The composition and date of Ezra-Nehemiah

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines different theories concerning the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah and the possible date of the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah. This will be done in three stages. First, we examine the compositional relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. Second, we will concentrate on the question of the possible date(s) of both Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s arrival in Palestine. Finally, once possible date(s) of both Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s arrival have been suggested, we would then be in a better position to suggest some possible date(s) for the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah.

A INTRODUCTION

This paper explores different theories concerning the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah, the possible date of the composition, and the date of the arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah in Judah. In this regard we will then explore possibilities as to who may have composed the text of Ezra-Nehemiah and we will then look at some possible dates for the missions of both Ezra and Nehemiah, which will then make it better for us to date the composition of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah.

In order to realise our goal or aim as stated above, this paper takes two steps. First, we examine the compositional relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. It is necessary to examine Chronicles here because based on some similarities between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, the traditional view maintained that these books were written or compiled by the same author.

Second, we will concentrate on the question of the possible dates of both Ezra and Nehemiah’s arrival in Palestine. Once possible dates of both Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s arrival have been suggested, we would then be in a better position to suggest some possible dates for the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah.

Let us deal with the composition of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah.

B COMPOSITION/AUTHORSHIP

1 Introduction

There are currently two opposing views concerning the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah. The first one is the traditional view, which maintains that the Chronicler was the author of both Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. The second view separates Chronicles from Ezra-Nehemiah, and goes on to maintain that the
primary authors of Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s memoirs are Ezra and Nehemiah respectively, while the final editor is an unknown Jew.

We will start our discussion by examining the traditional view, to which we now turn.

2 The Chronicler was the author of both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah

For so long now scholars have commonly believed that Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles were compiled by the same author, namely the Chronicler (Grabbe 1992:51; Eskenazi 1986:42-43; Clines 1984:9, 14; Blenkinsopp 1988: 47ff; McConville 1985). This position is summed up by Hayden, when he states that,

The author of Chronicles is the primary author of the Ezra-Nehemiah narrative in more or less its present form, and his work was completed within a few decades of the historical events of Ezra and Nehemiah (Hayden 1985:490).

Let us then briefly look at four main arguments that have been used as evidence for common authorship.

The first argument is about the parallel between the beginning of Ezra and the end of Chronicles. It is argued that the final verses of 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 are almost identical with Ezra 1:1-3. Scholars also show the common interests and parallels between the work of the Chronicler and the content of Ezra-Nehemiah (Eskenazi 1986:42; Blenkinsopp 1988:47ff). Certainly there is a lot of common ground between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Cave 1993:14; Fensham 1982:3; Throntveit 1989:9).

Second, a linguistic argument has been employed, which claims that the Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah share distinct literary characteristics in language, style and interests (Eskenazi 1986:42; Clines 1984:3ff; Hayden 1985:490; Throntveit 1989:9; Ryle 1917:10). Furthermore, advocates of this view argue that both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah show a great deal of interest in sacred vessels of the Temple (1 Chr 28:13-19; 2 Chr 5:1 and Ezr 1:7; 7:19; 8:25-30, 33-34) (Cave 1993:14). Similarly, Ryle argues that

In Chronicles we find extracts from other sources, genealogical and other lists, careful descriptions of religious festivals and rites, prominence given to Levites and the Temple staff generally, and all these points are characteristics also of Ezra and Nehemiah; while such phrases as ‘heads of fathers’ houses,’ ‘people of the countries,’ ‘the house of God,’ etc., only occur in the Bible in Ezra-Nehemiah and in Chronicles (Ryle 1917:10).

It has also been argued that the orders of sacrifices and sacrificial materials are almost identical in both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (2 Chr 2:3; 8:13 and
Ezr 3:4-6; 1 Chr 29:21; 2 Chr 29:21, 32 and Ezr 6:9, 17; 7:17-18, 22; 8:35-36) (Cave 1993:14). Advocates of this view have pointed out the fact that in both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, liturgical music and instruments, as well as those who are involved in the liturgy, are very similar (1 Chr 15:19; 16:5-6; 25:1, 6; 2 Chr 5:12-13 and Ezr 3:10; Neh 12:35) (Cave 1993:14).

Third, a theological and ideological argument has been advanced, which claims that Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah share a distinctive ideology (Eskenazi 1986:42; cf also Blenkinsopp 1988). The major theme of Chronicles is renewal and reform based on return to religious faithfulness after years of impurity. The pattern of Ezra-Nehemiah is very similar (Cave 1993:14; Throntveit 1989:9). Bracy argues that there is a similar theological theme that runs through Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, namely: that God desires and uses a righteous (purified) people (Bracy 1988:136-137). He says that in the case of Chronicles, this theme is shown by God’s election of the Southern Kingdom (House of David) rather than the Northern Kingdom as the means to preserve the faithful remnant. In Ezra-Nehemiah, this common theme is projected by the emphasis upon a purified and separated people (see Ezr 1-6; Ezr 7-10; Neh 8, 9; Neh 1-7, 10-13) (Bracy 1988:136-137).

Fourth, there is the evidence of 1 Esdras, which begins with 2 Chronicles 35-36 and continues through Ezra (Throntveit 1989:9). At this juncture theories about 1 Esdras become linked with theories about common authorship for Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Eskenazi 1986:42).

In sum, we note that it has been the prevailing assumption that Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, in that order, were written by the same author, namely the Chronicler, and formed originally a single work, which later became separated for some reason (Eskenazi 1986:42; Batten 1913).

Having dealt with the traditional view, let us now briefly examine the views of those who are very critical of it.

a Critique of Chronicler as the common author


These scholars advanced the following four major arguments. First, it has been argued that the linguistic usage of the books of Chronicles is sufficiently different from Ezra-Nehemiah to rule out common authorship (Grabbe 1992:50-51; Eskenazi 1986:42-43). Two of the major scholars who rule out linguistic argument as evidence for common authorship of both Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles are Sara Japhet (1968) and Hugh Williamson (1977) (Japhet 1968: 332-333; Throntveit 1982:201).
Let us briefly examine their arguments, starting with Japhet. Japhet (1968: 330-371) initiated the recent discussion of linguistic analysis as a means of approaching the question of authorship in Chronicles. What is of importance with regard to her investigation is that, methodologically, Japhet focuses her attention upon the differences between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, while acknowledging that general linguistic similarities between them do exist (Japhet 1968: 332-333; Throntveit 1982:201).

In examining Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, Japhet uncovers three categories of evidence that reveal the differences between the two works: (1) Linguistic opposition; (2) Technical terms; (3) Stylistic peculiarities (Throntveit 1982:201-202). We will focus our discussion here on the linguistic opposition and stylistic peculiarities, as this is the major argument of those who believe in common authorship of both works. We shall begin with Japhet’s linguistic analysis and save the stylistic peculiarities for our later discussions on Williamson (1977), who supports Japhet (Throntveit 1982:202).

With regards to the linguistic opposition, Japhet cited as evidence a common argument in explanation of three linguistic phenomena. She argues that the ‘actual linguistic reality’\(^1\) is reflected in Ezra-Nehehemiah, while Chronicles stands alone as an exception and even as opposition to this same reality (Japhet 1968:341). Thus, she maintains that the phenomena themselves divide into two groups: (1) the formation of the imperfect consecutive and the lengthened imperfect consecutive; and (2) the formation of theophoric names ending in \textit{yhw} (Throntveit 1982:202).

Japhet starts by showing a tendency in Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) of employing the full forms in the formation of the imperfect consecutive, that is, the writers of LBH simply prefix the \textit{waw} consecutive to the imperfect of the verb instead of following the earlier practice of prefixing the \textit{waw} consecutive to the jussive (Japhet 1968:334) and the lengthened imperfect consecutive, that is, lengthened by the frequent addition of \textit{-āh} to the imperfect consecutive (Japhet 1968:334). With regard to the prevalence of these forms in LBH, Japhet (1968) argues that the main feature is the absence of uniformity in linguistic usage in Ezra-Nehemiah. So for Japhet, both long and short forms occur in the Ezra-Nehehemia complex with no evidence of adherence to any linguistic principle. Japhet further argues that within this linguistic setting, the author of Chronicles established an order by consistently applying three rules. First, full forms in the 1 c.s. imperfect consecutive. Second, short forms everywhere else (Japhet 1968: 334-335). Third, complete avoidance of the lengthened imperfect consecutive 1.c.s. (Japhet 1968:338; Throntveit,1982:202).

As part of the second group of evidence, Japhet investigates theophoric names ending in \textit{-yhw} and discovers that a mirror image of the previous evidence

\(^1\) This refers to the most typical features of post-exilic Hebrew.
occurs (Japhet 1968:338-341). Ezra-Nehemiah, this time, displays uniformity by consistently using the short ending, -yh, while Chronicles displays a plurality of usage with a tendency to employ the long ending, -yhw (Throntveit 1982:202-203).

Japhet concludes her analysis on linguistic opposition by summarising the divergent practices of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah and suggests that Ezra-Nehemiah reflects the actual practice of LBH while Chronicles stands alone in opposition (Japhet 1968:341; Throntveit 1982:203). Thus, for Japhet, linguistic opposition such as she has demonstrated argues against the common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Japhet 1968:371; Throntveit 1982:203).

Having examined Japhet’s arguments against common authorship, we now analyse Williamson’s. While the reopening of the question of common authorship in Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah is attributed to Japhet, Williamson (1977) is responsible for mounting the most vigorous assault on the hypothesis of common authorship (Throntveit 1982:204). In a careful manner he systematically unravels the four basic arguments offered in support of common authorship (Williamson 1977:331-332). As it falls beyond the scope of this study, we will not discuss all the issues raised by Williamson’s attack, rather we will limit ourselves to a brief examination of the methodological criteria he establishes on the vocabulary and style of both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson 1977:39-41; Throntveit 1982:205).

Williamson follows Japhet’s theory, however, whereas Japhet concentrates exclusively on the differences between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, Williamson (1977:39) focuses on an investigation of the alleged similarities between the two works. In an attempt to meet this objection to Japhet’s work, Williamson also refutes arguments made along those lines (Throntveit 1982:205).

Thus, Williamson develops a set of criteria by which to determine unity of authorship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. These criteria are not only the strongest part of Williamson’s argument, but also comprise his greatest contribution to the debate (Throntveit 1982:205). They are as follows: in the first instance a substantial number of peculiarities must be produced. According to Williamson (1977:39), since our knowledge of LBH is limited, we cannot clearly distinguish between LBH and Classical Hebrew as well as LBH and Mishnaic Hebrew, therefore, care must be taken that we do not attribute to a single author peculiarities that belong to a period or stratum in the development of the language (Throntveit 1982:205-206). Second, these peculiarities must come from both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson 1977:39-40; Throntveit 1982:205-206). Third, the evidence must be confined to Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson 1977:40). This is Williamson’s most useful criterion. Its value lies in assuring us that the peculiarity is indeed that of a single author and not due to a characteristic of LBH in general (Throntveit 1982:205-206). Fourth,
peculiarities should, if possible, be expressed differently in other LBH works (Williamson 1977:40; Throntveit 1982:205-206). Finally, peculiarities must be used with the same meaning in both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson 1977:40; Throntveit 1982:205-206).

Employing these criteria, Williamson investigates the lists of alleged similarities between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. He eliminates forty-seven of the 140 entries on the basis of the second criterion since they occur only in Chronicles or Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson 1977:41-43), and twenty-seven of the remaining entries on the basis of criterion three (Williamson 1977:43-44), as they enjoy a wide distribution. Thirty-two entries are discussed but proved to be inconclusive for a variety of reasons (Williamson 1977:45-52). Upon closer examination (Williamson 1977:52-58), all but six of the thirty-four remaining entries are argued to favour diversity of authorship (Throntveit 1982:206).

Williamson then goes on to conclude that Polzin’s statement that we have an ‘extremely strong case for similarity in authorship of Chr. and Ezr.’ (1977:71) needs to be modified to read, ‘an extremely strong case for similarity in language’ (Williamson 1977:71).

Clearly, Williamson has convincingly and persuasively argued that the terms cited as evidence for common authorship are at best irrelevant or inconclusive for determining the common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson 1977:59; Throntveit 1982:206). Williamson has also convincingly shown that,

as far as the argument from style is concerned, the onus now rests on those who favour unity of authorship to produce more compelling new arguments to support their position (Williamson 1977:59; Throntveit 1982:206).

The above analysis shows that both Japhet and Williamson share basic presuppositions and methodological stances as well as conclusions reached as to common authorship (Throntveit 1982:206). Now that we have discussed the views of both Japhet and Williamson against linguistic use as evidence for common authorship, we shall now turn to the next argument used to support common authorship, namely the evidence of 1 Esdras.

Grabbe believes that the argument that 1 Esdras represents a portion of the original work of the Chronicler has not been strongly argued and well substantiated (Grabbe 1992:50-51). Williamson views Ezra and Nehemiah as two parts of a single work which was intended to be complete as it now stands. According to him, Esdras is not a source for Ezra-Nehemiah but in fact a later compilation (Motyer 1986:249). Similarly, Eskenazi proposes what she calls a distinct composition of Chronicles, Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah. She argues that 1 Esdras is a distinct composition by the Chronicler, that is, by the persons, circle, or school responsible for the Book of Chronicles,
This ‘author’, who used Samuel/Kings as his major source for the history of preexilic Israel in the Book of Chronicles, used Ezra-Nehemiah as his major source for the history of post-exilic Israel in 1 Esdras. As such, 1 Esdras is indeed compiled from Ezra-Nehemiah, but by the Chronicler. It is not, however, a fragment out of the large unity; it is rather a discrete book by the Chronicler, reflecting the same point of view that Chronicles does (Eskenazi 1986:39-40).

After a thorough analysis of the relationship between Chronicles and 1 Esdras, as well as their common contrast with Ezra-Nehemiah, Eskenazi maintains that,

1 Esdras corresponds to Chronicles in ideology and literary features which distinguish them from all other books in the Bible and, at the same time, differs in these aspects from Ezra-Nehemiah (Eskenazi 1986:60).

Thus, Eskenazi concludes that major ideological themes link Chronicles and 1 Esdras and so point to common authorship, only between these two works. Accordingly, she maintains that ‘this leads us to suppose that 1 Esdras was composed by the same person or circle responsible for Chronicles’ (Eskenazi 1986:43).

Having analysed the argument against the view that 1 Esdras represents a portion of the original work of the Chronicler, we now move on to analyse arguments against common ideology between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah.

Grabbe has shown that the ideology of Chronicles differs from that of Ezra-Nehemiah on significant points of interest to the post-exilic community (Grabbe 1992:50-51). Hoglund also argues for the independence of Ezra-Nehemiah from 1 and 2 Chronicles, basing his argument on the studies regarding ‘the ideological and historiographical differences prevalent’ (Hoglund 1992:37-38).

Throntveit spells out these ideological and historiographical differences as follows. First, the Chronicler’s emphasis on David and the Davidic Covenant, so prominent in Chronicles, is totally lacking in Ezra-Nehemiah (Throntveit 1989:9; Wright 1946:11). Second, similarly, the exodus traditions prominent in Ezra-Nehemiah are virtually ignored by Chronicles (Throntveit 1989:9). Third, Ezra-Nehemiah’s abhorrence of marriages with foreigners is difficult to explain in light of the tolerant attitude expressed toward Solomon’s mixed marriages in Chronicles (Throntveit 1989:9). Fourth, the Chronicler’s frequent use of immediate retribution as a theological lodestone is absent in Ezra-Nehemiah (Throntveit 1989:9).

The last argument to be presented here is against the concept of the Chronicler. Kapelrud points out that the very concept of the Chronicler has undergone changes, in that instead of denoting an individual, the term came to be applied to a group or to a circle (Kapelrud 1944:97). Complexity increased when
scholars postulated several editions of the Chronicler’s work, which Cross (1975) labels Chronicles 1, Chronicles 2, and Chronicles 3. Eskenazi also reminds us that the nature of authorship itself has been modified and re-evaluated with Willi (1972, in Williamson 1977:39) and Ackroyd (1977) speaking of the Chronicler as an ‘exegete’ (Eskenazi 1986:42-43).

It has to be stated that it is not the purpose of this subsection to dwell much on the arguments presented above, either for or against common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. We, however, make the following observations. As of now there is no consensus, opinions remain uncertain and divided (Eskenazi 1986:42-43). It also has to be acknowledged that the assumption of a common author/editor of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah ‘can no longer be taken for granted and must be justified’ (Grabbe 1992:50-51). It is noteworthy that the majority of recent monographs on Chronicles separate the two works Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah and, directly or indirectly, argue against their unity (Eskenazi 1986:42-43).

We need to state, however, that after examining arguments for and against common authorship for Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, and having noted the demonstrably clear differences between 1 Esdras and Ezra on the one hand, and the stated similarities between 1 Esdras and Chronicles on the other hand, we now come to the conclusion that Ezra-Nehemiah is distinct from Chronicles and 1 Esdras. We further believe that common authorship for both Chronicles and 1 Esdras may be a possibility.

For the purpose of this paper we will maintain that in view of the visibly undeniable differences between these books, Chronicles may not necessarily have been composed by the author of Ezra-Nehemiah. We are therefore throughout our discussions in this paper working with Ezra-Nehemiah as distinct from Chronicles.

In the aforementioned discussions we concluded that Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles are not works of the same author. In the next section we argue that Ezra and Nehemiah were written by the same author.

3 Ezra-Nehemiah by the same author

We have, in the previous section argued that Ezra-Nehemiah is separate from Chronicles. In this section, we want to argue that Ezra-Nehemiah was written by the same author. We will advance four arguments to support our position. The first argument in support of the common authorship of Ezra-Nehemiah is that Ezra and Nehemiah originally formed one book in the Hebrew Bible with the title ‘Ezra’ (Cave 1993:14; Wright 1946:5; Ryle 1917:7). It was therefore known as the book of Ezra. Pre-fifteenth-century AD, Hebrew manuscripts, as well as the Greek LXX, viewed Ezra-Nehemiah as a single book. Evidence of the unity of the two books, which would suggest a single author, is provided in the Masoretic Text. There one finds at the end of each Hebrew Bible book, certain
notes which give the number of verses and the middle point of each book. No such notes are found at the end of Ezra, but the notes are found at the end of Nehemiah. Furthermore, the middle point is stated to be Nehemiah 3:32 which would require that Ezra and Nehemiah be considered as one book (Harrison 1969:211ff; Bracy 1988:21; Fensham 1982:1; Keil & Delitzsch 1950:1; Williamson 1985:xxi).

The unity of Ezra-Nehemiah is also supported by extra-biblical writings. Vestiges of this unity can be seen in rabbinic writings (T.B. Baba Bathra 15a) where the two books were regarded as a unity with Ezra as author. The same view occurs in the writings of Josephus and in Eusebius, who ascribed this position to Melito of Sardis (2nd century AD) (Fensham 1982:1; Williamson 1985:xxi).

It is commonly believed that Origen (AD 185-254) was the first to divide Ezra-Nehemiah into two books (Cave 1993:14; Fensham 1982:1). Jerome acknowledged the division of Ezra and Nehemiah; he used the same division in the Vulgate (Fensham 1982:1). It was not until AD 1448 that the division into two books in the Hebrew Bible became completely official (Cave 1993:14). A Hebrew manuscript dating to 1448 has the division of the two books, and it was likewise taken up in the Bomberg Bible in 1525 (Fensham 1982:1; Williamson 1985:xxii).

The second argument is based on common sources used in both Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra records a list of those returning to Jerusalem with him (Ezr 8:1-14), and the section on mixing with foreigners (Ezr 10:18-43; Cave 1993:14). Nehemiah also records the home-comers (Neh 7:6-73), and the issue of mixed marriages (Cave 1993:14). Both Ezra and Nehemiah record registers of signatories, names and places (Ezr 2:2-61; 8:2-20; 10:18-43; Neh 3:1-31; 7:7-63; 10:1-27; 11:4-36; 12:1-26, 32-35, 41-42; Cave 1993:15).

The third argument is about the characteristics of style of Ezra-Nehemiah. First, there are abrupt transitions in narrative and subject in both Ezra and Nehemiah. Second, both Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s writings are characterised by the use of the first person singular (Neh 1:1-2:20; 3:33 [4:1]-7:5; 12:31-43; 13:4-31; Ezr 7:27-9:15) (Ryle 1917:9; Blenkinsopp 1988:46). Third, both works include lists introduced without apparent reference to context and names inserted without explanation, as if they had already occurred (Ryle 1917:9).

The fourth argument is about a common theme in Ezra-Nehemiah. The dominant theme of both books is restoration or rebuilding (Cave 1993:15). The text of Ezra-Nehemiah is about the return to Jerusalem of the exiles from Babylonian captivity. With the return follows the process of rebuilding and reconstructing the temple and city walls. This process is done at the exclusion of the כְּבָד. Clearly, the reconstruction/restoration theme runs through the Ezra-Nehemiah text.
In view of the above four arguments, we will conclude that Ezra-Nehemiah were compiled by the same author. In the next subsection we go on to discuss several possibilities of who the author of Ezra-Nehemiah could be. Thus, we begin by discussing the primary layers which the final editors used to produce the Ezra-Nehemiah text.

4 Layers of composition

Here we will start off by discussing the primary sources, and their authors, of the first layers of Ezra-Nehemiah, and then move on to identify the person(s) who compiled the final book.

There is consensus among scholars that the final author of Ezra-Nehemiah used both the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs as primary sources in his final composition of the text. Let us briefly examine these sources in turn, beginning with the Ezra memoirs.

The Ezra memoirs

These are material in which Ezra plays a dominant role, and are to be found in Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 8 (Williamson 1985:xxviii; Fensham 1982:4; Blenkinsopp 1988:44). The account of Ezra’s memoirs combines narrative in the third person (Ezr 7:1-11; 10:1-44) and the first person (7:27-9:15), which in places are closely parallel (especially 9:1-5; 10:1-6) (Blenkinsopp 1988:44).

A great variety of opinion has been expressed on the origin of the Ezra first-person narrative (Blenkinsopp 1988:45). On the one hand, Mowinckel does not regard this source as composed by Ezra; he is unable to find any reason why Ezra should have written it. Rather, he sees it as being the work of someone who had been a young man during Ezra’s activity and who, years later (370 BC), wrote up his idealised version of the events, not as a historical account, but as an edifying narrative (Williamson 1985:xxix-xxx). On the other hand, a majority of scholars believe that it was written by Ezra in the form of a report addressed to the Persian court (Koch 1974; Blenkinsopp 1988:45), mandated after the lapse of one year (Williamson 1985:xxxi; Blenkinsopp 1988:45). Williamson too argued that we must clearly think of Ezra himself (or somebody working at his behest), as the author of the first-person account of the Ezra memoirs, unless strong arguments can be brought to the contrary (Williamson 1985:xxx).

There is agreement, however, that the third-person narrative either derives from an independent source known to the editor or it represents a selective paraphrase of a personal memoir authored by Ezra (Rudolph 1949; Noth 1943; Blenkinsopp 1988:44).

The most plausible position is to accept with certain scholars that the ‘I-passages’ are a verbal transmission of the Ezra memoirs and that the ‘He-passages’ are a rendering of the memoirs in the words of the final author (Fensham 1982:4; Williamson 1985:xxx; Oesterley 1955:125). In sum, we accept
that Ezra was the author of the first-person account of the Ezra memoirs, and that
the third person account was probably added by the final editor.

Having briefly examined the Ezra memoirs, we want to move on to look at
the Nehemiah memoirs. Broadly speaking, the Nehemiah memoirs material is to
be found in Nehemiah 1-7 (Williamson 1985:xxiv; Fensham 1982:4-5; Widen-
has long been recognised (and is today universally agreed) that substantial parts
of the book of Nehemiah go back to a first-person account by Nehemiah himself
(or someone writing under his immediate direction) (Williamson 1985:xxiv;
Brown 1998:16-17). Brown elaborates that,

It has been suggested that originally the first-person narrative may
have formed the substance of Nehemiah’s report
to the Persian king,
later presented afresh for a wider audience and with a different
purpose, either by the writer, a colleague or successor. The supplemen-
tary lists may have been added to provide a rich sense of continuity, an

Unlike in the case of Ezra, scholars have accepted, without much debate, that
Nehemiah himself wrote the first-person accounts of the Nehemiah memoirs. In
the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we also accept that the Nehemiah
memoirs were written by Nehemiah himself.

Having concluded, in this subsection, that both Ezra and Nehemiah were
primary writers of the first-person Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs respectively, we
move on, in the next subsection, to discuss the final composition of the text of
Ezra-Nehemiah.

5 Final composition

From what sources did the editor draw his material? Williamson contends that
various sources lay in front of the writer in their original, unedited form; ‘we find
no evidence to favor the opinion that parts (such as the Aramaic source) had
already been joined together by a narrative framework before they reached his
hand. Indeed, there are some hints that he was working directly from the original
documents’ (Williamson 1985:xxiii).

It is clear that the author had at his disposal the different documents or
sources from which he quotes (Fensham 1982:4; Ryle 1917:10). Accordingly,
Fensham argues that the final author of Ezra-Nehemiah had at his disposal
certain sources, such as the edict of Cyrus and the receipt of the temple
vessels in Ezra 1. Ezra 1 (Neh. 7) contains a list of returnees, which
could have been in the archives. Ezra 3-4:5 might have been derived
from an oral source of the early history of the exiles after their return
from Babylon. It is clear, however, that the author had at his disposal
the different documents from which he quotes (Fensham 1982:4).
The reliability of these documents is accepted by a growing number of modern scholars (Fensham 1982:4; Ryle 1917:10).

The following sources have been isolated, as having been used by the final editor. First, he used both the Ezra and Nehemiah first person memoirs, to which he added the third person narratives.

Second, he added Ezra 1-6, which scholars agree comes from his hand. The following sources were combined to form Ezra 1-6: (1) the decree of Cyrus (1:2-4 cf 6:3-5, the Aramaic version, and 5:13-15, a paraphrase) (Williamson 1985:xxiv, Blenkinsopp 1988:42); (2) the inventory of temple vessels (1:9-11) (Williamson 1985:xxiv, Blenkinsopp 1988:42); (3) the list of those returning (chap 2, a compilation of those who returned during the first twenty years or so of Achaemenid rule) (Williamson 1985:xxiv, Blenkinsopp 1988:42; Fensham 1982:4), which could have been in the archives (Fensham 1982:4); (4) Ezra 3-4:5 might have been derived from an oral source of the early history of the exiles after their return from Babylon (Fensham 1982:4); (5) two letters which the editor summarises at 4:6 and 7 (Williamson 1985:xxiv). He may have used part of the information contained in these letters in his writing of 4:1-3 (Williamson 1985:xxiv); (6) a letter in Aramaic from Rehum and others to Artaxerxes (4:8-16) (Williamson 1985:xxiv, Blenkinsopp 1988:42); (7) Artaxerxes’ reply (4:17-22) (Williamson 1985:xxiv, Blenkinsopp 1988:42); (8) a letter from Tattenai to Darius (5:6-17) (Williamson 1985:xxiv, Blenkinsopp 1988:42) and (9) Darius’ reply (6:3-12), which included a transcript of a separate decree of Cyrus (vv 3-5) (Williamson 1985:xxiv; Blenkinsopp 1988:42).

Third, in addition to the above stated sources, the editor would, of course, have been familiar with such relevant biblical material as is found, for instance, in Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 (Williamson 1985:xxiv; Blenkinsopp 1988:42). It is suggested that nearly all the narrative framework that links these sources together was derived by common sense from the information that the documents would themselves have included in their original form. Naturally, they were read in the light of the editor’s prevailing ideology and purpose, such as his desire to present the return from exile as a second Exodus (Williamson 1985:xxiv). Likewise, Brockington states that,

In the Temple (or state) archives he would probably find some record of the decree of Cyrus and a list of the Temple vessels that were returned. From the Aramaic document used by him he would learn that Sheshbazzar was a leading figure at the beginning of the return period, and from the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah he would know something of the work of Zerubbabel and Joshua, and above all he could draw freely on the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was from these sources, some official and some not, that he drew his material and welded it into a story, shaping it according to his own interests and convictions (Brockington 1971:13).
Accordingly, Williamson (1983:1-30) has argued that Ezra 1-6 was composed subsequently to the combination of the Ezra and Nehemiah records, and that therefore it represents the final stage in the formation of the book (Blenkinsopp 1988:43; Williamson 1985:xxxiv). Thus, in sum, Williamson states that ‘only after the composition of Ezra 7-Neh 13 was complete was Ezra 1-6 added’ (Williamson 1985:xxxiv).

Furthermore, Williamson explains the history of the final composition as follows. The process, he argues, must start with

the combination of the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs. The same process demands, however, the inclusion of most of the rest of the material in Neh 9-12: chaps. 8-10 are a carefully constructed compilation around the theme of covenant renewal; 11:1-2 and its dependent list are clearly intended as a narrative continuation of 7:4-5; the splicing of other material into Nehemiah’s account of the dedication of the wall (12:27-43) is most reasonably to be taken as apart of this same editorial activity, and 12:44-13:3 is consciously placed to introduce the remainder of the Nehemiah Memoirs. In fact, only 11:21-12:26 cannot be regarded as part of this major phase in the book’s composition (Williamson 1985:xxxiv).

Consequently, the editor was careful to arrange his material in a panel fashion (Ezr 7-10; Neh 1-7; Neh 8-10; Neh 11-13) in order to suggest that the work of reform was a unity theologically, even if it was separated and carried through by two men historically. Furthermore, in giving new direction to his contemporaries, he showed that physical restoration and even separation from ‘enemies’ and ‘foreigners’ were but the prerequisite for the reception of the Law and response to it (Williamson 1985:xxxiv).

Let us now summarise the process of final editing of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. Two basic stages are to be identified in the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah. First, the writing of the various primary sources. Second, the combination of the Ezra Memoirs, Nehemiah Memoirs, and other sources to form Ezra 7:1-Nehemiah 11:20. Nehemiah 12:27-13:31 (11:21-12:26 were added separately), and the later addition of the introduction in Ezra 1-6.

Having argued that Ezra and Nehemiah are the authors of the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs respectively, and that the final editor used these memoirs and other material to form the final Ezra-Nehemiah text, we then move on, in the next subsection, to try to establish who the final editor of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah could have been.

6 Author(s) of final document

In this section, we will analyse two possibilities on who the final editor of the Ezra-Nehemiah text could be. The first possibility is that Ezra is the final editor.
Second, it has been suggested that an unknown Jew is in fact the final redactor. Below we examine each of these possibilities, beginning with the first.

a  **Ezra is the author of Ezra-Nehemiah**

In regard to the authorship of Ezra and Nehemiah, several scholars (Keil & Delitzsch 1950; Albright 1921; Torrey 1970; Kidner 1979; Breneman 1993) believe that Ezra was the compiler of the Ezra-Nehemiah text (Constable 1995:114; Cave 1993:14). The view that Ezra is the author of Ezra-Nehemiah was originally stated in extra-biblical material, *Baba Bathra* 15a (we hinted at this when we discussed the unity of Ezra-Nehemiah). Chief advocates of this view are Albright (1921) and Torrey (1970). Both Albright (1921) and Torrey (1970) accepted that the style of the Ezra memoirs and their viewpoint are identical with those of the Chronicler (Fensham 1982:2). Thus Albright presumed that the Jewish tradition in the Babylonian Talmud was in principle correct (Fensham 1982:2). It seems to me that the advocates of this view see both Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles as one book written by the same person, namely Ezra. For us to accept this argument would be to reopen the already concluded debate that Ezra-Nehemiah is distinct from Chronicles.

Keil & Delitzsch see Ezra as the author. They argue that,

> If this book is a single one, *i.e.* the work of one author, there can be no reasonable doubt that that author was Ezra, the priest and scribe, who in chapters 7-10 narrates his return from Babylon to Jerusalem, and the circumstances of his ministry there, neither its language nor contents exhibiting any traces of a later date. Its historical character is accurate (Keil & Delitzsch 1950:14).

Keil & Delitzsch’s statement above raises several issues. First, they do not seem to offer evidence for their claim that Ezra is the author. Second, they seem to assume that since Ezra-Nehemiah is a single book, then it follows that its author should be Ezra. The fact that Ezra’s name is attached to the book as its author in both the Masoretic and Septuagint texts does not necessarily mean that Ezra was indeed the author of Ezra-Nehemiah. Third, they take the historicity (though we know that historicity and authorship are separate issues) of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah at face value, that is, as ‘accurate’. Scholars have recently challenged the ‘accuracy’ of this text, based on both biblical and extra-biblical arguments.

The advocates of the view that Ezra is the final author of Ezra-Nehemiah do not take into consideration the fact that though the book of Ezra-Nehemiah is a unity, compiled by the same author, there are visible stylistic differences within the text of Ezra-Nehemiah (VanderKam 1992:64-5). Schrader has argued that the change of the person in the Ezra memoirs, from first person to the third person points to later editing of certain parts of the book of Ezra. They argue that this shows that the second part of the book was not composed by Ezra himself, but
that some other historian merely made use of a record by Ezra, giving it verbally in chapters 8 and 9, and in chapters 7 and 10 relating Ezra’s return from Babylon, and the conclusion of the transaction concerning the unlawful marriages, in his own words, but with careful employment of the said record (Keil & Delitzsch 1950:11-12).

We need to state here that the view that Ezra was the author has not been followed by many modern scholars. At the moment those who argue that Ezra is the author of Ezra-Nehemiah have not presented convincing evidence to compel us to join them in their belief. We conclude therefore that Ezra may have contributed to the writing of certain sections of the book of Ezra, but he was certainly not the compiler or author or editor of the entire Ezra-Nehemiah text. If Ezra was not the compiler of Ezra-Nehemiah, who then was the author? We offer some clues in the next section.

b Unknown author

In this subsection we discuss the possibility that the final text of Ezra-Nehemiah was compiled by an unknown Jew, who used the memoirs of both Ezra and Nehemiah, and also added his own section. Thus, Fensham argues that ‘it is not improbable that an unknown Jew, perhaps from the Priestly or Levitical circles’ compiled the text (Fensham 1982:3; cf Ryle 1917:10). Anderson too states that the author’s identity is unknown, and further that the final author must have been a ‘member of the temple staff, probably one of the priestly order known as Levites’ (Anderson 1978:475).

Keil & Delitzsch captured the views of those who argue that an unknown author wrote Ezra-Nehemiah, when they say,

The Ezra-Nehemiah text is said to have been composed and edited by some unknown author about 200 years after Ezra, partly from an older Chaldee history of the building of the temple and of the walls of Jerusalem, partly from a record drawn up by Ezra himself of his agency in Jerusalem, and from certain other public documents. The evidence in favour of this hypothesis is derived, first, from the fact that not only the official letters to the Persian kings, and their decrees (iv. 8-22, v. 6-17, vi. 6-12, vii. 12-26), but also a still longer section on the building of the temple (v. 23-vi. 18), are written in the Chaldee, and the remaining portions in the Hebrew language; next, from the diversity of its style, its lack of internal unity, and its want of finish and, finally, from the circumstance that the book of Ezra had from of old been combined with that of Nehemiah as one book (Keil & Delitzsch 1950:6).

The view that Ezra-Nehemiah was written by an unknown Jew has not so far been seriously challenged. I personally think that this view, if accepted, could possibly explain some stylistic differences between Ezra and Nehemiah, without
questioning the unity of the text. We therefore accept this view as our working position throughout this paper. Thus, elsewhere we have analysed the ideologies, not only of the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs, but also of the final editor (Farisani 2002).

7 Conclusion

The unknown Jew who wrote Ezra-Nehemiah may have been a returnee himself or he may have had close associations with the returned exiles. When he wrote Ezra-Nehemiah, he probably used these two figures (Ezra and Nehemiah) as they were held in very high esteem by the returned exiles, in view of their responsibilities in leading the Babylonian exiles back home to Palestine. Ezra and Nehemiah would not only be respected by later generations for the rebuilding projects they led, but also for other reconstruction measures they undertook.

Our discussions in this section set the stage for exploring several theories about both Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s possible dates of arrival in Jerusalem, and about the possible date(s) of the writing of various stages of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah.

C DATE

1 Introduction

In the previous subsection, we have argued that Ezra-Nehemiah was compiled by the same author, and that the author was an unknown Jew, who used several sources, including the memoirs of both Ezra and Nehemiah in his composition. In this subsection we attempt to suggest possible dates for the compilation or composition of the Ezra-Nehemiah text. However, in order to achieve the above stated goal, we will have first of all, to suggest possible dates for the arrival in Jerusalem of both Ezra and Nehemiah.

2 Examination of three possibilities

The complexity of the issue is evident. A brief evaluation of the three primary theories is necessary to lay the foundation for our decision (Bracy 1988:123).

a The traditional order

This theory holds that Ezra came to Jerusalem in 458 BC and Nehemiah came in 445 BC. Held by biblical scholars until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this theory has three major strong points: First, it follows the canonical text’s sequence of events which sets forth the priority of Ezra; second, it acknowledges the historical existence of Ezra and Nehemiah; and, third, it accepts the predominant roles that Ezra and Nehemiah played in the establishment of Judaism as historical fact. Overall, this theory holds to the veracity of the canonical text (Bracy 1988:124).
However, there are some weaknesses in the theory. The first weakness is the tacit assumption that the Persian king named in the text is Artaxerxes I Longimanus. Only in recent times have the proponents of the ‘traditional order’ attempted to establish this identification as a fact. This was done by both Young (1956:384, in Bracy 1988) and Cross (1969:41-62). Of course we acknowledge that Cross (1975:4-18) has been the major proponent of the ‘traditional order’ to attempt this. A second weakness, at least until recent studies, has been this theory’s failure to account satisfactorily for evidences gleaned from archaeology. Bracy urges those who seek to resolve this issue to consider all recent archaeological evidences (Bracy 1988:124).

b The reversal order

The first major strength of the reversal order is the emphasis placed upon an in-depth study of the text. Its aim here was to let the text provide its own answers to questions which scholars had. The second strength has been the attempt by the proponents of the ‘reversal order’ to understand the roles of Nehemiah and Ezra more in theological terms rather than merely in historical terms. This has resulted in a greater recognition being given to their missions. Another strength of this theory is its usage of archaeological findings to substantiate its arguments (Bracy 1988:125-126).

There are, however, some weaknesses in the theory. First, as part of its hypothesis is built on a textual error, this view does not provide textual-critical evidence at all to support it (Ackroyd 1970; 194; Fensham 1982:8). The outgrowth of the previously mentioned strength of viewing Nehemiah’s and Ezra’s roles in theological terms is another weakness of this theory. This had led some proponents to deny as historical fact certain figures and events which generally had been accepted as historical. This has been seen by critics of the reversal order as a major weakness of this theory (Bracy 1988:125-126). A similar weakness is that the proponents of the reversal order find it necessary to rearrange the text in order to make the theory plausible (Bracy 1988:125-126). The problem is that it presupposes a total reorganisation of the material of Ezra 7-10 and the whole of Nehemiah (Fensham 1982:8). Wright has argued that far too much has been read into the passages that are thought to support the predominance of Nehemiah over Ezra by the advocates of the reversal order (Wright 1946:9).

c The intermediate order

The ‘intermediate order’ is strengthened by the fact that its proponents try to correlate modern archaeological findings with the canonical text. Such efforts have forced present-day biblical scholars to search for more concrete answers to some of the issues raised by a careful study of the text. It is no longer sufficient just to assume an answer. For this, Albright, Bright, and others of this school are to be commended (Bracy 1988:37).
Here we need to note, however, that the strengths and weaknesses of this theory resemble those of the ‘reversal order’. It appears, though, that the proponents of the ‘intermediate order’ have a tendency to rely more on archaeological findings than methodologies of textual studies. It was their efforts to correlate the archaeological findings with the canonical text that led the proponents of this theory to date Nehemiah in 445 BC and Ezra in 428 BC (Bracy 1988:127).

Many scholars are of the opinion that the major weakness of this theory is its dependency upon textual emendation of Ezra 7:7 to support its arguments. Those who oppose the ‘intermediate order’ deny that there is any textual support for the supposed emendation (Bracy 1988:126). Although this hypothesis is very popular in modern research (Eissfeldt 1965:552-553), it is built on a very shaky foundation (Fensham 1982:8-9). In the first place, no proof whatsoever exists that the Johanan mentioned in Ezra 10:6 is the same person as the grandson of Eliashib. Indeed, Eliashib could have had more than one son, and one of them could have been called Johanan, for this was a fairly common name in the fifth century (Fensham 1982:8).

Second, this hypothesis is built on the assumption that the mentioning of Nehemiah in the Ezra memoirs and the reference to Ezra in the Nehemiah memoirs must be regarded as later insertions when ‘the Chronicler’ became confused about the chronological sequence of the two men. Such a mistake so close to the history it describes is extremely unlikely (Fensham 1982:8-9). Furthermore, opponents of this theory, and the reversal order, disclaim the many textual reasons given for postdating Ezra (Bracy 1988:127).

d Conclusion

For nearly a century it has been accepted, by both the proponents of the reversal order and the intermediate order, that Nehemiah preceded Ezra to Jerusalem. However, this seems to be changing. In the past couple of decades more scholars have shown favour towards the view that Ezra preceded Nehemiah, as is stated in the canonical text. The previous detailed arguments against the priority of Ezra are viewed as being without weight and do not substantiate wholesale rearrangements or emendations of the text (see Cross 1975:14; Smith 1971:122). Hayim Tadmor points out that ‘more methodological problems are posed by assuming that Ezra came after Nehemiah than by accepting the view that he preceded Nehemiah’ (Tadmor 1976:174).

Notwithstanding the challenges posed by both the reversal and the intermediate orders, when arguments and counter arguments are weighed, we will, in this paper accept the traditional dating of the arrivals of Ezra and Nehemiah as 458 and 445 respectively. With these dates in mind we go on to the next section to explore the possible date of composition of Ezra-Nehemiah.
2 Date of composition

a Introduction

In this subsection, we explore several possibilities concerning both the date of the memoirs and the final composition of Ezra-Nehemiah. We need to keep in mind though that the date of writing is interlinked with the issue of authorship (Bracy 1988:120).

b Date of writing of memoirs

Scholars believe that the Ezra memoirs were written by Ezra himself (Oesterley 1955:125; Kaiser 1975:181) in the form of a report addressed to the Persian court (Koch 1974), mandated after the lapse of one year (Williamson 1985). Harrison argues that Ezra was primarily responsible for the writing of his memoirs, having arrived in Jerusalem initially several years before Nehemiah, and that these memoirs were written by about 440 BC (Harrison 1970:1150). According to Williamson the Nehemiah memoirs were written up as a report on how the commission was fulfilled. It would thus perhaps have been composed a year, or at the most two, after Nehemiah’s journey to Jerusalem (Williamson 1985: xxviii).

In general scholars have held that the Nehemiah memoirs were composed ‘shortly after 432 B.C.’, and that they have seen a,

> decidedly similarity between them and the memorial inscriptions commonly found in the ancient Near East. It is also agreed that they comprise one of the most important and reliable historical sources for the post-exilic period in Judaea, and for the fifth century B.C. in particular (Harrison 1970:1145).

Pfeiffer also supports the view that the Nehemiah memoirs were written by Nehemiah himself (Pfeiffer 1953:833; Harrison 1970:1150) after 432 BC and that,

> recounting his activities during the twelve preceding years, these Memoirs report frankly and vividly, as one would do in a personal diary not intended for publication, the actual events and the emotions which they aroused in the writer (Pfeiffer 1953:833; cf also Batten 1913:2).

We will accept, along with the majority of scholars, that both the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs were written round about 440 BC and 432 BC respectively.

c Date of composition of final book

Cave accepts that there are a variety of suggestions for the dating of Ezra and Nehemiah but argues that it could not have been written before 430 BC because some of the events which are recorded did not take place until this date (Cave
1993:16). Williamson (1985:49) dates the final form of the book around 300 BC. The 300 BC date has been supported by several scholars (Ryle 1917:7; Robinson 1937:77; Wright 1946:16; Holmgren 1987:36; Constable 1988:228). Thus, Williamson argues that Ezra 1-6, coming from the pen of the final compiler of Ezra-Nehemiah early in the Hellenistic period (about 300 BC) as an introduction to the earlier combination of the Ezra and Nehemiah records, addresses a community that had experienced the initial fulfilment of that hope (Ryle 1917:7; Williamson 1985:xxxiv; Williamson 1983).

Similarly, Holmgren (1987) believes that Ezra-Nehemiah assumed their present form around 300 BC and had an author different from Chronicles (1987:xii), and that the author ‘may have made some chronological slips’ (Holmgren 1987:36; Constable 1988:228).

Accordingly, scholars have argued for a date around 300 BC because they identify Jaddua (Neh 12:10-11) as the one mentioned by Josephus as being around during the time of Alexander the Great (Cave 1993:16). Ryle states that,

The most definite indication therefore of the date of compilation is to be found in these verses of Neh. 12, which (if accepted as they now stand in the text) prove that it cannot have been earlier than 320 B.C., while it was very possibly later, as Darius did not die till 330 B.C., and the Compiler is evidently speaking from the stand-point of subsequent history (Ryle 1917:10).

Wright has identified what he calls a ‘clue to the date’ of the compilation which is found in the list of high priests in Nehemiah 12:10-22. Wright explains,

This list is carried down as far as Jaddua, the son of Jonathan (11,22). According to Josephus (Ant.xi.8.4), Jaddua was high priest at the time of Alexander the Great (c. 330 B.C). This means that the Compiler must have written after this date. So we will accept Josephus’s dating as correct, though we must bear in mind that the Jaddua of Nehemiah 12 may have been earlier (Wright 1946:12).

Wright argues that if Jaddua is used to fix the earliest possible date for the Compiler, he can also be used to fix a possible latest date. He goes on to relate that Jaddua plays no part in the history that the Compiler records. ‘There is no point in introducing his name except as the last member in the line of high priests. He is included in order to bring the list in Nehemiah 12 up to date’ (Wright 1946:12). If there had been one or two more high priests before the Compiler wrote, their names would naturally have been included too. The only reason for stopping short with Jaddua would be, either that he was high priest when the Compiler wrote, or that he was the father of the man who was high priest at the time of writing, or, as Albright suggests, that he was high priest elect.
In any of these cases the date of writing would be about 300 B.C. Unless strong evidence were forthcoming on other grounds, it would be reasonable to adopt 300 B.C. as the approximate date, with a margin of up to about 30 years on either side of that date (Wright 1946:12; cf also Kaiser 1975:185).

We will therefore in this paper accept the following positions concerning the composition of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. First, we maintain that both the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs were written by Ezra and Nehemiah respectively about 440 BC and 432 BC. Second, that an unknown Jew completed his compilation of the entire text of Ezra-Nehemiah about 300 BC.

**D CONCLUSION**

Let us summarise. First, we noted that the consensus of the ‘Chronicler’ as the sole author of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah has now been challenged and can no longer be accepted as a basis from which to work without further justification. We have already concluded that Ezra-Nehemiah was composed by a different author from the one who composed Chronicles. Furthermore, we concluded that the composition of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah took place in two stages. The first stage was the writing, in 440 BC and 432 BC of the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs respectively. The second stage was the compilation of the memoirs, with additions of several sources by the final author, probably an unknown Jew who belonged to or sympathised with the returned exiles, in about 300 BC.

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