibit such marriages, it advocates execution by stoning of any man who gives his daughter or sister in marriage to a Gentile, and execution by fire of any woman who marries a Gentile (see 34:7, 9–14). The Torah, of course, contains precedent for such violence in response to various offenses (see e.g. Lev 20–21, 24; Num 15; Deut 13, 17, 21, 22). But *Jubilees* expands its application to the offense of exogamous marriage.

Thankfully, neither Ezra nor Nehemiah went so far. Still, the impetus that would drive the author of *Jubilees* to such extremes is, nonetheless, the same as what drove Ezra and Nehemiah to take the relatively more moderate measures that they did in response to the perceived threat posed by exogamous marriages.

Jubilees is well-represented among the manuscripts discovered at Qumran, which leads scholars to conclude that it enjoyed a highly authoritative status among some Jewish groups in the 2nd century B.C. and beyond.³¹ *Jubilees* can, thus, serve as an example, alongside Ezra-Nehemiah, of how exilic and post-exilic concerns about ethnic, cultural, and religious survival could result in the radical expansion of the Torah's call to holiness. Given the difficulty one experiences in trying to find a basis in the Torah for Ezra and Nehemiah's absolute prohibition of exogamous marriages in the Jewish community, the parallels between Ezra-Nehemiah and *Jubilees* in this respect are striking. The following are some of the most relevant passages from *Jubilees* that portray a concern for (1) preservation of a "holy seed," (2) the inherent ritual impurity of exogamous marriage, and (3) hereditary punishment.

- 22:20–21—"Be thou ware, my son Jacob, of taking a wife from any seed of the daughters of Canaan; For all his seed is to be rooted out of the earth. For, owing to the transgression of Ham, Canaan erred, and all his seed will be destroyed from off the earth and all the residue thereof, and none springing from him will be saved on the day of judgment."

- 22:16 (Isaac talking with Jacob)—"Separate thyself from the nations, and eat not with them: And do not according to their works, and become not their associate; for their works are unclean, and all their ways are a pollution and an abomination and uncleanness."

³¹ "Jubilees." In *The Dictionary of the Bible and Ancient Media*, edited by Tom Thatcher, Chris Keith, Raymond F. Person and Elsie R. Stern, 199–201. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. Accessed November 12, 2021. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780567678393.099>.

- 34:9–15—“For thus hath it been ordained and written in the heavenly tables regarding all the seed of Israel: he who defileth (it) shall surely die, and he shall be stoned with stones. And to this law there is no limit of days, and no remission, nor any atonement: but the man who hath defiled his daughter shall be rooted out in the midst of all Israel, because he hath given of his seed to Molech, and wrought impiously so as to defile it. And to thou, Moses, command the children of Israel and exhort them not to give their daughters to the Gentiles, and not to take for their sons any of the daughters of the Gentiles, for this is abominable before the Lord. For this reason I have written for thee in the words of the Law all the deeds of the Shechemites, which they wrought against Dinah, and how the sons of Jacob spake, saying: ‘We shall not give our daughter to a man who is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach to us.’ And it is a reproach to Israel, to those who give, and to those who take the daughters of the Gentiles;³² for this is unclean and abominable to Israel. And Israel will not be free from this uncleanness if it hath a wife of the daughters of the Gentiles, or hath given any of its daughters to a man who is of any of the Gentiles. For there will be plague upon plague, and curse upon curse, and every judgment and plague and curse will come (upon him): if he do this thing, or hide his eyes from those who commit uncleanness, or those who defile the sanctuary of the Lord, or those who profane His holy name, (then) will the whole nation together be judged for all the uncleanness and profanation of this (man.)”

Conclusion: Contrasting Ezra-Nehemiah with the New Testament’s Vision of the “Other”

The parallels between the concerns of *Jubilees* and those we have observed in Ezra-Nehemiah are salient. But, there is also present in *Jubilees* additional evidence of an intensified hostility (or, at least, reticence) toward both the non-Jewish inhabitants of Canaan and at least some of Israel’s historic neighbours. For example, the author of *Jubilees* writes that it was “the king of Canaan” who, having conquered Egypt, devised the plot to enslave the Israelites there. Thus, the story is retold with a “king of Canaan” playing the role of the architect of Israel’s enslavement rather than an Egyptian pharaoh. Even more astonishing is *Jubilees*’ addendum to the story of Jacob and Esau. In *Jubilees*, a story that ends in the Torah’s version with a moving brotherly reconciliation is transformed into a story of blood-letting fit for a blockbuster Hollywood movie. In *Jubilees*, Esau changes his mind about forgiving his brother and leads an army to attack him. Jacob, in turn, personally slays Esau by shooting an arrow through his heart (see chapters 37–8). In a speech before

³² Note that the prohibition on marriage with Shechemites is applied to all Gentiles generally.

that fateful event, Esau declares with a vengeance that there is no room—nor would there ever be—for a bond of brotherhood between Jacob’s descendants and his own (see 37:18–23). The reader gathers the message that no peace is possible between the house of Jacob and that of Esau. Contrast this portrayal of the Edomites (descendants of Esau) with a statement in Deuteronomy 23:7: “You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin. You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an alien residing in their land. The children of the third generation that are born to them may be admitted to the assembly of the LORD” (NRSV).

While a formal relationship of dependence between *Jubilees* and Ezra-Nehemiah cannot be posited as a reason for their shared worry about exogamous marriages among the post-exilic Israelite community, the exilic experience of their authors seems to have led both authors, perhaps independently, to basically rewrite and reappropriate certain passages from sacred scripture to fit their contemporary concern about ethnic survival. Worry about preserving the integrity of any community, but particularly a community whose call was to be holy, seems to have led to a paradox. On the one hand, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the author of *Jubilees* were driven, no doubt, by a passion for the holiness of the surviving remnant of Israel, to add to what their sacred texts seemed to require of them for faithfulness. But, on the other hand, in doing so their zeal led them to take some surprising liberties with Israel’s sacred texts—liberties that seem to compromise the authoritative status such texts might have been intended to sustain. In other words, for Ezra and Nehemiah, the holiness of the exilic community seems to have taken precedent over the holiness of their sacred writings.

Observing the dynamics created by the natural tendency to appropriate sacred texts for political ends should serve to inform uses of them for the same in contemporary contexts. Some might find a liberating message here, by which license is given through Ezra-Nehemiah for the further creative reappropriation of the Bible in situations confronting the faithful today. But I wish to suggest that a warning is more appropriate—one that may be especially relevant for Christians trying to live faithfully in areas of the world, like the United States, where citations of the Bible can be rhetorically powerful. Ezra and Nehemiah’s use of Israel’s sacred tradition served not only to galvanize the returned exiles in their cause to build a protective physical barrier around Jerusalem; it also served as a symbol of their social and spiritual otherness. For their survival as a distinct ethnic group, this may have been necessary. Nationality and ethnicity are part and parcel to Jewish identity, and it makes sense that those concerned with preserving a national or ethnic group’s absolute distinctness would need to pay close attention when that group’s ethnic borders are becoming too porous.

However, this in and of itself should give pause to Christians—especially those living at the beginning of the twenty-first century—who would point to Nehemiah’s approach as inspiration for Christian discipleship. Unlike Ezra-Nehemiah, the New Testament betrays no concern for holiness that is *nationally* or *ethnically* defined. Rather, the theology of the New Testament imagines a group—the church—defined in great measure by the porousness of its borders. It is the radical inclusivity of the church that makes it holy. The New Testament, like Ezra and Nehemiah, appropriates the Torah in a wide variety of creative ways to bolster its message. But its message regarding the people of God’s relationship to outsiders is not the same. Ephesians 2:11–17, for example, mentions a wall that, like Jericho’s, came down. But the reason for this wall’s tumbling was not for slaughter but for peace, and for the removal of hostility. Similarly, Romans 11 speaks of the “grafting in” of gentiles into the Israelite vine and 1 Peter 2:10 and its context also implies an invitation for gentile followers of Jesus to identify themselves with God’s elect people. In the Gospels, Jesus on numerous occasions draws his disciples’ attention to the faith of Samaritan and gentiles.

The implications for using Nehemiah as an exemplar in rhetoric aimed at Christian audiences in America today should be clearly understood. Nehemiah’s primary agenda was to preserve the ethnic integrity of his people—to keep them “holy,” separate from outsiders. And he did this well. However, authentic Christian discipleship does not depend in any way on ethnic or national holiness. In fact, faithful Christian discipleship often involves opposing efforts to maintain ethnic purity or national separateness. The truth is, as Aviv rightly observes in his fascinating work, *End of the Jews*, Ezra’s (and, we can add, Nehemiah’s) “decree concerning ‘foreigners’ diverged greatly from Jewish tradition, be it in the realm of actual torah law or informal practice.”³³ He notes,

On *thirty-six distinct occasions*, the Torah reminds the Jews of their foreigner status in Egypt and how badly they were treated as the vulnerable “other” in Egyptian society. Then, the Torah quickly follows each reminder with yet another piece of social legislation. The Jewish experience in Egypt ...thus serves a higher purpose: framing a vision for a just society. At the heart of this just society, one finds the *ger* [foreigner].³⁴

The claim here is that Ezra and Nehemiah failed to draw from the radical inclusivity shining through the Torah itself. How much greater a failure would it be for Christians, despite their access to the greater light of God’s self-revelation in Jesus, to follow the same course? In public life, the gospel compels Christians to seek mitigation of any political agenda or ethos that construes human

³³ Aviv, ch. 4, par. 16.

³⁴ Aviv, ch. 4, par. 19.

relationships in terms of “us-versus-them.” For the Christian, walls—whether they are built or torn down—should serve to foster welcome and friendship rather than competition and animosity, let alone fear. Whether in America or elsewhere, Christians should view Nehemiah and Ezra not as unmitigated examples of righteous men with a righteous cause, but as human beings who, like the rest of us, fall short of our calling as representatives of God in the world. Their goals and concerns fell short of Jesus’ goals and concerns. Authentic Christian discipleship demands that we measure these characters’ righteousness against the example of Jesus, as we understand him through the New Testament.

Bibliography

Aviv, Dan Mendelsohn. *End of the Jews: Radical Breaks, Remakes and What Comes Next*. Toronto: The Key, 2012, Kindle.

Bedford, Peter R. Diaspora: Homeland Relations in Ezra-Nehemiah. *Vetus Testamentum* 52, no. 2 (2002): 147-165.

Brown, A. Philip II. The Problem of Mixed Marriages in Ezra 9-10. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162, no. 648 (October-December 2005): 437-58.

Cataldo, Jeremiah. Persian Policy and the Yehud Community During Nehemiah. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28, no. 2 (2003): 131-143.

Cross, Frank Moore. A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94, no. 1 (March 1975): 4-18.

_____. Discovery of the Samaria Papyri. *Biblical Archaeologist* 26, no. 4 (December 1963): 110-121.

_____. Geshem the Arabian, Enemy of Nehemiah. *Biblical Archaeologist* 18 (1955): 46-47.

_____. The Historical Importance of the Samaria Papyri. *Biblical Archaeological Review* 4, no. 1 (1978): 25-27.

Eskenazi, Tamara and Eleanore P. Judd. Marriage to a Stranger in Ezra 9-10. In *Second Temple Studies 2: Temple Community in the Persian Period*, edited by Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent Richards. Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1994.

Esler, Philip F. “Ezra-Nehemiah As a Narrative of (Re-Invented) Israelite Identity.” *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 3-4 (2003): 413-426.

- Fitzpatrick-McKinley, Anne. *Empire, Power, and Indigenous Elites: A Case Study of the Nehemiah Memoir*. Boston: Brill, 2015.
- Goodnick, Benjamin. Ezra Rejects Patrilineal Descent. *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (October-December 1998): 250-54.
- Grabbe, Lester J. *Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah*. Vol. 1 of *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*. London: T & T Clark International, 2004.
- Hayes, Christine. Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources. *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999): 3-36.
- Hoglund, Kenneth G. *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah*. Atlanta: Scholars, 1992.
- Janzen, David. The 'Mission' of Ezra and the Persian-Period Temple Community. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 4 (2000): 619-643.
- Kessler, Rainer. *The Social History of Ancient Israel: An Introduction*. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.
- Klawans, Jonathan. Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism. *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 20, no. 2 (1995): 285-312.
- Knoppers, Gary N. *Jew and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- _____. The Construction of Judean Diasporic Identity in Ezra-Nehemiah. *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 15, a. 3 (2015). <http://www.jhsonline.org>.
- Levin, Yigal. *A Time of Change: Judah and Its Neighbors in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods*. London: T & T Clark, 2007.
- Lipschits, Oded, Gary Knoppers and Manfred Oeming, eds. *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
- _____. *Judah and Judeans in the Persian Period*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- _____. Persian-Period Judah: A New Perspective. In *Texts, Contexts and Readings in Postexilic Literature: Explorations into Historiography and Identity Negotiations in Hebrew Bible and Related Texts*, 187-211. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.

- Margalith, Othniel. The Political Background of Zerubbabel's Mission and the Samaritan Schism. *Vetus Testamentum* 41, fasc. 3 (July 1991): 312-323.
- McCarthy, Dennis J. Covenant and Law in Chronicles-Nehemiah. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (January 1982): 25-44.
- Myers Jacob M. *Ezra-Nehemiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. New York: Doubleday, 1965.
- _____. *The World of the Restoration*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968.
- Olmstead, A. T. *History of Palestine and Syria to the Macedonian Conquest*. New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1931.
- Olyan, Saul M. Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community. *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 35, no. 1 (2004): 1-16.
- Oswald, Wolfgang. Foreign Marriages and Citizenship in Persian Period Judah. *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 12, no. 6 (2012). <http://www.jhsonline.org>.
- Rabinowitz, Isaac. Another Aramaic Record of the North-Arabian Goddess HAN-'ILAT. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 10, no. 2 (April 1959): 154-55.
- _____. Aramac Inscriptions of the Fifth Century B. C. E. from a North-Arab Shrine in Egypt. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 15, no. 1 (January 1956): 1-9.
- Rainey, Brian. 'Their Peace and Prosperity': Biblical Concepts of Hereditary Punishment and the Exclusion of Foreigners in Ezra-Nehemiah. *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 6 (2016): 158-181.
- Schaper, Joachim. Priestly Purity and Social Organisation in Persian Period Judah. *Biblische Notizen* 118 (2003): 51-57.
- Smith-Christopher, Daniel. The Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13: A Study of the Sociology of Post-Exilic Judean Community. In *Second Temple Studies 2: Temple Community in the Persian Period*, edited by Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent Richards. Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1994.
- Southwood, Katherine E. 'And They Could Not Understand Jewish Speech': Language, Ethnicity, and Nehemiah's Inter-marriage Crisis. *Journal of Theological Studies* 62, pt. 1 (April 2011): 1-19.
- Sparks, Kenton L. *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998.
- Stern, Ephraim. The Babylonian Gap: The Archaeological Reality. *Journal for the Study Of The Old Testament* 28, no. 3 (March 2004): 273-277.

Washington, Harold C. The Strange Woman (hyrkn/hrz hfa) of Proverbs 1-9 and Post-Exilic Judean Society. In *Second Temple Studies 2: Temple Community in the Persian Period*, edited by Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent Richards. Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1994.

Williamson, H. G. M. The Governors of Judah under the Persians. *Tyndale Bulletin* 39 (1988): 59-82.

Yamauchi, Edwin M. Two Reformers Compared: Solon of Athens and Nehemiah of Jerusalem. In *Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, 269-292. New York: KTAV, 1980.

Yamauchi, Edwin M. Archaeological Backgrounds of the Exilic and Postexilic Era, Pt. 4: The Archaeological Background of Nehemiah. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137, no. 548 (October-December 1980): 291-309.

Zadok, Ran. *The Earliest Diaspora: Israelites and Judeans in Pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia*. Tel Aviv: Diaspora Research Institute, Tel Aviv University, 2002.

Zvi, Ehud ben and Cristoph Levin. *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Contexts*. New York : Walter de Gruyter, 2010.