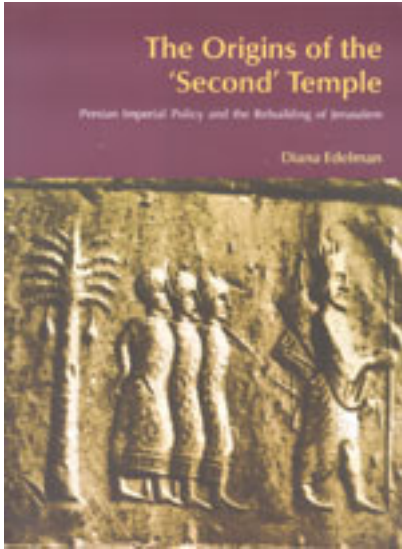


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Edelman, Diana

The Origins of the 'Second' Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem

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This book by Diana Edelman, senior lecturer in the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield, contests a scholarly consensus up to the 1990s that Ezra 1–6, Haggai, and Zechariah can be relied upon for information about the “origins” of the Second Temple. These biblical texts presuppose 515 B.C.E. as the date when the exiles returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt its temple and 445 B.C.E. as the date when Jerusalem became fortified (7–8). According to Edelman’s challenging hypothesis, historical priority should instead be accorded to the claim in the book of Nehemiah “that the resettlement of Jerusalem only took place during the governorship of Nehemiah, which began in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, 444 BCE.” Concomitantly, Edelman holds that the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem’s fortification took place at the same time (8). After a concise introduction (1–12), Edelman elaborates her hypothesis, discussing the literary evidence of Nehemiah, Haggai–Zech 8, and Ezra 1–6 in the respective chapters 1 (13–79), 2 (80–150), and 3 (151–208), while turning more specifically to the archaeological evidence about Yehud’s boundaries and its settlement patterns in chapters 4 (209–80) and 5 (281–331). A final, sixth, chapter (332–51) synthesizes insights drawn from the previous chapters.

Chapter 1, “When Generations Really Count: Dating Zerubbabel and Nehemiah Using Genealogical Information in the Book of Nehemiah,” does a meticulous job of historical

identification of generations on the basis of a list of priests and Levites in Neh 12:1–26. The combined reference to Persian military (2:9) and Jewish civil (7:2) appointments in Jerusalem constitutes important evidence for Edelman’s hypothesis (26–27). Edelman concludes from the genealogical information and the chronological information in Elephantine papyrus *AP 30* that Nehemiah belonged to generation 3, while the return from exile under Zerubbabel and Yeshua (generation 2) should be dated around 465 B.C.E. (75). A critical point should be made with regard to Neh 7:6–72. While this genealogical list of returned exiles appears to be less relevant for the discussion (36, 37, 39, 74, 77), Edelman does not give due emphasis to the fact that Neh 7:6–72 and Ezra 2 present parallel versions. The differences—which can be discerned between Ezra 2:2 and Neh 7:7; Ezra 2:10 and Neh 7:15; Ezra 2:17–20 and Neh 7:22–25; Ezra 2:30 having no equivalent in Neh 7:6–73; and Ezra 2:50 and Neh 7:52—need to be accounted for in a discussion about generations starting with the return from exile. This is not to deny the otherwise richly documented character of Edelman’s discussion, which pays detailed attention to the ways in which historical information may be derived from both literary and documentary sources, including papyri, inscriptions, coins, and bullae.

Chapter 2, “What’s in a Date? The Unreliable Nature of the Dates in Haggai and Zechariah,” analyzes Haggai–Zech 8, deferring discussion of Ezra 1–6 to chapter 3 in view of the literary dependence of the latter on the former. Edelman puts the divergent references to the date of the temple-building in the books of Haggai (Hag 1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 20) and Zechariah (Zech 1:1, 7; 7:1) in perspective. The dating formulae are first compared to Judean, Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Persian, Seleucid, and Ptolemaic contexts (82–90). Examples of Persian dating practices include the Behistun inscription, whose English translation is presented in appendix 1 (353–361). Edelman explains the various dates in Haggai and Zechariah in view of prophetic genre conventions (90–106), observing that they deliberately fit “Jeremiah’s prophecies in 25.11–12; 27.6–7” (106) and 29:10 (95) about the seventy-year wrath of God against the people of Israel and the land. It may be added here that Dan 9:2 most explicitly refers to Jeremiah’s prophecy. The author further reconsiders the “month and day-elements in the date formulae” in Haggai (107–23) and Zech 1–8 (123–31), as well as the “internal organization of Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 as temple-building accounts” (131–39). Edelman concludes that “the dates are secondary and are used in part as a way to interrelate the two texts” (131). She explains the insertion of the seventy-year tradition from the distance in time in the “common collective memory,” when the combined edition of Haggai–Zechariah 8 was composed, roughly 325–275 B.C.E. (146).

Chapter 3, “It’s All in the Sources: The Historicity of the Account of Temple-Rebuilding in Ezra 1–6,” provides new answers to historical problems surrounding the account of Cyrus’s commission of rebuilding, the delay in the completion of the temple, and the

opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Ezra 1–6 (154–59). Edelman explains the first two problems in light of the diversity of biblical sources used by the author of Ezra. According to Edelman, these sources are Second Isaiah (Isa 44:28), the books of Chronicles, Jeremiah, Haggai–Zech 8, Nehemiah, and Ezek 40–48, while the Cyrus Cylinder provides further contextual information for Cyrus’s policy of religious restoration (163–66 and appendix 2 [362–63]). On the other hand, she contests the scholarly assumption that historical sources underlie Ezra 1:2–5 and the Aramaic documents in Ezra 4:11–16, 17–22; 5:7–17; 6:2–5, 6–12 (180–201), attributing a “later, editorial origin” to the section on opposition to rebuilding in Ezra 4:6–24 (159), and thereby removes the basis for the evaluation of Ezra 1–6 as an independent historical source.

Chapter 4, “Setting the Bounds: The Territory Comprising Yehud under Artaxerxes I in the Mid-Fifth Century BCE,” examines the biblical evidence in Neh 3; 7:6–69; and 11:25–35 (210–32), the artifactual evidence of jar stamps (233–38), and the relation between literary and archaeological evidence (238–75). Edelman suggests that the control over the Beersheva Valley and the Negev, exerted by Jerusalem before 586 B.C.E., was reassigned from Edom to Jerusalem by Artaxerxes I as part of the mid-fifth-century redevelopment of the province of Yehud (275–76). According to Edelman, the evidence of Nehemiah does not provide an accurate account of the boundaries of Yehud (233, 275), while the evaluation of archaeological evidence demonstrates the historical unreliability of other prophetic indications, such as in Second Isaiah (276). Yet it is unclear whether and how the supposed ideological motivation and secondary character of Neh 11:25–35 (228–33) could also impact the evaluation of the immediately following section of Neh 12:1–26.

Chapter 5, “Excavating the Past: Settlement Patterns and Military Installations in Persian-Era Yehud,” provides an extensive survey of archaeological excavations while still pointing to their limitations as sources of information about the redevelopment of Yehud. The chapter includes a table of settlement patterns, based on Ph.D. theses and publications, many of them from the 1990s up to 2003 (291–310). According to Edelman, the archaeological evidence still allows for the general conclusion that new settlement activity and the establishment of government facilities took place in the Persian period (328–30).

Chapter 6, “Piety or Pragmatism? The Policy of Artaxerxes I for the Development of Yehud,” draws the evaluation of literary and artifactual sources together and concludes that the establishment of Jerusalem as a provincial seat, accompanied by new settlement activity, the appointment of a new governor, and the fortification and rebuilding of Jerusalem, including its temple, should be dated to the early reign of Artaxerxes I (465–425 B.C.E.). Edelman observes that pragmatism rather than piety was the motivation of Artaxerxes’ policy that made the rebuilding of the temple possible.

Edelman's book provides a major challenge to the scholarly consensus about the "origins" of the Second Temple. It will stimulate much discussion, if only for the need to rethink the historical and literary evaluation of Ezra 1–6 and Haggai–Zech 8, on the one hand, and Nehemiah, on the other. Yet certain questions still remain unanswered by this hypothesis, starting with Edelman's own "open question" about whether Nehemiah succeeded Zerubbabel in office or whether the two "represent the same historical person who has been split into two different people ... as a result of the decision to place the rebuilding of the temple almost seventy years earlier than the rebuilding of Jerusalem, for ideological reasons" (351). It further remains unclear why Edelman's interpretation of Neh 2:8 takes the building of the "gates of the fortress of the temple" (*sha'are ha-birah asher-labayit*) to stand for the "the building of a new temple" (345). Edelman's reading depends on an emendation of Neh 2:8, which deems the present text to be the result of "inadvertent scribal error" and supposes that the original reading puts "four major building projects" next to each other (345). Yet the Masoretic Text could presuppose the idea that the gates belonged to fortifications surrounding the temple hill, an idea that 1 Macc 13:52 further attests.