

THE LAST CENTURY
IN THE HISTORY OF JUDAH

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THE LAST CENTURY
IN THE HISTORY OF JUDAH

The Seventh Century BCE in Archaeological,
Historical, and Biblical Perspectives

Edited by

Filip Čapek and Oded Lipschits

SBL Press



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Abbreviations

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AcBib	Academia Biblica
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
A.J.	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
ANET	Pritchard, James B., ed. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
Apoc. Ab.	Apocalypse of Abraham
Apos. Con.	Apostolic Constitutions
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
ASORAR	American Schools of Oriental Research Archaeological Reports
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Alte Testament Deutsch
<i>Atiqot</i>	<i>ʿAtiqot</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BARIS	British Archaeological Reports International Series
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BCAW	Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World

BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovanien- sium
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BVB	Brem- und Verdische Bibliothek
BZAW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissen- schaft
CCSA	Corpus christianorum, series apocryphorum
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblical: Old Testament Series
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Judaicarum and Novum Testamen- tum
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
Dtr	Deuteronomist
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
<i>EncJud</i>	Skolnik, Fred, and Michael Berenbaum, eds. <i>Encyclope- dia Judaica</i> . 2nd ed. 22 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Refer- ence USA, 2007.
<i>ErIsr</i>	<i>Eretz Israel</i>
<i>ESI</i>	<i>Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
frag.	fragment
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ha	hectare
HA	<i>Hadashot Arkheologiyot: Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zm Alten Testament
HTS	<i>HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies</i>
IAAR	Israel Antiquities Authority Reports
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JAJ</i>	<i>Journal of Ancient Judaism</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>

JCSSS	<i>Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
Liv. Pro.	Lives of the Prophets
LXX	Septuagint
Mart. Ascen. Isa.	Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah
MT	Masoretic Text
NCB	New Century Bible Commentary
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
NEAEHL	Stern, Ephraim, ed. <i>New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> . 4 vols. Jerusalem: Carta & Israel Exploration Society; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBO.SA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OTP	Charlesworth, James H., ed. <i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1984.
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
Pesiq. Rab.	Pesiqta Rabbati
QD	Questiones Disputatae
Rab.	Rabbah (+ biblical book)
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RIA	Ebeling, Erich, et al., eds. <i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–2018.
RSF	<i>Rivista di studi fenici</i>
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCJ	<i>Stone-Campbell Journal</i>

SECA	Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha
<i>Sem</i>	<i>Semitica</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature (Lang)
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigraphica
SymS	Symposium Series
TA	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
ThW	Theologische Wissenschaft
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
<i>Transeu</i>	<i>Transeuphratène</i>
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>VeEc</i>	<i>Verbum et Ecclesia</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
Yebam.	Yebamot
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

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The Last Century in the History of the Kingdom of Judah: New Data, New Queries, New Interpretations

Oded Lipschits and Filip Čapek

The seventh century BCE, the last century in the history of the kingdom of Judah, is well defined historically and archaeologically. On the one hand, the region was devastated by the Assyrian campaign of Sennacherib (701 BCE), which subsequently caused several destruction levels. An additional series of destruction levels caused by the Babylonian campaign of Nebuchadnezzar (588–586 BCE) were discovered all over Judah and mark not only the end of this century, but also the end of the monarchic period in Judah—the end of the First Temple period.

From an archaeological perspective, the material culture of the late eighth century BCE (as discovered in the 701 destruction levels) and the late seventh–early sixth century BCE (as discovered in the 586 destruction levels) are considered to be familiar to research and easy to identify. The material culture of this period can be added to the historical sources from and related to the seventh century BCE, which include mainly Assyrian and Babylonian sources that mention kingdoms, places, events, and people that are well known from archaeological research and from biblical descriptions of the history of the kingdom of Judah during this period.

From the historical perspective, the kingdom of Judah became an Assyrian vassal kingdom already during the days of King Ahaz and continued to exist as such for the next century. Only after one hundred years and after the Assyrian withdrawal from the Levant and the cancellation of all the Assyrian geopolitical measures did Judah become, for a short period, an Egyptian vassal kingdom and later, after the Babylonian conquest of the region, a Babylonian vassal kingdom. The outcome of this history is that Judah was under the direct rule of great empires for approximately 150 years (732–586 BCE) before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem

and the demotion of its status to a province. The economy and administration of the kingdom of Judah was established already at the beginning of this period, when Judah, like other vassal kingdoms, was obliged to send regular intelligence reports on the movements of Assyria's enemies, pay annual taxes to the Assyrian throne, and participate in Assyrian military campaigns. The settlement pattern, economy and administration were changed and adapted to this new political and geopolitical situation, especially during the seventh century BCE, after Sennacherib's campaign (701 BCE) and the loss of the Shephelah. It can be assumed that Ramat Raḥel was the center of this rural administration, and the main development occurred in the area of Benjamin to the north of Jerusalem and to its south. This is likely also the reason why from this same period there are numerous Judahite ostraca, seals, weights, stamp impressions, bullae, and other administrative finds. Such material remains render the seventh century BCE the most documented and well-known era in the history of Judah.

Further to this, the seventh century BCE was the period when, according to many scholars, biblical historiographers ("the Deuteronomistic school") wrote and edited parts of the biblical historiography, describing the history of Judah from the time of Joshua to the time of Josiah, and when prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel lived in Jerusalem, side by side with other prophets and prophetesses, leaving a rich library of scrolls with a abundant historical, theological, political, and social information.

From all these perspectives, the information and knowledge of the seventh century BCE is incomparable with any other century in the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

This collective volume is the result of international cooperation between researchers who, coming from different academic disciplines and having different viewpoints, have concentrated on a single common theme, the kingdom of Judah in the last full century of its existence. Altogether, eleven chapters in four main sections develop the current ongoing discussion about Judah in the seventh century BCE and extend it to include further important insights. These are based on the specific results of the most recent research in the fields of archaeology, history, cult, and the interpretation of Old Testament texts. Although the academic disciplines involved differ in character, their perspective is influenced by the other scholarly fields, so that thanks to this interdisciplinary approach the reader has a vivid picture of the period under examination, in which mainstream historical developments merge with the events of everyday life.

The first section, “Judah in Extended Perspective,” deals first of all with the definition of “the long century,” as the seventh century BCE is known. To begin, Oded Lipschits demonstrates how little we actually know about the history, archaeology, and geopolitical situation of the land of Israel and in particular the history of Judah during the seventh century BCE. Based on a geopolitical analysis of the history of the land, its administrative and economic development, Lipschits suggests an alternate solution to the current understanding of the seventh century BCE and a different perspective on the development of its material culture. He further suggests to expand the limits of this seventh century, both backward for thirty-four years (734 BCE) and forward about fourteen years (586 BCE), effectively creating the long seventh century. A new chronological frame for the Iron Age IIB–IIC is suggested in which the long seventh century is divided to two subphases, each one of them approximately one hundred years: the late Iron IIB (734–630 BCE) and the Iron IIC (630–539 BCE), with each one of these periods further categorized into two subphases, employing the destruction levels as a spotlight on the middle of a chronological phase in the development of the material culture, rather than as a marker for the end of the archaeological period: the late Iron IIB1 (734–701 BCE) and the late Iron IIB2 (701–630 BCE), when the Sennacherib campaign places the spotlight on the material culture of this period and facilitates a historical separation between these two phases, and the Iron IIC1 (630–586 BCE) and the Iron IIC2 (586–539 BCE), when the Babylonian destruction shifts the spotlight onto the material culture of this period and historically separates these two phases.

In the next chapter Filip Čapek focuses on the strange tension that is associated with the figure of Josiah, king of Judah (639–609 BCE), if we attempt to understand his period and Josiah himself through the material culture, on one hand, and the biblical texts, on the other. This tension is due not only to the silent epigraphic evidence about the long reign of this king, but also to the conflict between the material culture, in particular cult artifacts, and what the biblical texts try to communicate. These texts, written from a later perspective, have a marked religious and literary stylization and portray Josiah as a prominent reformer of the Yahwistic cult, which according to them should be strongly monolatrous or even directly monotheistic. Čapek outlines an interpretational scenario that resolves this conflict positively by using the different disciplines to complement each other. In this scenario the later perspective found in the biblical texts is also significant, because if it is analyzed criti-

cally it, too, helps extend our understanding of the late seventh century BCE in which, from the viewpoint of material culture, it is as if Josiah has been forgotten.

The second section, “Material Culture under Scrutiny,” primarily examines the settlement of Judah in the towns and the countryside. On the basis of his own current research in Hebron, David Ben-Shlomo describes the appearance of the architecture from the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, in particular town walls, in its archaeological and historical context, including the seals and ostraca that have been found there. A notable discovery is the evidence of the continued use of Middle Bronze IIB–C fortifications during the Iron Age and specifically their reinforcement in the southern part of the tell dated to the Iron Age IIB–C, which has its parallel in the City of David, where Middle Bronze II fortifications were used during Iron Age II.

Yuval Gadot, together with Sivan Mizrahi, Liora Freud, and David Gellman, analyze the changes in the agricultural landscape around Jerusalem, the appearance and usage of which were derived from the organization of the political, religious, and economic system. These authors’ research reveals the important role played by Assyria, whose hegemony is evident both outside the capital, where the cultivation of previously unused areas occurs, and from the material culture, in particular the architecture, in Jerusalem itself. The last chapter in this section, written by Liora Freud, focuses on a specific type of ceramic that was used, the holemouth jar, which is associated with the end of the Iron Age. The detailed description of the typology of the holemouth jar provided by the author makes it possible both to date more exactly the settlement of selected sites in the vicinity of Jerusalem and to determine the extent to which some other types of ceramic were used after the fall of the kingdom of Judah in the year 586 BCE.

The third section, “Iconography, Cult, and Cultural Interaction,” deals with the broad field of religion, cult, and the associated political contexts. Ido Koch examines in detail how the iconographic material in Judah adopts the models of the Assyrian hegemony. An important aspect observed by the author is the adaptation of the imperial symbols and their transformation in many different ways. After the fall of their principal bearers these symbols became the sign of the proclaimed sovereignty of Judah, as can be seen, for example, from the use of the rosette in the late seventh century BCE and the start of the following century. The religious symbols of the deities underwent a similar transformation, being adapted to the setting of

the southern Levant, where innovation of the already existing iconography of the local lunar deities also occurred.

David Rafael Moulis considers the subject of the cult under the reign of Hezekiah. By using existing archaeological evidence, including the latest discoveries from Tel Moza, he shows that the reform of the cult took place over a lengthy time period. According to Moulis, this is also connected with the various forms it took, which developed out of the different ways that the local authorities understood the assumed instructions for centralization issued in Jerusalem.

The chapter by Josef Mario Briffa concentrates on a different aspect of the cult. It puts forward the thesis that the Judean pillar figurines need to be seen as part of a miniature figural world that includes female figurines but also other anthropomorphic types, figurines of riders and horses, and the like. This assertion stands against a restrictive paradigm that isolates the female figurines, notably the Judean pillar figurines, from the rest of the repertoire, linking them with rituals of fertility and protection. Informed by semiotic and poststructural debate, the figurines are seen as a medium for the production and manipulation of social identities and meanings, offering a window, a pale reflection, on the persons and communities who made and used them, as though “looking through a glass darkly.”

The fourth section, “Judah in the Seventh Century BCE, Reflected Not Only in Biblical Texts,” contains three chapters and deals with the theme of how the events in this century were treated in the Old Testament traditions and in texts from later historical periods. Adam Mackerle questions the historical reliability of the preexilic prophetic texts. Analyzing studies on this theme by Rainer Kessler, Devadasan Premnath, and Gunther Fleischer, he argues that the assumption of a preexilic date is based more on a preconceived view of the time at which they were supposed to have been written than on any genuine proof. This means that the interpretation, including the social, economic, and religious contexts, ends up in a vicious circle. The reliability of a monarchic dating for texts in the books of Kings, and particularly the lists of Israelite and Judahite kings, is explored by Jan Rückl. Contrary to the notion that the first edition of Kings climaxed with the depiction of Josiah’s reign and that it was composed under this king’s rule in the last quarter of the seventh century BCE, Rückl demonstrates that accounts of the reigns of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah do not support the Josianic date of origin of the book but point rather to a first edition of the book during the exilic/postexilic period. On the basis of textual criticism, Rückl argues that the way the seventh

century is described in Kings does not point to a seventh-century BCE edition of the book culminating with Josiah's reign.

The final chapter, by David Cielontko, examines seven early Jewish texts dealing with King Manasseh (Animal Apocalypse, Apocalypse of Abraham, 2 Baruch, Martyrdom of Isaiah, Greek Prayer of Manasseh, Prayer of Manasseh in 4Q381, and a prayer in Apos. Con. 7.37). Cielontko comes to the conclusion that these literary sources provide unique insights into the ongoing development of the tradition and recollections about this Judahite king from the seventh century BCE. Manasseh has been remembered in two very distinct ways, on the one hand, as the most wicked sinner guilty of the worst possible deeds and, on the other hand, as a blessed righteous example for following generations.

This collective volume extends the horizons of our knowledge about the kingdom of Judah in the seventh century BCE. New archaeological data and their analysis, together with a detailed study of the iconography, cult, and texts relating to this period, shed new light on this long century, the last full one, which is essential for an understanding of the history of the kingdom of Judah, a small state in the region of the southern Levant.

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