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APPROACHING YEHUD
New Approaches to the Study
of the Persian Period

Edited by

Jon L. Berquist

Society of Biblical Literature
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DIASPORA AND HOMELAND IN THE EARLY
ACHAEMENID PERIOD: COMMUNITY, GEOGRAPHY
AND DEMOGRAPHY IN ZECHARIAH 1–8

John Kessler

1.0. INTRODUCTION

One of the most intriguing features of Judean history in the Persian period is the emergence of several widely dispersed communities in various parts of Mesopotamia, the Levant, and Egypt consisting of inhabitants of the former northern and southern kingdoms. Persian-period scholarship has devoted significant attention to various issues such as the population, borders, and governance of Yehud, the region's internal sociopolitical structure, as well as the impact of Achaemenid imperial policy upon polity in Yehud. More recently, fresh attention is being devoted to the issue of how the community in Yehud and the other Israelite/Judean communities beyond its borders defined and understood themselves, as well as how they viewed other Yahwists who stood at some distance, either ideologically or geographically, from themselves. The present study will seek to contribute to this discussion by analyzing Zech 1–8 with a view to determining this text's particular understanding of the composition, nature, geographic location, and future of the community of Yahweh. Such an analysis will enable us to glimpse one distinct perspective on the question of how the *pastiche* of Judean communities described above understood one another in the context of the Achaemenid period.

1.1. ZECHARIAH 1–8 AS A SOURCE FOR THE PERSIAN PERIOD

The question of the literary history of Zech 1–8 is a complex one and cannot be discussed in detail here. Nevertheless, the present study assumes it to be a relevant source for the period at hand and makes four assumptions. The first is that Zech 1–8 is a discrete and distinct literary entity, separate from (albeit

related to) both Zech 9–14 and Haggai and should be read as such.¹ Second, redactional complexities notwithstanding, Zech 1–8 can be viewed as consisting of two major blocs of material: (1) a sermonic framework (henceforth SF) consisting of 1:1–6; 7:1–8:23 and (2) a visionary-oracular complex (VOC) consisting of 1:7–6:15. It is generally agreed that, while both sections reflect complex literary development and contain both earlier and later material, the SF represents the work's last major compositional stage (Beuken 1967; Redditt: 40–43; Amsler: 43–46; Petersen: 124). The date of this final form is ascribed by some to the time around 515 B.C.E. (Redditt: 42; Meyers and Meyers 1987:xlvi), by others to the late sixth or early fifth century (Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumier: 63; Petitjean: 440; Rudolph 1970), or to the mid- to late fifth century (Ackroyd 1968; Beuken 1967; Coggins: 31).² While I personally favor a dating in the late sixth or early fifth centuries, this only marginally affects my conclusions. The creation of such texts as Haggai and Zech 1–8 in the early Achaemenid period should not be deemed improbable. Despite its reduced size (see below), Yehud was nevertheless the locus of significant literary activity (Carter 1999:286–88; Ben Zvi 1996; 1998; Kessler 2001). Third, while significant portions of the material contained in Zech 1–8 likely date from various moments early in the Achaemenid period, this material has been subject to ongoing reflection. As Chary (43) appropriately comments, the older material “is not an immutable monolithic piece. It is rather the property of the community which meditates upon it and completes it as new religious needs arise.” Thus Zech 1–8 may be read as a textual unity comprising ongoing theological reflection at various moments. Fourth, Zech

1. On the relationship between Zech 1–8 and 9–14 in current scholarship, see Floyd 2002:303–8; Boda 2003. Zech 1–8 is frequently read together with Haggai (so Meyers and Meyers 1987) or with Haggai, Zech 9–14, and Malachi (thus Sérandour; Bauer). My reading of Zech 1–8 does not deny that Haggai and Zech 1–8 share certain thematic and ideological preoccupations and a common historical matrix. Nor do I deny the possibility that at some point Haggai and Zech 1–8 were incorporated into a common literary and theological collection. What I do affirm, however, is that in form and content Haggai and Zech 1–8 are sufficiently distinct to be evaluated independently from one another (Kessler 2002: esp. 56–57; Coggins: 44–45; Boda 2003:49–54, with bibliography). Furthermore, the arguments adduced in favor of a late-sixth-century composite redaction of Haggai-Zech 1–8 (thus Meyers and Meyers 1987; Lux) or a mid-fifth-century work including Malachi (Sérandour: 75–84, esp. 76) appear inconclusive in that they could all equally be used to demonstrate that Zech 1–8 and/or Zech 1–8; 9–14 and Malachi were all united to the book of Haggai *already in existence*.

2. Lipiński (1970) views 8:20–23 as a far later addition, stemming from the late Persian or Hellenistic period, due to its use of the pilgrimage motif. This, however, is far from certain; see Petitjean: 419–38).

1–8 reflects a Yehudite, rather than a diasporic, perspective (Petitjean: 442–43).³ Zion is the central point from which the world is viewed or to which the world comes.

1. 2. YEHUD AND THE DIASPORA IN THE EARLY PERSIAN PERIOD

Amidst the torrent of scholarly interest in the Persian period over the past twenty years one can speak of a certain emerging critical consensus that views Yehud as a Persian province whose territory and population were vastly diminished when compared with the situation at the end of the monarchic period. In contrast to the position proposed by Albrecht Alt and followed by several scholars such as Galling (1964), Petersen (26–27), and McEvenue, wherein Yehud/Judah was annexed to Samaria and governed from there until the time of Nehemiah, or to the approach taken by Sacchi, Bianchi, and Niehr, which views Yehud as a quasi-independent kingdom within the Persian Empire ruled (at least in the early period) by a Davidic scion, a significant number of scholars view Yehud as a subunit within the fifth satrapy, initially ruled over by a governor of Davidic stock (Avigad; Williamson 1998; Lemaire 1994; Carter 1999:50–52; Na'aman). The province itself consisted of a rather small swath of territory lying around Jerusalem. Two major positions have emerged here. The first is that of Ephraim Stern (1982), who favors a somewhat larger province, including such sites as Lod and Ono in the northwest, Hazor in the north, and Beth-zur in the south. This contrasts with the narrower boundaries proposed by scholars such as Carter (1999:97) and Lemaire (1994:21). Lemaire views the province as consisting of the area within a radius of some twenty-five miles around Jerusalem (1994:20–21). Despite some extremely high estimates of the population of the province (Weinberg 1996:37), the application of modern demographic analysis, which involves such matters as spatial analysis, carrying capacity, water supply, and the establishment of a population co-efficient, has yielded far lower estimates.⁴ Two major positions appear in the recent literature.⁵ The first is that of Carter (1999:201–2), who suggests that the maximal population

3. Cf. Redditt (42), who argues on the basis of 2:10–17 (2:6–13) that the visions and accompanying oracles were formulated in Yehud and sent back to Babylon. Thus the exiles were the “original audience to whom the visions were directed.” Similarly Petitjean (127–28) sees the purpose of 2:10–17 as being “to support the return-from-exile movement.”

4. For a history of modern demographic analysis, including the work of Y. Shiloh, R. Gophna, M. Broshi, I. Finkelstein, and J. Wilkinson, see the surveys in Carter 1999:195–99; Lipschits 2003:324–26.

5. Cf. The earlier suggestion of Albright (87) of about twenty thousand in Yehud.

of the province during the Persian period to have been approximately twenty thousand. Oded Lipschits is critical of Carter's methodology⁶ and suggests a maximal population of about thirty thousand for the Persian period as a whole (2003:363–64). While an increase of 50 percent from Carter's suggestion (or a decrease of 30 percent from Lipschits's) is certainly significant in relative terms, in absolute terms both estimates reflect a sparsely populated province, especially when compared with the situation on the eve of the Babylonian conquests, at which time the population of Judah was about 110,000 (Lipschits 2003:363–64). Especially striking here are Carter's and Lipschits's perceptions of the situation in Jerusalem. Carter (1999) assumes Jerusalem to have had a population of less than one thousand in the period between 538 and 450.⁷ Lipschits (2006) and also independently Lemaire (2003:291–92) view Jerusalem to have been largely desolate until its refortification in the mid-fifth century. Both view the capital of Yehud as having been situated at Mizpah until that point. Blenkinsopp (1998:34) views Mizpah as the political and religious capital of Babylonian Judah until the *coup d'état* of Ishmael, after which the religious center moved to Bethel. David Ussishkin similarly views Jerusalem as having been territorially quite large but severely underpopulated during the Persian period. Lipschits (2006) further argues that the presence of an elite in the mid-fifth century initiated the redevelopment of Yehud but that real growth did not occur until the emergence of an even more significant elite in the Hellenistic period.⁸

Concurrent with this developing consensus regarding a reduced Yehud there has been a growing body of evidence regarding the presence of descendants of the inhabitants of the northern and southern kingdoms in a variety of locations beyond the borders of Yehud. This population is frequently designated by the term "Jewish"; however, such a term is problematic in that it is somewhat ambiguous, potentially anachronistic,⁹ somewhat ill-fitting for the inhabitants of Samaria, and in danger of homogenizing quite disparate groups. Elsewhere (2006) I have suggested the designation "Yahwistic." However, this

6. Specifically Carter's periodization of the evidence into Persian I and Persian II (Carter 1999:199; Lipschits 2003:359–60). Readers of the two works may become confused here. Lipschits refers to Carter's two periods as Persian A and B, while Carter himself actually dubs them Persian I and Persian II.

7. Carter posits a settled area of 25–30 dunams of settled area in the early period (1999:148). Using his population coefficient of 25 persons per dunam—a figure Carter views as maximal—the result would be 625–750.

8. On the fortification of Jerusalem in this period, see Bodi: 37–55.

9. See Knauf (2002), who seeks to avoid anachronism by speaking of a "pre-biblical Judaism" at Elephantine.

is also not without problems of its own, since the terms *yehudi/yehudim* were widely used at the time as self-designations in Yehud and at Elephantine (Neh 1:2; Esth 2:6; Porten and Yardeni: A.4.7; Cowley: 30).¹⁰ For the present study I will use the term “Israelite/Judean” to describe these communities. Whatever term is used, however, evidence of the presence of such a population, in such forms as biblical texts, extrabiblical literary materials, Yahwistic names in inscriptions and numismatics, is available for the following regions: Samaria, Egypt, Babylonia-Elam, and several of the regions surrounding Yehud, including Edom, Galilee, Ashdod, Idumaea, Moab, and Ammon (see Japhet 1983 for an earlier survey and Kessler 2006 for a survey of the more recent evidence, both with bibliography). Given the highly fragmentary state of our knowledge of these communities, it is virtually impossible to suggest any specific estimate of their demographic proportions vis-à-vis Yehud.

1.3. STUDYING THE JUDEAN COMMUNITIES IN THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE

We thus are faced with a highly disparate mosaic of diverse yet related communities tracing their origins to the earlier kingdoms of Israel and Judah. One may summarize this complex tapestry as follows: (1) *golah* returnees in Yehud; (2) *golah* remainees in Babylonia;¹¹ (3) Yehudite remainees; (4) Israelite/Judean residents in Egypt; (5) Israelite/Judean inhabitants in the province of Samaria; and (6) other Israelite/Judeans in the various regions of the Levant. As noted above, one of the most fascinating questions to emerge in the analysis of these diverse communities is how they viewed one another. Certain studies have begun to address this question. Significant attention has been paid to the relationship between the returnees and the nondeported Judean remainees (Kessler 2001; Ben Zvi 1995:109–10; Williamson 1998:159) and between the returnees and the population in Samaria to the north (Ben Zvi 1995; Diebner; Knoppers). Others have investigated relations between the returnees and the Babylonian remainees (Bedford), between the Egyptian Diaspora and the communities in Jerusalem and Babylon (Bar-Kochva; Garbini: 133–50; Phillips; de Pury and Römer) or between the population in Yehud and the surrounding provinces (Rappaport). Still others have reflected upon Jewish identity formation (Hamilton; Cohen; Berquist 2006; Dombrowski).

10. For a summary of the use of the term, see Schmid.

11. The existence of other Israelite/Judean communities in the east is often speculated upon; see Smith-Christopher 2002:71, who suggests that Judeans may have been conscripted for military service by Nabonidus and scattered in Arabia. See also Oded (481), who suggests that exiles from the former northern kingdom were found among the Babylonian-Elamite Judean population.

Other studies have sought to understand the community in Yehud in terms of broader sociological dynamics. Most significant here are Causse's pioneering study (1937), Weinberg's citizen-temple community (1992), and Smith-Christopher's study of the impact of the exile on the Golah (1989; 2002).¹²

In a recent study (2006) I proposed viewing the Yehudite returnee community as a charter group. Based on the sociological model elaborated by John A. Porter in his study of colonial elite groups, I define a charter group as a *geographically transplanted elite*. As described by Porter, such an elite moves into a depopulated or underpopulated territory and establishes itself as the hegemonic sociopolitical force within the region, controlling its social, political, and economic institutions and leaving its impress for generations to come. Such hegemony is frequently achieved and maintained via political and economic support from outside the region itself. Viewing the returnees as functioning as a charter group is not meant in any way to predict outcomes or to form a grid through which to read the data. Rather, it offers a heuristic vantage point from which to observe the social, religious, and political dynamics at work in Persian Yehud and to view the similarities and dissimilarities that may exist between that situation and other analogous contexts. One especially significant issue is how such groups deal with questions of identity, membership, exclusion, and inclusion. It is to such questions that we now turn.

2.0. THE VIEW FROM ZECHARIAH 1–8

The present study, however, seeks to address the question of Israelite/Judean identity from the ideological perspective of one contemporary literary source, Zech 1–8. As such, I am not engaging in any kind of “concordist” enterprise, that is, asking this text to confirm or deny any of the historical, demographic, or sociological reconstructions mentioned above. My purpose is rather to examine the text in order to ascertain its own ideological perception and evaluation of the community in Jerusalem/Yehud and its relationship to the Israelite/Judean communities external to it. Once this ideological perspective is ascertained, I will seek to reflect on how the perceptions in Zech 1–8 relate to two specific and critical questions in the Achaemenid period: Jewish identity; and the future of Jerusalem and Yehud. In conclusion, I will offer some reflections on what such a perspective might reveal about the community that

12. See also Fried; Tollefson and Williamson. On the need for extreme caution in the use of sociological analogies, see Carter 1996.

produced it, when read against the backdrop of the realities of life in early Persian Yehud.

As noted above, Zech 1–8 views the world from the vantage point of Jerusalem (Petitjean: 442–43). The primary addressee, then, is the community in Yehud that is in the process of restoring the temple and reconstituting communal life. This provides a fixed point of reference and center of focus for the text as a whole (Petersen: 119; Meyers and Meyers 1987:lvi). However, it is also immediately apparent that the world of the text radiates outward from this one fixed point both chronologically and spatially. Chronologically, the text’s purview extends to both past and future communities related to the one in Jerusalem. Spatially, the text’s interest emanates outward from Jerusalem, to the cities of Judah, to Israel, Babylon, and beyond.¹³ The present study will look at the data from the perspective of the narrative continuum created within the world of the text, as it moves from past to present to future. Within this framework, the text’s geographical/spatial movement, from Israel, Judea, and Jerusalem, to the distant regions of the earth and back again, will become apparent. Methodologically, each segment of the narrative continuum will be analyzed first from the perspective of the SF, then from that of the VOC.

2.1. THE COMMUNITY OF THE PAST

2.1.1. THE SERMONIC FRAMEWORK: 1:1–6; 7:1–8:23

Zechariah 1–8 opens with a word from Yahweh in the eighth month of Darius’s second year, thus October 520.¹⁴ The reader is immediately struck by absence of any specified audience for the oracle (cf. the clearly expressed addressees in Hag 1:1; 2:1, 10, 20). Rather, attention is immediately focused upon a community of the past—consisting of “the ancestors” (*'btkm*)—who lived prior to the community presently addressed. No further designation of the identity of this earlier group is given in the opening section. The text simply describes the fact that they refused to hear (*sm'*) or pay heed (hiphil of *qsb*) to Yahweh’s warnings to them through the “former prophets” (1:4). This resulted in Yahweh’s intense anger (1:2; where the verb *qsp* is strengthened via a cognate accusative) and judgment, (described as his word “overtaking the fathers” [hiphil *nsg*, 1:6]). Zechariah 7:1–8:23 likewise mirrors this perception of the past, albeit in greater detail. While the term “ancestors” does not

13. Meyers and Meyers (1992) and Floyd (1997) discuss the cosmic aspects of our text, but this theme cannot be pursued here.

14. On the scribal computation system in Haggai and Zech 1–8, see Kessler 1992; 2002:41–51, with bibliography.

reappear in this section, the same group is clearly referred to in the oracles in 7:1–7 and 8–14 (on the structure of these sections, see Floyd 2000:418–27). They refuse to hear (infinitive absolute of *smʿ*, 7:11; cf. 1:4) or pay attention (hiphil of *qsb*; cf. 1:4). This section adds the further terms “to refuse,” “to set a defiant shoulder,” and “to block the ears and make the heart as stone” (7:11–12; Meyers and Meyers 1987:403–4). As a result, Yahweh became exceedingly angry with them (here *qsp gdwl*; cf. 1:2), scattered them (*sʿr*; only here for scattering in Zechariah) among the nations they had not known (7:14, a Deuteronomism; cf. Deut 13:2; 28:36, 64; Jer 22:28; cf. 8:13 and 8:7).¹⁵ As a result, Jerusalem, the cities of Judah, the Negev, and the Shephelah were depopulated (7:7), the land was desolated (*ʿrs nsmh*), and the beautiful land made a desolation (*ʿrs hmdh smh*, 7:14).

2.1.2. VISIONARY-ORACULAR COMPLEX: 1:7–6:15

A similar perspective is found in the VOC. While there is no explicit mention of the “ancestors” here, the concept is clearly present and implicit in the description of the nations’ (2:2 [1:19]) and Yahweh’s (2:10 [2:6]) scattering of the community. The second vision (2:1–4 [1:18–23]) refers to the scattering (*zrh*) of Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem by the “horns” (*qrnwt*). Several points are worthy of attention here. First the verb *zrh* (“to scatter”) is a crucial one used to describe the exile and is found in a variety of traditions (Lev 26:33; 1 Kgs 14:15; Jer 31:10; 49:32; Ezek 5:2, 10, 12; 6:8; 12:14, 15; 20:23; 22:15; 36:19; Ps 106:27). Second, the precise localities to which these dispersed ones have been scattered are not explicitly stated in the vision. The mention of the four horns in 2:1 (1:18) may refer to Assyria and Babylon as the agents of this dispersion (Boda 2005) or may have a more general referent.¹⁶ However that may be, the location of the dispersed persons is not specified. Third, the text links all the dispersed Israelite/Judean communities to this scattering. No account is taken of any who have engaged in voluntary emigration¹⁷ or mili-

15. 8:7, 13–15 will be discussed in greater detail below.

16. Boda 2005 suggests the image of two animals with two horns each. He notes Vanderhooff’s evidence for the Assyria-Babylon amalgam in various contexts (207). Alternately, Chary (64–65) among many others suggests that the four horns do not designate Babylon in particular but rather “the collective responsibility of all the Gentile nations for the evil done to the elect people.” The number four is thus an expression of universality, similar to the four winds of 2:10 (6) and 6:5; see also the same image in Jer 49:36; Ezek 37:9; Dan 7:2; 8:8; 11:4.

17. It could be argued that any such emigration was redactionally subsumed under the concept of scattering. This appears to be the assumption of Petitjean (100–101). On

tary colonization (such as the community at Elephantine).¹⁸ Fourth and most significantly, in 2:2 (1:19) the dispersed ones include “Israel.” The mention of Israel in such a context is surprising, given the more frequent exilic designation of the objects of the nations’ dispersal and Yahweh’s renewed favor as “Judah and Jerusalem” (Zech 1:12; 2:16 [12]; 8:15; 2 Kgs 23:1, 2, 5, 24; 24:20; Isa 40:9; 44:26; Jer 1:15; 11:3; 18:1; Joel 4:1 [3:1]; 4:6 [3:6]; Zech 12:2, 5, 6, 7; Mal 2:11, 3:4). Furthermore, in 2:4 (1:21) only Judah is mentioned. However, despite the absence of the name “Israel” in the LXX, with Barthélemy (936–37), Meyers and Meyers (1987:138), Petersen (161), and Chary (64) but *pace* Redditt, I retain the entire phrase.¹⁹ “Israel” here likely refers to those Israelites exiled by the Assyrians (Petersen: 163; Barthélemy: 977) and also possibly to those northerners who may have come south after 722 and were exiled by the Babylonians (Meyers and Meyers 1987:138). Later in the same vision (2:4 [1:21]) the exile is said to have been enacted upon “Judah” (*yhw dh*) and “the land of Judah” (*rs yhw dh*). The reason for the absence of the name Israel here (cf. 2:2 [1:19])²⁰ may be due either to a desire to focus on the south (Petersen: 164) or because the activity of the “smiths” (*hrysym*)²¹ is seen as consisting in the eviction of all foreign powers from the territory of Yehud (Chary: 66) or due to the specific interest in the “the restoration of self-governance in Yehud” via Persia’s routing of Babylonian hegemony (Meyers and Meyers 1987:140, 145–46). In this vision it is the Gentile nations who have done the scattering.

The oracular additions to the third vision provide further detail. The exiles have been dispersed to a wide variety of locations, as symbolized by the four winds (2:10 [6]),²² specifically to the north (*spwn*, 2:10 [6]), to Babylon (*bt bbl* 2:11 [5]). Here it is noteworthy that Yahweh is the author of the dispersion and that, unlike 2:2 and 4 (1:19, 21), where *zrh* is used, here *prs*

questions of immigration and the movement of persons, see Limet; Garelli; and on roads, see Graf 1993. Mobility is an absolutely critical issue for the understanding of our period; see below.

18. On the origins of this colony, see Knauf; Porten 1984:378–83; 2003.

19. Amsler (67) follows Duhm, Mitchell, Sellin, Jepsen, Elliger, Delcor, and Rudolph in retaining Israel but seeing it as a secondary insertion intended to further generalize the referent of the vision. Barthélemy (937), however, notes that this is a literary, not a textual, judgment.

20. LXX does add “and Israel” at 2:4 (1:21); however, this is clearly an interpolation from 2:2 (1:19; see Barthélemy: 932).

21. The meaning and identity of the image here cannot be discussed in the present study; cf. the extensive literature in the commentaries.

22. Also 6:5 and the same image in Jer 49:36; Ezek 37:9; Dan 7:2; 8:8; 11:4 (Petitjean:100–101).

is employed.²³ The text would thus appear to recognize a past, widespread dispersion and a more focused one (Babylon). A careful distinction must be made here. On one hand, Assyria and Babylon are widely recognized as the agents of dispersion in the Deuteronomistic tradition, as well as in Chronicles and various prophetic texts.²⁴ This should not, however, be used to collapse all the expatriate communities into the one in Babylon.²⁵

In sum, then, both the SF and the VOC view the addressees of Zech 1–8 as the descendants of an earlier community that had hardened its hearts and refused Yahweh's word and that was scattered abroad, leaving the land a desolation. Thus the community of the past is perceived as having once existed in Jerusalem, Israel, and Judah but as having been dispersed to various localities. While certain differences in vocabulary and emphasis exist between 1:1–6 and 7:1–8:23, on the one hand, and 1:7–6:15, on the other, the basic perspective of the two blocs is the same.

2.2. THE COMMUNITY OF THE PRESENT

In contrast with the community of the past, which was portrayed as having been dispersed, the community of the present exists in two geographical/spatial foci: (1) Jerusalem (and possibly elsewhere in Yehud);²⁶ and (2) various regions beyond Yehud where Israel and Judah's descendants are now found. This perspective is present in both the SF and the VOC.

23. On the use of *prs* here, see Petitjean: 98–100.

24. Boda 2005 cites the following: 2 Kgs 20//Isa 39; 2 Kgs 24–25; 2 Chr 32:31; 33:11; 36; Ezra 5:12; Jer 21:11–12; 29–30; Ezek 17–32; Isa 13:1–14; 21:1–10; Hab 1:5–11.

25. Lust argues that the notion of a widespread regathering in Ezekiel is a late Persian or Hellenistic creation. He seeks to distinguish the notions of *galut* and diaspora, arguing that the notion of *galut* is limited to Babylon, in contrast to the wider diaspora. He does not deal with Zech 1–8, which seems to locate the *golah* (8:10, 14) in the context of the wider dispersion.

26. Clearly a community is implied as present at Jerusalem. If Bethel is read as the subject of 7:2 (on which, see below), population is recognized in that city as well. In 7:7 a former time is described when Jerusalem, the cities of Judah, the Negev, and the Shephelah were inhabited (*ysbt*). As will be argued below, however, this implies that Zech 1–8 views these regions as still totally deserted.

2.2.1. THE COMMUNITY IN YEHUD

2.2.1.1. *The Sermonic Framework: 1:1–6 and 7:1–8:23*

As noted above, Zech 1:1–6 opens with a word from Yahweh to the community in Jerusalem.²⁷ The oracle implies a direct link and inherent continuity between the community of the past and the addressees. Thus the oracle in 1:2, set off by a *Wortereignisformel* preceding it (1:1) and a *Gottesspruchformel* formula following it (1:3), confronts the community of the present with the extreme anger of Yahweh vis-à-vis “your ancestors.” The present community is then called to manifest behavior that stands in contrast to that of the ancestors, who were overtaken by the judgment²⁸ proclaimed by Yahweh through his prophets. Zechariah 1:6 ends on an optimistic note. Members of the present generation²⁹ have returned/repented (on the double significance of *swb* here, see Petersen: 110–11). A similar perspective is found in 8:1–17,³⁰ where the themes of the nonrepentance of the ancestors, the result of their actions, and the renewal of the present generation are taken up. The foundational unity between the community of the past and that of the present is expressed in the strongest of terms in 8:14–15. Here Yahweh states: “Just as I purposed to do evil to you [*lkm*] when your ancestors [*'btkm*] provoked me ... so I have thought to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.” The implication is that the judgment on the ancestors can be seen as having been experienced by the present generation (*you*), in that the two groups constitute an extended unity. The use of the vocatives “house of Judah and house of Israel” (8:13) or the terms “Jerusalem and the house of Judah” (8:15) similarly reveal the book’s

27. This localization is not explicitly stated but may be implied from the parallel in 7:1–14.

28. This is the sense of *nsg* here. In the Jeremiah prose tradition it refers both to literal pursuit and capture (39:5; 42:16) as well as to a more generalized description of destruction (42:16) and captivity (Lam 1:3). Rudolph 1970:70 stresses the importance of Deut 28:2, 15, 45 here.

29. 1:6b could be an allusion to the return to Zion by the present generation, thus Petersen (100–101) or Meyers and Meyers (1987:96), who relate it to the effects of the preaching of Haggai. Amsler (57) following Rothstein, Beuken, and Petitjean, views it as a narrative conclusion describing the effect of the preaching of Zechariah in 1:1–6a upon his hearers. In favor of this latter position is the fact that Hag 1:1–15 follows a very similar pattern: 1:1–3 contains a complex and somewhat idiosyncratic merging of date formula, addressees, and oracles; and 1:12–15 contains a summary of the effects of the preaching of Haggai (Kessler 2002:112–12; Floyd 2000:266–72). The exact group that constitutes the subject of *swb* in Zech 1:6b remains, however, rather ambiguous.

30. Floyd 2002:427–36 affirms the essential unity of this long section.

understanding of its addressees as members of a broader unity, such that the present generation can be said to have been the recipients of Yahweh's actions in the past. This is identical to the perspective in Hag 2:5, where the text³¹ speaks to the Persian-period community of “the covenant I made with *you* when *you came out of Egypt*.” Similarly, 8:13 also extends this unity in both a past and a future sense. There Yahweh declares to the (present) Yehudite community, “just as *you* were a curse among the nations so I will save [*ys*] *you*.” Thus the first “*you*” is tied to the present community in Yehud (contextually the “*you*” in 8:13 is the same “*you*” addressed in 8:9 and described as being “those who in these days hear these words from the mouths of the prophets present on the day of the foundation of the house of Yahweh Sebaoth.” The second “*you*” clearly refers to the diaspora members whom Yahweh will bring back to Yehud as a future date. Thus the Yehudite community is the visible manifestation of the broader entity that extends chronologically into both the past and future and that radiates geographically outward from Jerusalem.

The present community in Yehud is further glimpsed in 7:1–7. Zechariah 7:2 has been the subject of extensive inquiry due to its extreme ambiguity. Neither the question of the subject and objects of the verb *slh* nor their identities, functions, or places of origin can be discussed in detail here.³² It is widely affirmed that a question is sent to the Jerusalemite temple,³³ with its functioning priests and prophets, by those living at a distance from it. What is significant for our purposes, however, is that a new designation for the community in Yehud is introduced here. The prophet uses the question as a springboard for a response to “all the people of the land” (*'l-kl-'am h'ars*). As in Hag 2:4, the term describes the general population of Yehud (Nicholson 1965:66; Rudolph 1970:144; Boda 2003:398–99; Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumier:115).³⁴ It is significant to note that the present community in the land is called to a renewed commitment to Yahweh. This hortatory tone, largely ethical in nature, is a hallmark of Zech 1:1–6; 7:1–8:23 (see Boda 2003:60–61). The generation of the ancestors has passed. Now the present generation is called to return (*swb*) to Yahweh (1:3), not to be like (*'l thyw*

31. On the textual issue here, see Kessler 2002:160.

32. See, provisionally, the analysis in Meyers and Meyers 1987:379–84; Baldwin: 141–42; Petersen: 281–82; Barthélemy: 967–98.

33. Thus, Meyers and Meyers 1987:384–85; Amsler: 114; Lemaire 1970; but cf. Blenkinsopp 1998, who argues that the question is sent to Bethel but responded to from a Jerusalemite perspective.

34. Amsler (15) suggests that the term is explicitly inclusive of the remainees, on which see below. Gunneweg views the reference here as to the upper-class land owners, but this limitation is not warranted by the context.

k-) the ancestors (1:4), and to pursue diligently (*'hb* here, as in Prov 4:6) “truth and peace” (8:19).

Finally, in 8:6, 11 the present generation is described as a remnant (*s'ryt*). As in Hag 1:12 and 2:4, the term here clearly refers to the numerically small proportions of the Yehudite community (vis-à-vis the diaspora) as well as, albeit subtly, to their renewed relationship to Yahweh (cf. Hag 1:1–15; Zech 1:6b).³⁵

2.2.1.2. *The Visionary-Oracular Complex: 1:7–6:15*

The VOC similarly views a community present in Yehud. However unlike the SF this section does not describe the community in relationship to earlier generations, few epithets are attached to it, and it receives no commands or exhortations as a group. An appellative for the community as a whole does occur, however, in 2:14 (10), where the term “daughter of Zion” (*bt sywn*) is employed.³⁶ Here the personified Jerusalem designates the community gathered in proximity to Jerusalem, which is called to rejoice due to the greatness of the future blessing of Yahweh. If the oracle here specifically addresses Jerusalem (as opposed to Yehud as a whole),³⁷ the contrast between present *petitesse* and future *grandeur* is indeed an immense one, given the fact that Jerusalem may have been a mere village at the time.³⁸ Amsler (76) suggests that the term “Jerusalem” includes both returnees and remainees; however, such a suggestion remains conjectural.

35. On the use of *s'ryt* here, see Meyers and Meyers 1987:417, who affirm the theological significance of the term in Zechariah but deny any such significance in Haggai. However, the fact that the term is used in Haggai only *following* the people's obedience in 1:12 is surely significant. Amsler (122) sees the term only as an image of smallness. A similar perspective is found in Conrad (144–45). On Hag 1:12–15 as a covenant renewal, see Beuken 1967:45–46; Kessler 2002:550 n. 327.

36. On the sense of the feminine term here, see Petersen: 179–80.

37. Petitjean (129–30) notes that while the term *bt sywn* frequently refers to the city of Jerusalem here as in Mic 4:10, 13; Zeph 3:14; Zech 9:9, Jerusalem has a metonymic value, and designates the broader community gathered around it. Amsler (1988:76) and Meyers and Meyers (1987:417) appear to limit it to the population of Jerusalem. On the one hand, the unity of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, seen elsewhere in the book (1:12, 17; 2:4, 16), the reference to the desolation of the “beautiful land” in 7:7, 14, and the fact that the basic division in Zech 1–8 is between two groups (homeland and diaspora) rather than three (Jerusalemites, Yehudites, and diaspora members) would favor Petitjean's view. On the other hand, however, the Jerusalemite temple, as the dwelling of Yahweh, receives special attention in Zech 1–8 (1:14, 16 [2x], 17; 3:2; 8:3).

38. Carter 1999; Lipschits 2003.

The VOC mentions various specific members of the community in Yehud, as well as their roles and activities: Joshua the high priest (3:1); Zemach/the Branch (3:8; 6:12) and servant of Yahweh;³⁹ Zerubbabel (4:6, 7, 9, 10) the temple builder.⁴⁰ Zerubbabel and Joshua may be clearly identified as returnees (see Hag 1:1). Zechariah 6:10, 14 mentions Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah,⁴¹ all of whom are associated with the community of returnees (*gwlh*, 6:10), who have come to the house of Josiah. Commentators see either all of these individuals as returnees from the diaspora who have come with an offering for the temple (Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumier: 105; Rudolph 1970:129; Redditt: 77) or, alternatively, only Heldai as a recent returnee, while the others are earlier returnees now resident in Yehud (Meyers and Meyers 1987). Petersen (274) suggests that Josiah's father Zephaniah may have been a remanee. However one understands the time of their arrival, the presence of these individuals forms a bridge between the community in Yehud and the broader Israelite/Judean community beyond it.⁴² Just as 1:1–6 and 7:8–14 presuppose a unity between the ancestors and the present generation, and 8:13–15 envisages a unity between the returnees and the diaspora, here this text views the nonreturned exiles in the diaspora as an extension of the community in Yehud.⁴³ If these individuals have indeed come to Yehud to take up residence, bearing gifts from the diaspora (thus Chary: 109), this event prefigures the yet-future and greater ingathering of the exiles spoken of elsewhere in Zech 1–8.

39. The identity of this individual has been much discussed. Rose and Meyers and Meyers (1987:372–73) see it as a symbolic-messianic figure. Amsler (108–9), following a long interpretive tradition, sees it as a reference to Zerubbabel. Lemaire (1996:51) notes the presence of Zemach-Zerubbabel as a double name in the inscriptional evidence.

40. Note that, unlike Haggai, Zechariah mentions neither Zerubbabel's political status nor his Davidic genealogy.

41. On the various possibilities for understanding *hn* in 6:14, see Meyers and Meyers 1987:340–43. The hypothesis of a double name seems quite probable, given the frequency of such names at the period; see Demsky; Lemaire 1996:51.

42. As noted, mobility is an absolutely critical issue for the understanding of homeland-diaspora relations in our period. The degree to which the community in Babylon may have been involved in the life of the community in Yehud is contingent on the degree of facility of interchange between the two; see Limet; Garelli.

43. Meyers and Meyers (1987:339) aptly comment, "The ambivalence of the term 'exiles' helps to demonstrate the unity of a community acknowledging Yahweh as God, apart from the form or identity of the political state in which those who acknowledge Yahweh may live." See also Rudolph 1976:129, who sees this as a demonstration of the participation of the nonreturnees in the project in Yehud.

2.2.2. THE COMMUNITY OUTSIDE YEHUD

2.2.2.1. *The Sermonic Frame: 1:1–7; 7:1–8:23*

Zechariah 1:6 makes only an oblique reference to Judeans outside Yehud. Thus, as noted above, Yahweh's judgment upon the ancestors (1:4–6) is a way of speaking of destruction and, by extension, exile. Zechariah 8:1–7, however, makes it clear that dispersion is an ever-present reality. In 8:7 a further designation for the Judean community ("my people" [*my*]) is added to those already mentioned. Here, then, the members of the people of Yahweh are seen as living in the east and the west (*m'rs m'zrh w'm'rs m'bw' h'sms*; cf. Ps 50:1). This may be a simple merism, thus designating the exiles wherever they may be (thus Meyers and Meyers 1987:418, who note the parallel with Isa 43:5–7; Rudolph 1970:148), or the mention of the west may be an explicit inclusion of the Egyptian diaspora (Ackroyd 1968:213; cf. Phillips). In 8:13 the community outside Yehud is seen as belonging to the "house of Israel and house of Judah" whom Yahweh will deliver in the future. Finally, in the concluding oracle, 8:20–23, the diaspora community is described via the locution *'ys yhwdy*. The term *yhwdy* carries ethnic (Jer 34:9, 40:11–12; 41:3; Neh 5:8), territorial (Jer 43:9; 44:1; 52:28), and linguistic (2 Kgs 18:28; Neh 13:24) overtones. In a more general sense it is used, as here, to denote members of the southern kingdom or their descendants living in exile (Esth 2:5; Lemaire 1970: 43–44).⁴⁴

2.2.2.2. *The Visionary-Oracular Complex: 1:7–6:15*

The VOC similarly takes into account the existence of the diaspora beyond Yehud. Zechariah 2:2 (1:19) understands the past scatterings to be an ongoing reality. As already noted, the oracle in 2:10–17 (6–13),⁴⁵ while acknowledging a broader diaspora, focuses on the community in Babylon (*bt bbl*).⁴⁶ In this

44. See Schmid. Meyers and Meyers understand the term *Yehudite* here as meaning "citizen of Yehud who has accepted the new reality of postexilic Israel: its new administrative structure, its restored temple, and Yahweh's sovereign presence" (1987:441). This however, seems, unwarranted, as the term is more naturally to be taken as a simple gentilic-religious designation here.

45. On the delimitation of this oracle, see Amsler: 73; Petitjean: 91–94; Floyd 2002:365–70.

46. On the sense and use of this expression, see Petersen: 175–76, who renders it "fair Babylon." Meyers and Meyers (1987:164) render it simply "dwellers of Babylon." As Petersen (175) notes, in the Jeremianic tradition the exiles in Babylon appear to function

context the exiles are called “Zion” (2:11 [7]).⁴⁷ Significantly, whereas in the second vision the focus of interest was the territory of Yehud, here the use of the term *Zion* lays stress on the identity of the exiles as those who, despite their dwelling in places far removed from Yehud, still stand in relationship to Jerusalem as the religious center of the territory and the place where Yahweh’s future dwelling will be realized.⁴⁸

In the analysis of the community in Yehud, mention was made of the individuals named in 6:10 and 14. These individuals have come from the *golah* and in some sense represent the nonreturnee community.⁴⁹ A further designation of the diaspora community occurs in 6:15a, at the end of a section that Floyd (2002:409) labels a report of a prophetic symbolic action. In this context it is promised that “those who are afar off” (*rhwqym*) will come

as the concrete manifestation of the more general exile (see Jer 6:22; 16:15; 23:8; 31:8). The implication of this would be that the specific call to flight addressed to the exiles in Babylon would be paradigmatic and applicable by extension to the exiles as a whole.

47. I take Zion here to be a vocative (see Petersen: 172–73). Meyers and Meyers (1987:164) treat Zion here as an accusative of direction. This is possible but unlikely due to the clear parallelism between Zion and “the one who dwells in Babylon.” In a similar vein Petitjean (105–7) prefers a vocative due to the likelihood that a vocative would follow the interjection *hwy* and the similarities between our text and Isa 40:9; 52:1–2; Zeph 3:16; Zech 9: 13; Pss 146:10; 147:12. He further notes the parallel between 2:11 (7) and the calls to the “daughter of Zion” in Isa 52:1–2; Zeph 3: 14, 16, and Zech 9:9, 13.

48. See Petitjean: 105–7 for a detailed discussion of the terms *Jerusalem* and *Zion* in Isa 40–55 and Zech 1–8. Petitjean discerns two principal referents for these terms: (1) Jerusalem/Zion as the capital and religious center of the new community (Isa 51:3; 52:7–8; Zech 1:14, 17; 8:2–3); and (2) a designation of the people as a whole (Isa 40:9; 41:27; 46:13; Zech 2:11). In summary, he states, “The use of Zion to designate the deportees in Babylon serves to place the dramatic situation created by the exile in stark relief. Israel has been snatched away from its land and from the religious centre which Yahweh has assigned to his people—Jerusalem and the hill of Zion. Put another way, Zion is no more in Zion.” Amsler (74) similarly suggests that Zion is used to stress the relationship of the exiles to the promises made to Zion in Isa 40:9 and 51:16. Ackroyd (180) similarly comments, “It is significant that the sense of belonging to the community even while in exile is expressed so strongly that the exiles can be described as ‘Zion who dwells in Babylon.’” See also Meyers and Meyers 1987:339.

49. Meyers and Meyers (1987:368–68) view each of the individuals in the list as constituting “a carefully chosen set” in which “each individual represents a group of Yahwists that has a special relationship with the territory of Yehud and to the Temple of Yahweh being rebuilt there.... [T]heir inclusion by Zechariah in his account of such an event apparently reveals the prophet’s awareness of the geographical diversity that characterized the Yahwist community in his day.” This suggestion is an interesting one that cannot be evaluated here.

and build the temple of Yahweh. The term is one frequently used for the diaspora population (Isa 33:13; 43:6; 49:12; 60:4, 9; Jer 30:10; 51:50; Dan 9:7).

3.0. DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE FUTURE OF JERUSALEM AND YEHUD

The narrative continuum of Zech 1–8 can be summarized as follows. The SF and VOC both portray a similar image of the community of Yahweh. Yahweh's people formerly dwelt in Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem was of special importance, as it was there that Yahweh also dwelt, in his temple. Due, however, to their refusal to heed the word of Yahweh, his people were scattered to diverse nations, and the land and its cities became desolate. A new era, however, had dawned. A community now existed in Jerusalem and Yehud that was in the process of rebuilding and reconsecrating the temple. Nevertheless, a significant portion of the people of Yahweh remained outside the land, particularly in Babylon. From the perspective of Zech 1–8, however, this bifurcation into two groups, one in the land and the other outside of it, is, in the final sense, anomalous and provisional. The text therefore looks ahead and depicts the relationship between Yahweh and his people as having a future phase. A survey of the data in both major sections of Zech 1–8 will demonstrate that Yahweh's ultimate purposes are understood as involving an undoing of the earlier scattering, and a restoration to the land.

3.1. THE SERMONIC FRAME: ZECHARIAH 1:1–6; 7:1–8:23

Zechariah 1:1–6 has little to say about either the existence of the diaspora or its return. That theme, however, does appear in 7:1–8:23. Zechariah 7:7 bemoans the depopulation and economic devastation of all of the southern kingdom: Jerusalem, the cities of Judah, the Negev, and the Shephelah; 7:14 similarly reflects on the land's devastation. The theme of its restoration is taken up in 8:1–17 and 18–23.⁵⁰ Zechariah 8:3 announces Yahweh's imminent return to Zion.⁵¹ In addition to the religious and ethical components of

50. On the division of these sections, see Floyd 2002:427–36.

51. See Petitjean (1969:369–71), who notes the parallelism here with 1:14–16b and 2:14–15 (10–11). The perfects *sbt* in 1:16 and 8:3 would thus be read as examples of the *perfectum confidentiae* stressing the certainty of Yahweh's return (see Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumier:66) and the imminence of the event expressed by the *futurum instans* in 2:14–15. Alternatively, Meyers and Meyers (1987:122) see the perfect in 1:16 as indicating that the oracle viewed Yahweh's return as having already taken place, whereas the *futurum instans* in 2:14 (10) is a real future, indicating that the oracle stems from a time before the rededication ceremony (1987:168). At 8:3 they argue that the implication is that the dwell-

Jerusalem's future described in 8:3, a demographic dimension is introduced in 8:4–6. Zion's future is unveiled in three stages. First, an image is drawn of an inhabited Jerusalem (note the use of *ysb* in 8:4, parallel to Yahweh's own dwelling in 8:4). The description of the city's inhabitants is significant. The reference to old men and women leaning upon their staffs and to children of both genders playing describes a situation of blessing, peace, and security.⁵² Zechariah 8:7–8 indicates the source, at least in part, of this future population. Through a *futurum instans* indicating imminence (cf. Hag 2:6, 21) it is stated that Yahweh will deliver his people (*hnnny mwsy*)⁵³ from the east and west (likely inclusive of the Egyptian diaspora) and bring them (hiphil of *bw*) to dwell (*ysb*) in Jerusalem. Zechariah 8:13 takes up the same theme and describes this event as a coming deliverance.⁵⁴ This future repopulation is seen as a manifestation of Yahweh's decision to do good (*yth*) to Jerusalem and to Judah (8:15). In the concluding oracles of this section (8:20–22, 23) reference is made once again to the exilic community at large as well as to the Gentiles. To stress the extreme value placed upon the exilic community by the Gentile nations around them, ten non-Jews⁵⁵ are said to take hold of the garment of an individual of Israelite/Judean origin (*ys yhwdy*) who is en route to Jerusalem.⁵⁶

ing of Yahweh has already begun. On the ambiguity of *swb*, see Petersen: 156. However the chronology of Yahweh's return is understood, all three passages go on to demonstrate the effects of this return.

52. For a description of the meaning of the various elements in the description, see Ackroyd: 212).

53. This combination of *hinneh* and the verb *ys'* is frequently used in connection with Yahweh's coming repatriation of the exiles (Isa 25:9; 35:4; 62:11; Jer 30:10; 46:27; Zeph 3:19).

54. Hiphil of *ys'*; however, a simple imperfect is used here, different from the participial construction in 8:7 noted above.

55. Pace Lipiński 1970:44–46, who views the referent of *'mym rby*m and *gwym 'swmym* in 8:22 as being diaspora Jews. The argument is unconvincing in the light of the frequent use of such terms for Gentiles (cf. Isa 2:1–4; Mic 4:1–4).

56. It is difficult to determine exactly what brings these *yehudim* to Jerusalem. Petersen (315–18) sees the notion of pilgrimage as implicit in 8:20–22 but notes that in 8:23 the language is more vague. If one reads 8:23 in the light of 8:8, then a definitive return to dwell permanently is in view. However the verb *ysb* is absent from 8:23, and the language here is far closer to that of pilgrimage (Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumier: 125). If this is indeed a reference to diaspora members returning to Jerusalem only for pilgrimage, 8:23 stands in significant tension with the dominant vision of Zech 1–8, which foresees a total return. If such were the case, Lipiński's suggestion (1970:42–46) of a later addition would be the most likely explanation.

3.2. THE VISIONARY-ORACULAR COMPLEX: 1:7–6:15

A very similar perspective is found in the VOC. In the first vision and oracle (1:7–17) the angel of Yahweh expresses discontent with the status quo. The fact that the earth is at rest is viewed as a reflection of Yahweh's lack of compassion (*rhm*) toward Judah and Jerusalem (1:12). The resolution to this dilemma is the return of Yahweh to Jerusalem in compassion (*rhm*, 1:16, 17b) and election (*bhr*, 1:17). The result of this return will be twofold: (1) Yahweh's house will be rebuilt; and (2) a measuring line (*qw*), frequently used in connection with judgment (2 Kgs 21:13; Isa 34:11; Lam 2:8) but also salvation (Ezek 47:3), shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem. Zechariah 1:17 advances this description by asserting that Yahweh's cities (*ry*) will overflow (a rare use of *pws*; cf. Prov. 5:16) with prosperity (*twb*). This corresponds to their former prosperity (cf. 7:7 *slwh*) and populous state mentioned in 7:7. The theme of repopulation is similarly taken up in the second vision (2:1–4 [1:18–21]), albeit implicitly. There judgment is pronounced on the horns (i.e., nations) that scattered "Judah, Israel and Jerusalem" (2:2 [1:19]). The implication of the terrifying (i.e., destruction; see Boda 2005) of these nations is explained in the third vision (2:5–9 [1–5]) and accompanying oracles (2:6–13 [10–17]). In 2:5–6 ([1–2]) a figure appears with a measuring line (*hbl mdh*, which here symbolizes hope, as in Jer 31:39; Ezek 40)⁵⁷ and goes forth to measure (*mdd*) Jerusalem. The significance of this is explained in 2:8–9 (4–5). Jerusalem will be so full with a multitude (*rb*) of people (*'dm*) and cattle (*bhmmh*)⁵⁸ that⁵⁹ it will be like an unwalled village (*przh*; cf. Ezek 38:1; Esth 9:19), its population having far surpassed the boundaries of the city walls.⁶⁰ However, the lack of fortifications naturally raises problems of defense. Thus the security of the city will be guaranteed by Yahweh himself 2:9 (5), who will protect it like a wall of fire.⁶¹ The origins of this multitude are not specified in the vision, but the following oracle implies that, at least in part, it will be made

57. Cf. the same image but using the term *qw* in 1:16.

58. Cf. the similar description of a multitude of people and cattle in Nineveh in Jonah 4:11, using identical terms.

59. The *min* in *mrb* is causal, indicating that Jerusalem's unwalled state stands in direct causal relationship to the multitudes present within her (the Hebrew is specific: *btwkh*).

60. Clearly in Darius's reign Jerusalem's walls were in ruins. Meyers and Meyers (1987:154–55) see the description here as rooted in the realities of the early Persian period. Perhaps the implication here is that, from the perspective of Zech 1–8, the reconstruction of the walls is unnecessary (cf. Ackroyd 1968:179).

61. See Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumier: 71–72, who note that the imagery here recalls the pillar of fire of Exod 13:21–23. Note also the contrast with the walls and gates that are destroyed by fire in Jer 49:27; Amos 1:7, 10, 14; Neh 1:3; 2:13, 17.

up of exiles who heed the call to flee Babylon in 2:10–13 (6–9).⁶² This call is presented in the most urgent of terms. The exiles are called to flee (*nws*; 2:10 [6]) and to escape (*mlt*; 2:11 [7]). These terms, individually and more especially taken together, suggest an urgent flight and seeking of refuge in the context of an impending disaster (see Gen 19:20; Isa 20:6; Jer 46:6; 48:6, 19; 51:6; Amos 9:11). The disaster in context here is Yahweh's impending judgment on Babylon for its mistreatment of his people (2:12–13 [8–9]). A further indication of the source of Jerusalem's population is given in the subsequent oracle (2:14–17 [10–13]). Many nations (a frequent prophetic designation of the Gentile world, especially in the sixth century [Jer 25:14; 27:1; Ezek 26:3; 31:6; 38:23] and in eschatological descriptions [Mic 4:2–3]) will join themselves to Yahweh (*lwh*; cf. Isa 14:1; 53:3, 6; 50:5; Esth 9:27; Dan 11:34) and become his people (*l'm*). Such language is frequently used in the sixth century for the renewal of the relationship between Yahweh and his people (Jer 24:7; 31:1, 33; Ezek 11:20; 36:28; 37:23; esp. Zech 8:8) but is also used for the inclusion of foreigners (Ruth 1:16; Isa 14:1; 19:27; 53:3, 6; Jer 50:5; Esth 9:27). The exact form that this “becoming the people of Yahweh” would take is not specified.⁶³ Judgment on Babylon (here called *'rs spwn*, 6:6, 8) is likely in view in the vision in 6:1–8 (e.g., Amsler:104–5).⁶⁴ The quieting (*hnyhw*) of Yahweh's Spirit in the north country is seen by a long exegetical tradition as permit-

62. On the issue of the origin of this oracle and its function in its present literary context, see Petitjean:127, who sees it as support for the movement to return. Amsler (76) views it both as an appeal to the diaspora members to return, which could have been transmitted by word of mouth to those in Babylon, and as an encouragement to those who had already made the move back to the homeland. Meyers and Meyers (1987:172–73) make a similar point. Rejecting the notion that Zechariah's prophetic activity had begun in exile (see Ackroyd 1968:148–49), they maintain that we hear “in the imperatives of this oracle pulling its distant audience to Zion the voice of one who has already made the return and who is involved in the temple restoration project.” It is destined to “be heard by fellow returned Yehudites needing assurance that they have chosen wisely or by exiles still pondering the choice.” The suggestion that the oracle is destined to reassure the returnees is certainly correct. That the oracle should have been transmitted to the Babylonian communities remains speculative, as it presupposes significant movement between the homeland and Babylonian diaspora in our period—by no means a certainty. As noted above, personal mobility is a complex issue that is of critical importance for our period.

63. For a discussion of this, see Rudolph 1976:91, who notes that what is being described here goes far beyond the simple notion of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem on the part of the nations; see also Amsler:76. Meyers and Meyers (1987:175) maintain that this expression indicates that the nations will “share in the special arrangement which had heretofore characterized Israel as a ‘people.’”

64. But cf. the alternative approaches of the vision in Meyers and Meyers 1987; Floyd 2002.

ting the return of the exiles.⁶⁵ The report of the prophetic symbolic action in 6:10–15 concludes with the promise that “those that are far off” (*rhwqmym*) will come and build the temple. As noted above, these are diaspora members who return to Jerusalem.

In sum, then, we have seen that for both the SF and the VOC the present situation is viewed as temporary and somewhat anomalous. The narrative continuum of the text looks forward to a time when the exiles will ultimately return to dwell in Yehud, and Gentiles will come and join with them. Jerusalem will be filled to overflowing and the population and prosperity of Judah restored.

4.0. ZECHARIAH 1–8 AND PERSIAN-PERIOD REFLECTION

Zechariah 1–8, then, presents a comprehensive and self-consistent image of the community of Yahweh. The broadest designation for this community is the simple epithet “my people” (2:11 [7]; 8:7–8). This community includes past generations (1:1–6; 7:11–14) as well as those alive in the present (6:15). Furthermore, the text envisages the ongoing life of the community in the future (8:1–8). While consisting in its foundational sense of the “house of Israel and the house of Judah” (8:13), this community is open to the inclusion of Gentiles (2:15 [11]; 8:20–23). Moreover, Zech 1–8 displays a strong geographic focus. It uses the metonymic expression “Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem” (2:2 [19]; see also 1:12, 14, 16, 17, 2:4, 16; 3:2; 8:13) for the people of Yahweh, thus profoundly connecting them to their places of origin. Through the activities of the nations (2:2 [1:19]) as well as Yahweh (2:11 [6]) they have been scattered into a variety of locations (2:10 [6]; 8:7), especially Babylon (2:10–12 [6–8]). Such a situation, although persisting until the time of the book’s production, was merely provisional and would ultimately give way to a new reality. The dispersed communities in every location would be regathered by Yahweh and restored to the land (2:8 [4]; 6:15; 8:1–8), which would overflow with abundance and prosperity (1:17). Most important, Yahweh himself would dwell in Jerusalem amidst his people (1:16; 2:9 [5], 14 [10];

65. Amsler (104–5) disputes the inference that the return of the exiles is in view but cites Sellin, Elliger, Rudolph, Delcor, and Rothstein as supporting it. Chary (108) affirms, “The poverty and demographic insignificance of the tiny community will be overcome when the diaspora returns, having been touched by the movement of the Spirit. [They will come] not only from Babylon, the largest community, but from many locations.... Such was the assurance and comfort that the then-present moment required.” Similarly, Petersen (272) comments that the vision “is designed to elicit another exit, that of the return of those in the north country to their homeland.”

8:3, 8). Such an understanding of the Israelite/Judean community is highly significant when set in the context of two burning issues in the Achaemenid period: (1) requirements for membership in the people of Yahweh; and (2) the future of Yehud and especially of Jerusalem.

4.1. EXILE AND IDENTITY

Zechariah 1–8 paints a general image of exile and return that is quite similar to that of Ezra, Nehemiah, the Deuteronomistic History, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Chronicles. However, it is immediately apparent that Zech 1–8 does not use the experience of exile in Babylon as a means by which membership in the community of Yahweh is defined and demarcated. This stands in tension with several near-contemporary texts. Jeremiah 24:8 clearly distinguishes the deportees from both the remainees and the Egyptian diaspora and asserts that Yahweh's favor lies with the former group, to the exclusion of the latter two (on the complexities of this passage, see Carroll 1986:480–88). The Egyptian diaspora is singled out for special disapprobation in Jer 42:15–43:13. Similarly, Ezek 11:15 identifies the *golah* as the exclusive embodiment of the true Israel (Allen 1994:163–64). Ezra-Nehemiah furthers this concept by making membership in the assembly contingent on three requirements: genealogical roots in the former southern kingdom; exile to the east; and obedience to the “law of Moses” (Kessler 2006; Gunneweg 1983). In Ezra-Nehemiah the experience of Babylonian exile is specifically used as an exclusionary strategy vis-à-vis the Samaritan population (Ben Zvi 1995) and the Yehudite remainees.⁶⁶ The stability of such a definition of communal boundaries was reinforced through the prohibition of intermarriage with members of the nonapproved groups, on pain of excommunication for noncompliance (Ezra 7:26; 10:8, Neh 13).

Zechariah 1–8, however moves in a very different direction. As noted above, it would appear that all the descendants of the inhabitants of both the northern and southern kingdoms are eligible for inclusion in the community. While a certain interest is expressed toward the Babylonian community in 2:6–7 (10–11) and 6:10,⁶⁷ this interest is never expressed in exclusionary terms. The relevance of this may be seen with reference to three groups. The first of these is the Egyptian diaspora. Zechariah 8:7 speaks of Yahweh bring-

66. Note, however that various strategies may have been deployed to facilitate the inclusion of the Remainees (Kessler 2006; Japhet 1983:114; 2003; Dyck, 2000; Bedford:150).

67. Petersen (280) opines that “it is difficult to avoid the inference that Zechariah has particular sympathies with those who have been in exile.” It is commonly assumed that Zechariah himself was a returnee.

ing back those in the east and west, which leaves the door wide open for the inclusion of the Egyptian community. The absence of any exclusionary designation here is especially relevant in light of the commonly recognized similarities between Zech 7:1–8:23 and the prose tradition of Jeremiah (Boda 2003:59), a tradition that was certainly aware of the rejection of the Egyptians in Jer 37–43⁶⁸ and 24:8. Judith R. Phillips has argued that Zechariah's visions are intended to reinforce the rejection of the diaspora and a focus on Jerusalemite expressions of Yahwism. The clear openness to all diasporic communities in both sections of Zech 1–8, however, speaks against the rigid lines she draws. The second of these groups is the nondeported population, whether resident in Yehud or in other neighboring provinces.⁶⁹ Indeed, the perspective of Zech 1–8 seems somewhat unconcerned by existing Achaemenid provincial divisions⁷⁰ in that two of the four regions mentioned in 7:7 (Shephelah, Negev) lay outside the boundaries of Yehud (Lemaire 1994). The implication may be that for the compiler of Zech 1–8 the “real” Yehud (whatever the Persian administrative system may have provisionally ordained) included all the territory of the former Judah.⁷¹ Care needs to be exercised here so as not to extract too much from Zech 1–8. Thus despite Amsler, who affirms our text to be *inclusive* of both the returnees and the remainees (Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumier: 115), it is perhaps better to affirm that Zech 1–8 makes no explicit reference to the exclusion of such a population. The use of *'am h'rs* in 7:5 cannot be used as an explicit reference to the inclusion of the remainees, since the term's referent is most likely the general population, not the community from which the returnees distinguish themselves, as in Ezra-Nehemiah. As noted above, both the mention of Israel in 2:2 (1:19) and the parallelism between the “house of Israel and the house of Judah” in 8:13 (Japhet 1983:111) would indicate that Zechariah favors the inclusion of this group.⁷² Third, Zech 1–8 is open to Gentile inclusion. Gentiles join themselves to Yahweh and become part of his people in 2:15 (11)

68. Note the treatment of this section in Lohfink.

69. On the tension between Zech 1–8 and Ezra-Nehemiah on this issue, see Petersen: 182. On the mixed marriages, see Eskenazi.

70. Issues of borders and their significance have received attention in the recent literature. Fantalkin and Tal (2006), discuss the actual situation of the Shephelah in our period and argue for a fluidity of borders in transitional periods. On the issue of the relevance of the concept of borders in the study of the ancient world, see Wright. On the broader question of the construction of identity, see Berquist 2006. On the relationship between borders and the movement of persons, see Limet: 167–68.

71. Such a perspective may be reflected in the town lists in Ezra 2 and Neh 7; 11.

72. Japhet (1983:111) appropriately comments, “As for the people of the north ... although the ‘house of Israel’ is not the immediate audience of the prophet, ... they are

and join returning exiles on their journey to Jerusalem in 8:23.⁷³ It needs hardly to be mentioned that such openness to Gentiles stands in tension to the separation from them in Ezra-Nehemiah, which appears to preclude even the possibility of conversion as a response to the question of mixed marriages (see Cohen: 306).

Concurrent with this nonexclusivist interpretation of the exile is a somewhat more general and less polemical presentation of the fate of the land subsequent to the Babylonian devastations. Whereas various other traditions enter into far greater detail regarding the extent of the depopulation of the land and its significance, the presentation in Zech 1–8 is quite reserved. No ideological or theological reason for the deportations is provided other than the anger of Yahweh (1:4–6; 7:13–14).⁷⁴ What is more, in Zech 1–8 the descriptions of the state of the land after the Babylonian devastations are quite restrained when compared with other sources, and no insistence is made upon absolute emptiness.⁷⁵ Zechariah 7:14 is the only passage in the corpus where a description of the state of the land following the Babylonian invasions is given, and only two highly general terms are used. First, 7:14a describes the land as having been desolated (*smm*) and laid desolate (*smh*). The verbal form occurs frequently in Lev 26 (26:22, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 43), Isa 40–55 (48:8; 49:19; 54:3; it occurs once in Isa 56–66 at 61:4), Jeremiah (10:5; 12:11; 18:16; 19:8; 33:10), Ezekiel (6:4; 35:15; 36:4, 34, 36), Lamentations (1:4; 3:11; 5:18), and once each in the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles (1 Kgs 9:8; 2 Chr 36:21) but nowhere in this sense in Ezra-Nehe-miah.⁷⁶ The adjectival form occurs in Isa 1–39 (5:9; 13:9; 24:12), once in the Deuteronomistic History, twice in Chronicles (2 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 29:8; 30:7), and very frequently in Jeremiah (2:15; 4:7; 18:16; 19:8; 25:9, 18; 42:18; 44:22) but not in Ezra-Nehemiah. The themes of destruction, exile, and abandonment figure prominently in the use of this root. The two terms are found

nevertheless within the scope of his prophecies and of his conception of the people of Israel. On the similar perspectives in Chronicles, see Braun.

73. It is noteworthy that the motif of the servitude of the nations, present in texts such as Isa 60 (see Morgenstern), is absent from Zech 1–8.

74. See Gangloff, who surveys the various sources and underlines their distinctive usages of the “empty land” motif. His article, however, paints an unduly negative view of the *golah* (cf. Smith-Christopher 1989; 2002) that underlines only the strategies of exclusion utilized by the *golah* and does not take into account some of the strategies of inclusion present in our sources; see above.

75. See, e.g., the extensive use of the roots *hrb*, *smd*, *yst*, *ysm*, ‘*bd*, *klh*, *krt* in other sources and their absence in this sense in Zech 1–8.

76. It appears in Ezra 9:3–4 but in the polel participial form and refers to the devastated emotional state of Ezra himself.

together only in Jer 18:16; 19:8; 49:17 and Zech 7:14. The use of such terms is closely paralleled in the Deuteronomistic-Jeremianic tradition (Petitjean: 358–59). Zechariah 7:14b adds a further general description: “with no one passing through or returning” (cf. Petitjean, who notes the parallels in Isa 33:8; Jer 9:11; 51:43; Ezek 14:15; 29:11; 33:28; 35:7).⁷⁷ Both terms constitute general descriptions of a devastated land where cities are in ruins and normal socioeconomic life has been shattered. However, no explicit implications are drawn from the devastation of the land or the experience of exile relative to membership in the community.

Furthermore, while the language in Zech 1–8 stresses the radical disruption of the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests, it does not view that situation as having come to an end as yet. The complaint of the angel of Yahweh in 1:12, set in the second year of Darius (1:7), still laments the depopulated state of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. Thus from the perspective of Zech 1–8 the depopulated state caused by the disobedience of the ancestors persists *despite* the arrival of such figures as Joshua, Zerubbabel, and Zechariah himself in Jerusalem.⁷⁸ Thus the perspective of Zech 1–8 is that of a sparsely populated land looking forward to a better future. In sum, then, Zech 1–8 does not make exile to Babylon a *sine qua non* of inclusion and holds a view of the community of Yahweh that is open to all those who have genealogical links with the northern and southern kingdoms as well as, through acknowledgement of Yahweh, Gentiles who join themselves to him.

4.2 THE RETURN OF THE EXILES AND THE END OF THE DIASPORA

Zechariah 1–8 views the existence of the diaspora as provisional and somewhat anomalous. Several commentators have noticed this theme. Amsler (74) suggests that the oracle in 2:10–11 “reminds the exiles of the abnormal situation in which they find themselves, living in a foreign land.” Petitjean

77. The allusion need not be one of total emptying but may reflect the absence or impossibility of normal human travel and economic activities (Meyers and Meyers 1987:405).

78. Petitjean (442) captures the perspective of Zech 1–8 as viewing the present moment as a decisive juncture. He states, “From this perspective the present moment marks a decisive change from the preceding decades. The recent past has been dominated by the anger of Yahweh against the ancestors ... and the consequences of that judgment still darken the existence of the community called to restoration.” He views the temple refoundation ceremony as the definitive harbinger of better days ahead and the completion of the temple as ushering it in (443). Coggins (30) comments that “neither [Haggai nor Zechariah] seems to be in any way aware that a turning point in the community’s life—the ending of the exile—has been reached” (cf. Galling 1952)

(109) similarly suggests that via the language of 2:11 “the prophet places the tragic condition of Israel in exile in stark relief.” Two elements in Zech 1–8 may account for such a *malaise* with the status quo. The first would appear to stem from religious tradition. Like Haggai, Zech 1–8 draws significantly upon broader Deuteronomistic theology. In that theological stream, particularly as reflected in Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History, and Jeremiah, there is a close association between people and land. Disobedience to the covenant results in loss of land (Deut 4:25–28; 28:64; 1 Kgs 14:15; 2 Kgs 17:18; 24:1–4; Jer 7:34; 9:16), and renewal of covenant brings blessing in the land (Deut 28:1–14) or return to the land (Deut 30:3; Jer 29:14; 32:36–44). The hope of regathering the exiles is found widely in a variety of prophetic traditions (Isa 11:12; 43:5; 54:7; 56:8; Ezek 11:17; 20:34; 37:21; Mic 2:12; Zeph 3:20; Zech 10:8, 10). The situation created by the events of the sixth-fifth centuries has sometimes been described as a transition from a territorial to a nonterritorial Yahwism or, alternatively, to a multicentric Yahwism (Petersen: 119–20). While Zech 1–8 clearly accepts the reality of such a situation, it clearly views it as an interim measure. In line with the broader Deuteronomistic and prophetic outlook, Zech 1–8 sees Yahweh’s ultimate purposes as being fulfilled only with the return of his people to the land.

In addition to the weight of tradition, a second source of frustration was the actual situation in Yehud, mentioned several times in the text. Zechariah 1–8 is painfully aware of the existential reality of a depopulated Yehud (1:12; 7:7, 14) and an extensive diaspora (2:2 [1:19]; 2:10–13 [6–9]; 7:14; 8:7). With the announcement of Yahweh’s return to Jerusalem (1:16; 2:9 [5]; 15–16 [11–12]; 8:3), such an ongoing state of affairs would be incongruous in the extreme.

It will be immediately noticed that such a perspective stands in significant tension with other contemporary and near-contemporary sources. Haggai makes no explicit reference to the exile or return of the exiled population.⁷⁹ While Ezra-Nehemiah recognizes the reality of the diaspora and the potential for return (Neh 1:8–9) it also recognizes the possibility of remaining in exile and supporting the returnees (Ezra 1:3–5; see Williamson 1985:14–15). Esther makes no mention of Jerusalem and affirms the presence and protection of Yahweh for those in exile.⁸⁰ While it is sometimes assumed that Zech 1–8 acknowledges the ongoing existence and legitimacy of the diaspora,

79. See Galling 1952:76. On the hermeneutics of the book of Haggai and the possible reason for such an omission, see Kessler 2002:271–75.

80. Esther is usually assigned to the late-Persian or Hellenistic period; however, see Friedberg 2000 for an argument in favor of an earlier dating. As a sideline it is interesting to note that, from the perspective of Zech 1–8, the question of alternative cult sites would

whose members periodically come in pilgrimage to Jerusalem, no unambiguous allusion to such a community can be found.⁸¹

Finally, it should be noted that, from a Zecharian perspective, the return of the diaspora members is in some sense contingent upon the faithfulness of the remnant community already in Yehud. The notion of the community's return to Yahweh is one that underpins 1:1–6 and 7:1–8:23. At times such an ethical and religious renewal is described by the general terms *swb* (1:4) or *smr* (6:15), while at other times more detail is given (5:3–5; 7:9–10). What is most noteworthy is that in 6:15b the return of the exiles to rebuild the temple is made conditional upon the diligent obedience (note the infinitive absolute of *smr*) of the community in Yehud. Some commentators would attach this condition to either 15a (the recognition that the prophet has been sent by Yahweh) or the entirety of 6:10–15.⁸² However, both suggestions are unlikely. It is most probable that it is the return of the exiles to participate in the rebuilding of the temple that is conditioned upon the obedience of the community. In this sense the perspective here is like the “tent peg” imagery of Ezra 9:8, where the refounded community at Jerusalem is viewed as a “foothold” that has been gained through Yahweh's grace but that may ultimately be lost if the community is unfaithful. The prophetic call to obedience is far from optional: the community's own future, in some sense, hinges on it. The formulation in 6:15 is stock Deuteronomistic phraseology (Meyers and Meyers 1987:366). The return of the exiles and the resumption of normal existence in the land, a situation for which the tiny community longed, are thereby made conditional upon their own fidelity. Thus, in good Deuteronomistic form, Zech 6:15 asserts that, just as the unfaithfulness of the fathers resulted in the loss of the land, so the obedience of the present small remnant in the land will play a role in the fulfillment of Yahweh's ultimate purposes. Petitjean (444) concludes, “In conformity to the ideology of the covenant, [Israel's] privileges demand in return a complete faithfulness to the demands connected with divine favour. This explains the importance and the extent of the exhortations which Zechariah sets forth ... to call community to a valid response to the grace of the covenant.”

be a temporary one at best. Given the ultimate return of Yahweh's people to Zion (not to mention his presence there), what need would there be of such installations?

81. As noted above, 8:23 could depict a diasporic pilgrimage to Zion, but even this is not explicitly stated. If, however, such were the case, it would likely stand in tension with the rest of Zech 1–8 and reflect ongoing theological reflection on the reality of life outside the land.

82. Meyers and Meyers (1987:366) make the establishment of a new temple in Yehud, under the aegis of a Davidic dynasty, conditional on the people's obedience.

4.3. THE VISION OF ZECHARIAH 1–8 AND THE ISRAELITE/JUDEAN COMMUNITIES OF THE EARLY PERSIAN PERIOD

We turn, in conclusion, to the question with which we began: According to Zech 1–8, how did the community in Yehud understand itself and its relationship to the other Israelite/Judean communities beyond it? I would suggest that Zech 1–8 allows us to draw the following conclusions. (1) the people of Yahweh, consisting primarily of the inhabitants of the northern and southern kingdoms, constitute an expansive, multigenerational, and geographically widespread body. (2) The center of this expansive entity is Jerusalem, wherein Yahweh dwells. It thus forms the fixed point of reference for the people of God. (3) The tiny community in Jerusalem (and, by extension, Yehud) constitutes the firstfruits of a new epoch in the history of Yahweh and his people. This small remnant is called to manifest worship and ethical integrity as a means of demonstrating their solidarity with Yahweh in the ushering in of the age to come. (4) In light of Yahweh's return to Jerusalem and his coming intervention in world history (see below), his people in exile are called to an immediate and hasty return to Jerusalem/Yehud. If Zech 1–8 has a political agenda with reference to other communities, it is surely at this point: the time of dispersion is over; it is time to return home. (5) Whatever divisions may have existed between the north and south or between various sectors of the population, these fissures belonged to the past. Yahweh's renewed presence in Jerusalem served to vouchsafe the return and reunification of all who had been scattered and the removal of the divisions between them. One diaspora community was no "better" than another. (6) Although the new era of Yahweh's dwelling with his people had dawned, the present situation constituted the initial phase of a dramatic intervention of Yahweh, soon to be realized. This element, stated boldly via the shaking of the cosmos and nations in Hag 2:6–9, 20–23, although less explicit in Zech 1–8, is still clearly present. Zechariah 1–8 looks forward to a future decisive act of Yahweh. The "smiths" will appear to put the "horns" to rout (2:4 [1:21]). Yahweh will surround Jerusalem as a wall of fire (2:9 [5]). Babylon would soon be judged as Yahweh "shook his hand" (2:13 [9]) over it.⁸³ The destruction of Babylon would be fully accomplished (6:1–8). In the light of such an intervention, the exiles were called to flee (2:10–11 [6–7]). But such flight was to be no mere human effort, since Yahweh himself promised to save them and bring them safely to Jerusalem and cause them to dwell there. In that great day (3:10, *bywm hhw'*,

83. On the various terms involved in the imagery of shaking, and their origin and significance, see Kessler 2002:175–79.

a clearly eschatological term; see Hag 2:23) the community would dwell in perfect peace.

We have seen, then, that Zech 1–8 presents a vision of a regathered community around the reconstructed temple in Jerusalem. What kind of a vision is this? How does it relate to the actual life situation of the community in Yehud in the earlier years of Persian rule? What can it tell us about their hopes, dreams, fears, and aspirations in the context the realities of life in an economically struggling, sparsely populated, territorially reduced province of the Persian Empire? First, this view of life is markedly concerned with ritual and ethical concerns (evidenced in the construction, ordering, and cleansing of the temple and its personnel [3:1–10; 4:1–14; 6:9–15] and the call to ethical behavior [1:1–6; 5:1–11; 7:1–8:19]) but *profoundly unconcerned* with the more mundane matters such as authorization and funding for travel and its attendant dangers (2:10–13 [6–9]; cf. Ezra 1:1–6; 7:21–24; 8:15–36; Isa 43:1–21; 49:19–26), economic viability and land-tenure struggles in the land (1:17; 7:7, 14; 8:4–5; cf. Hag 1:3–11; Neh 5:1–5), political boundaries (see 7:7; cf. Ezra 6:6–12), and the like. Such concerns are evident in other sources. In Zech 1–8, however, the exiles are called to return and viewed as coming to reside in Jerusalem and Yehud without any apparent attention to such practicalities as imperial authorization for travel, the dangers of the journey, financial considerations, land allocation and economic opportunities in Yehud, or even the presence of provincial borders. All this suggests a highly *idealized and schematic* image, formulated by a tiny community dreaming of its future and reflecting on its past. The harsh realities of life in the land, together with the undesirability of Yehud as a place of immigration (Blenkinsopp 2000:133–34), would engender ongoing reflection on the timing, nature, and even feasibility of such a return. Both the emergence of the pilgrimage as an interim measure and the eschatologizing of the motif of the return would appear to be the fruit of such reflection. Second, Zech 1–8 presents a highly *inclusivistic, nonpolemical, nonexclusionary* perspective. There is no evidence of priestly disputes or competition, no conflict between political and religious authorities, and no heterodox and ethnically suspect worshippers of Yahweh from whom to keep separate (cf. Ezra 2:62–63; 3; 10; Neh 9). Rather, the twin criteria of the correct worship of Yahweh and commensurate ethical behavior form the defining features of the community. Even Gentiles may be included among the people of Yahweh (2:15 [11]). If the text unwittingly reveals any fears or threats felt by the community, it would perhaps be that of the overpowering smallness and insignificance of their undertaking and the risk that it might all come to naught. As in Hag 2:1–4, the danger of “despising the day of small things” (4:10) may have been (alongside ethical failure; cf. 5:1–4; 8:16–17) the community’s greatest peril. Third, the vision reflected here is *nostalgic*

and *restorationist*, without being tied to the precise forms of the past. Floyd (1997:142–43) has pointed out this aspect of the text with reference to the text's reconfiguration of earlier monarchic hopes. This is very much akin to the adaptation of earlier traditions and institutions to changes circumstances evident in Haggai (Kessler 2002:273–74). Zechariah 1–8 expresses the fervent hope that Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem will once more be found in their former abodes and that the ongoing life of Yahweh and his people, disrupted by the disobedience of the ancestors, will resume. Fourth and finally, the vision here reveals the profound anticipation of a *coming, decisive intervention of Yahweh*. Babylon would be judged, the exiles would return, and even non-Israelites would join in the worship of Yahweh and become his people. All of this would come in short order. A new day was about to dawn.

These four characteristics would seem to me to reflect the vision of a community whose future stood before it and who painted upon that *tabula rasa* enthusiastically with broad and bold strokes, anticipating the future acts of God that would turn the impossible into reality. Such a perspective appears to fit better in the late sixth/early fifth century than a later period.

In conclusion, then, Zech 1–8 envisages the people of Yahweh as a collective entity comprised of all the historic people of Yahweh, the “house of Israel and the house of Judah” as well as those from among the nations. These are gathered around Yahweh, who reigns from Jerusalem, in lives of ethical integrity and in worship. Only a moment's reflection is required to reveal the highly enduring impact that this image has had.