

POVERTY, LAW, AND DIVINE JUSTICE  
IN PERSIAN AND HELLENISTIC JUDAH

SBL Press

# ANCIENT ISRAEL AND ITS LITERATURE

Thomas C. Römer, General Editor

*Editorial Board:*

Susan Ackerman

Mark G. Brett

Marc Brettler

Tom Dozeman

Cynthia Edenburg

Konrad Schmid

Number 32

SBL Press



POVERTY, LAW, AND DIVINE JUSTICE  
IN PERSIAN AND HELLENISTIC JUDAH

Johannes Unsok Ro

SBL Press



**SBL PRESS**

**Atlanta**

Copyright © 2018 by Johannes Unsok Ro

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by means of any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to the Rights and Permissions Office, SBL Press, 825 Houston Mill Road, Atlanta, GA 30329 USA.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ro, Johannes Unsok, author.

Title: Poverty, law, and divine justice in Persian and Hellenistic Judah / by Johannes Unsok Ro.

Description: Atlanta : SBL Press, 2018. | Series: Ancient Israel and its literature ; Number 32 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017060322 (print) | LCCN 2018001454 (ebook) | ISBN 9780884142850 (ebk.) | ISBN 9781628372069 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780884142867 (hbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Bible. Old Testament—Criticism, interpretation, etc. | Jews—Economic conditions—History—586 B.C.–70 A.D. | Punishment—Biblical teaching. | Poor—Biblical teaching. | Qumran community. | Jewish law.

Classification: LCC BS1171.3 (ebook) | LCC BS1171.3 .R625 2018 (print) | DDC 221.6/7—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017060322>

Printed on acid-free paper.



לאקוקו ויושין

SBL Press

SBL Press

## CONTENTS

Preface.....	ix
Abbreviations.....	xi
1. Challenges and Responses of the Second Temple Period.....	1
2. Literacy and the Socioeconomic Context of the Judean Postexilic Communities.....	13
2.1. Introduction.....	13
2.2. Advanced Agrarian Societies and Literacy.....	15
2.3. The Socioeconomic Contexts of Postexilic Society.....	23
2.4. Conclusion.....	29
3. The Portrayal of Judean Communities in Persian-Era Palestine: Through the Lens of the Covenant Code.....	33
3.1. Introduction.....	33
3.2. Literary Analysis of the Covenant Code.....	35
3.3. The Stranger (גַּר).....	38
3.4. The So-Called Deuteronomistic Redactor.....	47
3.5. The Critique of Kingship.....	54
3.6. The Juxtaposition of the Covenant Code, the Holiness Code, and the Deuteronomic Code in the Pentateuch.....	56
3.7. The Socioeconomic Context of the Covenant Code.....	66
3.8. Conclusion.....	72
4. The Postexilic Construction of the Prophetic Figure of Jeremiah.....	75
4.1. Introduction.....	75
4.2. Did Jeremiah 7:1–12 Derive from the Prophet Jeremiah?.....	77

4.3. Does Jeremiah 7:1–12 Belong to Deuteronomistic Editorial Layer?	85
4.4. Conclusion	100
5. The Theological Concept of YHWH's Punitive Justice in the Hebrew Bible: Historical Development in the Context of the Judean Community in the Persian Period .....	103
5.1. Introduction	103
5.2. Genesis 18:22b–33a	105
5.3. Additional Examples of Pentateuchal Traditions	108
5.4. Relevant Texts in the Prophetic Traditions	113
5.5. Conclusion	122
6. The Psalms of the Poor .....	125
6.1. Earlier Research Trends and Problems	125
6.2. Methodological Approaches to the Psalms of the Poor	134
6.3. Psalm 34	136
6.4. Parallels to Psalm 34	146
6.5. Observations on the Piety of the Poor in the Psalms of the Poor	163
6.6. The Historical Stages of Conflict and Theological Reflection in the Psalms of the Poor	175
6.7. On the History of the Piety of the Poor in the Postexilic Judean Community	180
6.8. Conclusion	185
7. The Piety of the Poor in the Qumran Community .....	189
7.1. Poverty Terminology in the <i>Hodayot</i> : Defining the Problem	189
7.2. The Subject of the Poor in Other Qumran Texts	202
7.3. Conclusion	209
8. Epilogue .....	211
Bibliography .....	237
Ancient Sources Index .....	279
Modern Authors Index .....	295



## PREFACE

This volume is a work that has grown organically. I have been interested in socioeconomic and theological issues in Judah in the Persian and Hellenistic periods for more than a decade. I started with the issue of the piety of the poor (*die Armenfrömmigkeit*). Then my interest developed, and my attention turned to the biblical law codes and the question of divine justice. This book is an attempt to bridge and connect these developmental theses to each other and to build a synthesis thereupon. I hope this work presents at least a first step toward this goal.

I owe a debt of sincere gratitude to my teachers, who have inspired, encouraged, and brought me to reevaluate many particulars throughout my journey through biblical studies. From the bottom of my heart, I herewith express my deep gratitude to Emeritus Professor Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, the late Emeritus Professor Otto Kaiser, and Emeritus Professor Namiki Koichi.

Heartfelt thanks are due also to Professor Thomas Römer, who accepted this work into the Ancient Israel and Its Literature series. His insightful advice has enhanced the value of the final product. I also thank the copyeditors and other people from the SBL Press team who carefully produced this volume.

Professor Diana Edelman in Oslo, Professor Wolfgang Zwickel in Mainz, and Professor Jörg Rüpke in Erfurt have kindly read an earlier version of this volume and provided me with useful and substantial comments. I would like to express gratitude to each of them for their help.

The present volume has benefited from the generous support of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) through the KAKENHI research grant (15K02061).

Last but by no means least, I also wish to express deep appreciation to my wife Ikuko and my son Yushin. My wife has supported me for better as well as for worse throughout the time I spent researching and creating this

volume. My son has given me his wonderful smiles, which have also made me smile. I dedicate this volume to Ikuko and Yushin.

Parts of this monograph were published in earlier forms as follows, and I am grateful to the respective publishers for permission to include them in this book: chapter 2 from “Socioeconomic Context of Post-exilic Community and Literacy,” *ZAW* 120 (2008): 597–611; chapter 3 from “The Portrayal of Judean Communities in Persian Era Palestine through the Lens of the Covenant Code,” *Semitica* 56 (2014): 249–89; chapter 5 from “The Theological Concept of YHWH’s Punitive Justice in the Hebrew Bible: Historical Development in the Context of the Judean Community in the Persian Period,” *VT* 61 (2011): 406–25; *From Judah to Judaea: Socioeconomic Structures and Processes in the Persian Period*, ed. Johannes Unsok Ro, HBM 43 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013), 87–107; chapter 6, “3.3 Die Armenpsalmen,” in *Die sogenannte “Armenfrömmigkeit” im nachexilischen Israel*, BZAW 322 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 113–99; and chapter 7, “2. Armenfrömmigkeit in der Qumrangemeinde,” in *Die sogenannte “Armenfrömmigkeit” im nachexilischen Israel*, BZAW 322 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 9–34; “The Piety of the Poor in the Community of Qumran and Its Historical Origins,” in *From Judah to Judaea: Socioeconomic Structures and Processes in the Persian Period*, ed. Johannes Unsok Ro, HBM 43 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013), 54–86.

SBL Press

## ABBREVIATIONS

1 En.	1 Enoch
2ms	second-person masculine singular
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AchH	Achaemenid History
AcT	<i>Acta Theologica</i>
AET	Abhandlungen zur Evangelischen Theologie
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AM.T	Athenäums Monografien, Theologie
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ASR	<i>American Sociological Review</i>
ASTI	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATDan	Acta theologica Danica
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BCT	<i>Bible and Critical Theory</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BibInt	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BiE	Biblische Enzyklopädie
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>

BThSt	Biblich-theologische Studien
BVB	Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZABR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CC	Covenant Code
CHJ	Davies, William D., and Louis Finkelstein, eds. <i>The Cambridge History of Judaism</i> . 4 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–2006.
CThM.BW	Calwer theologische Monographien Bibelwissenschaft
CurBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
DC	Deuteronomic Code
DMOA	Documenta et monumenta Orientis antiqui
DtrH	Deuteronomistic History
EBib	Etudes bibliques
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
EHPHR	Etudes d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses
ETL	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
EV	English verse number
EvT	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
FO	<i>Folia Orientalia</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GAT	Grundrisse zum Alten Testament
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBAI	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBS	Herders Biblische Studien
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HC	Holiness Code
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament

HThKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBS	Jerusalem Biblical Studies
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JPSTC	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
JRASup	Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement Series
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
<i>JSTOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KD	Deuteronomistic composition as postulated by Blum, among others
KHab	Kölner historische Abhandlungen
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
KStTh	Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LH	Laws of Hammurabi
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
LXX	Septuagint
NCB	New Century Bible Commentary: Based on the Revised Standard Version
NCBiC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NSKAT	Neuer Stuttgarter Kommentar: Altes Testament
NStB	Neukirchener Studienbücher
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus

OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PNAS	<i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
RBL	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
RelSRev	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
Saec	<i>Saeculum</i>
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SAT	Schriften des Alten Testaments
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
sg.	singular
SHANE	Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SNVAO.HF	Skrifter utgitt av det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi—Historisk-Filosofisk Klasse
STAR	Studies in Theology and Religion
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
StudBib	Studia Biblica
STW	Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SymS	Symposium Series
Syr.	Syriac
TB	Theologische Bucherei
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TeDi	Témoins de Dieu
tg.	targum
ThA	Theologische Arbeiten

ThSt	Theologische Studien
ThW	Theologische Wissenschaft
ThWAT	Botterweck, G. Johannes, and Helmer Ringgren, eds. <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> . Stuttgart: Kohlhammer. 1970–2000.
TRE	Krause, Gerhard, and Gerhard Müller, eds. <i>Theologische Realenzyklopedie</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977–2004.
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur,
TWNT	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> . Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1932–1979.
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UF	<i>Ugarit Forschungen</i>
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WdF	Wege der Forschung
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
VWGTh	Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
ZABR	<i>Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
ZKT	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

SBL Press



## CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES OF THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

The aim of this study is to understand the Judean communities in Persian- and Hellenistic-era Palestine (and, in the case of ch. 7, partially thereafter) as reflected in the Hebrew Bible. This study does not intend to develop a single thesis but to highlight some major issues in Persian- and Hellenistic-era Palestine. Thus, this book addresses some of the core themes in the study of the Judean community, including: the relationship between the shaping of the canon and literacy in the Judean community; “strangers” in the biblical law codes; the socioeconomic structures of Judean communities reflected in the biblical law codes; the development of the theological concept of divine punitive justice; the piety of the poor in certain psalms; and the concept of poverty in the Dead Sea Scrolls. These topics indicate that the Judean communities in Persian- and Hellenistic-era Palestine are crucially important for understanding the background of the formation of the Hebrew Bible. The scriptural scope of this book includes the Pentateuch, the Deuteronomistic History (hereafter DtrH), the prophetic literature, the Psalms, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>1</sup>

Although this book deals with such a wide array of scriptural texts and thematic issues, I have attempted to maintain focus so that every chapter raises particular and specialized questions, develops logical arguments, and gives clear answers to the issues. It is the reader’s task to judge whether my intention, namely, portraying Yehud from various angles through theological as well as socioeconomic lenses, succeeds. I hope that through this book not just one, but rather a series of compelling portrayals

---

1. Regarding the biblical text, I will employ the NRSV throughout this volume unless I provide my own translation; all translations from modern languages are mine unless otherwise specified.

of the Judean community in the Persian and Hellenistic periods emerges that may bring us one step closer to illuminating this tremendously influential community.

Numerous biblical scholars approach ancient Israelite society through the socioeconomic lens of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>2</sup> Four major socioeconomic models have been employed in order to explain the structure of ancient Israelite society (frequently including Judean communities in Persian- and Hellenistic-era Palestine): (1) rent capitalism, (2) ancient class society, (3) the tributary mode of production, and (4) the patronage system.<sup>3</sup>

Many scholars have a tendency to elevate a socioeconomic framework or even a mode of production to an all-encompassing key to explain crucial characteristics of ancient Israelite or Judean society. However, the ancient economy was not an independent entity isolated from other areas of human life. It was deeply embedded in “the sacred.”<sup>4</sup>

In his recent monograph *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (2015), Roland Boer rejects a one-dimensional framework for ancient Southwest Asia including ancient Israel. He proposes instead “the sacred economy,” which is a highly theorized model capable of coping with various socioeconomic situations in ancient Southwest Asia from the Bronze Age to the end of the Persian period. An axiological Marxian viewpoint that all socioeconomic circumstances are crisis-embedded and unstable informs Boer’s model. If there was stability for a while, it was an abnormality and there-

---

2. The literature that discusses socioeconomic issues in ancient Israelite society is extensive. A few selected monographs since 1980 would be enough to give a general picture of current scholarship: Gottwald 1980, 2001; Ste. Croix 1981; Silver 1983; Garnsey, Hopkins, and Whittaker 1983; Lang 1985a; Epsztein 1986; Lemche 1985; M. Smith 1987; Dearman 1988; Fleischer 1989; Mosala 1989; Whybray 1990; Archer 1990; Albertz 1992; Crüsemann 1992; Weinberg 1992; R. Kessler 1992; Hamilton 1992; Chirichigno 1993; Fager 1993; Gorringer 1994; Washington 1994; Weinfeld 1995; Bendor 1996; Malchow 1996; Hudson and Levine 1996, 1999; Jaruzelska 1998; Carter 1999; McNutt 1999; Sneed 1999; Fox 2000; Pleins 2001; Ro 2002; Grabbe 2004; Nurmi 2004; Liverani 2005; Sandoval 2006; Stevens 2006; Domeris 2007; Houston 2008; Baker 2009; Nam 2012; Dunn 2012; Olyan 2012; Guillaume 2014; Boer 2015; and Bremer 2016.

3. For brief sketches of each of the four models, see Houston 2008, 26–51. For (1): Wolf 1966, 50–57; Coote 1981, 29–31; Lang 1985b, 86. For (2): Kippenberg 1977, 34–36; 1978, 56–58. For (3): Gottwald 1993, 5–9; Chaney 1986, 53–76; 1993, 250–63; Mosala 1989, 103–18; Banaji 2010, 1–44; Boer 2015, 146–92. For (4): Simkins 1999, 123–44; 2004, 1–17; Lemche 1994, 119–32; 1996, 106–20; Boer 2015, 105–8

4. Boer 2015, 8.

fore requires careful exposition, which is provided by regulation theory focusing on “how specific economic systems stabilize crises in order to gain some continuity for certain periods.”<sup>5</sup> Instead of assuming capitalistic *homo economicus* acting in a free market, Boer attempts to revitalize Soviet-era Marxian theory. He claims that the whole socioeconomic history of ancient Southwest Asia, including ancient Israel, can be inferred from a single system that he terms the “sacred economy.” According to Boer, in ancient Southwest Asia, including ancient Israel, the mode of regulation was “sacred” in the sense that “the sacred saturated daily life.”<sup>6</sup> This supposition is highly insightful for the current study, and his many other hypotheses are also very enlightening. Careful readers may discern that the current study benefits considerably from and is stimulated by many aspects of Boer’s study. However, there are in our view several serious flaws in his approach.

First, the time and space for the sacred economy are too broad and general. Addressing such a large expanse of time and space inescapably means that one cannot investigate deeply the details of particular features. As a result, the resolution of the heuristic model for understanding ancient socioeconomic life unavoidably becomes obscure.<sup>7</sup> Is it really true that “ancient Israel was no different from any other part of ancient Southwest Asia”?<sup>8</sup> The current study derives from the recognition that the Second Temple period was significantly different from any other era of ancient Israel.

Second, Boer’s analysis and treatment of biblical texts is frequently minimal. Most of the biblical texts appearing in his volume remain in the footnotes and are not analyzed in detail.<sup>9</sup> Thus Boer mainly proceeds deductively, since the overarching theory and thesis go before (and often simply depart from) the concrete and detailed biblical evidence. As a biblical scholar, I regard this feature as problematic.

---

5. Ibid., 32.

6. Ibid., 8.

7. Chaney criticizes appropriately Boer’s presupposition of “homogeneity” and “continuity” in relation to “ancient Southwest Asia” (Chaney 2016, 140). According to Chaney, due to this feature Boer’s analysis fails to catch the population pressure on arable land in Iron II Palestine. On this issue, see §3.7, below.

8. Boer 2015, 8.

9. Ch. 5 is an exception where the nature of trade in the relevant biblical texts is discussed.

Third, Boer's views of human beings can be evaluated as too narrowly conceived. Of course, Boer's articulation and criticism in relation to the anachronistic analysis of free markets as well as the overcapitalistic notion of *homo economicus* have their own valid right in biblical studies. However, at least some characteristics of human beings as well as of the ancient world can be persuasively explained by those seemingly anachronistic aspects and elements.<sup>10</sup> In any human society, even in the modern era, *homo economicus* does not completely exclude *homo religiosus*. The two aspects of human nature are inseparably intertwined and appear in their combined form in various areas of human life. It was more so in ancient society, including ancient Israel.

Due to the above-mentioned points that mar the achievement of drawing appropriate portrayals of Yehud, I have decided to deploy a hybrid model instead of following Boer's otherwise solid framework of the sacred economy. Thus I have adopted a new term *religionness* that will be briefly clarified as this: I suggest that there was a nexus of core values and meanings that was an essential part of the religious world of Judean society in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Since this concept can hardly be fully captured and expressed by the existing nouns *religiousness* or *religiosity*, I have coined here a new term, *religionness*, to indicate this part or aspect of the religious world of ancient Israel. Religionness is intended to connote a network of beliefs and values shared by various ancient Israelites, in particular Judean communities in the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

Strictly speaking, applying the term *religion* to ancient society is itself quite anachronistic because the concept of religion, which can be distinguished from other areas of human life such as economics, politics, and morals was absent in ancient society. The Hebrew Bible sometimes makes it evident that religious thought and the socioeconomic framework are so closely intertwined that one cannot clearly differentiate cause from effect, as some of the following chapters will indicate. Furthermore, the word religion was used with different meanings and connotations depending on the times. Therefore, modern biblical scholars are advised to be careful in utilizing and applying words such as *religion*, *faith*, or *belief*, which are categories of Christian dogmatics, directly to ancient Israel.<sup>11</sup> In order to remind ourselves of this risk of anachronism, it will be useful to utilize

---

10. See Nam 2016, 343, who illustrates a biblical example (2 Kgs 4:1–7) that seems to contradict Boer's articulation.

11. See Rüpke 2007, 73.

the new term religionness throughout this volume.<sup>12</sup> By doing so, I intend a kind of *Verfremdungseffekt* (distancing effect). Therefore, the portrayals that this volume attempts to delineate are not about the “religion of ancient Israel,” but about the “religionness of Judean communities” within a certain historical time frame, namely, in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. In the religionness of Judean communities in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, *homo religiosus* not only dynamically interacts with *homo economicus*, but both are also merged and fused into one. Here relentless materiality and relentless spirituality are two sides of one coin.

It is one of the main assertions of the present study that “status inconsistency” played a crucial role in certain facets of the religionness of the Judean communities in the Persian and Hellenistic periods.<sup>13</sup> An outline of status inconsistency will be delineated below. A feature of Max Weber’s class theory is that it is based on a multidimensional view of social stratification, in sharp contrast to the one-dimensional view of Karl Marx.<sup>14</sup> Weber’s class theory describes the process through which inequality is born and established by three key elements: class, status, and party.<sup>15</sup> According to Weber, while class is primarily assigned within an economic order of rank, status emerges within a social order of rank and is related to the distribution of honor.<sup>16</sup> Correspondingly, party is an element in the pursuit of social and political power.<sup>17</sup> One aspect that must not be forgotten here is that these three components are interrelated

---

12. Von Rad’s remark is highly insightful in this context: “There never was such a thing as a ‘religion of the people of Israel,’ i.e., an integrated abstract complex of all her ideas about the relationship between God and man” (von Rad 1965, 368).

13. The issue of status inconsistency has been hotly debated in sociology. The bibliography on this issue is quite extensive. Only a few selected works can be mentioned here: Lenski 1966, 86–88; 1967, 298–301; Goffman 1957, 275–81; Jackson 1962, 469–80; Randall and Strasser, 1976, 43–119; Segal and Knoke 1980, 149–66; Whitney 1980, 138–41; Hortmann, 1986, 52–67; Kimberly, 1986, 83–102; Bailey, 1986, 118–29; Bornschier, 1986, 204–20; Zaborowski, 1986, 262–74; Grimshaw, 1986, 307–20; Singh, 1986, 368–81; Hartman, 1986, 537–51; Faught, 1986, 592–605; Slomczynski and Mach 1997, 93–117; Strasser and Hodge 1993, 3–36; Stryker 1993, 70–82; Kreckel 1993, 248–69; Fuerstenberg 1993, 270–82; Meulemann 1993, 283–98; and Barnett 2004, 177–81. This concept was often applied to ancient societies related to early Christianity (see Stegemann and Stegemann 1999, 60–88; and Meeks 1983, 55).

14. Barnett 2004, 177.

15. Weber 1957, 180–95.

16. *Ibid.*, 194–95.

17. *Ibid.*

and occasionally work in conjunction with each other. However, there is no certainty that the order of rank of status groups is proportional to the order of rank of economic classes. In this way, Weber presents a pioneering insight that can be used to explain the mechanism of status inconsistency. This insight by Weber is elaborated upon in the social theories of Gerhard Lenski.<sup>18</sup> According to Lenski's theory, a distributive system is necessarily present in a given society.<sup>19</sup> This distributive system is a structure used to determine the social status of each member in a society through the three elements of power, privilege, and prestige.<sup>20</sup>

When we further define power, privilege, and prestige, the three elements of the distributive system, they can be exchanged for the concept of multiple class systems. That is, the distributive system of a given society is constructed out of multiple class systems.<sup>21</sup> In Lenski's theoretical structure, a class system is a midlevel framework that connects the microlevel (a class) to the macrolevel (the distributive system).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, a class system is a hierarchy of classes ranked in terms of some single criterion.<sup>23</sup>

There are multiple class systems present in advanced agrarian societies.<sup>24</sup> For example, a political class system, an economic class system, an occupational class system, an educational class system, and an ethnic class system can be assumed. These can be employed as factors in deter-

---

18. Lenski 1954, 405–13; 1966, 80–88, 288–89; 1967, 298–301.

19. Lenski 1966, 79–82.

20. Ibid., 44–46. Weber defines power (*Macht*) as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (1947, 152). With Weber's definition in mind, Lenski (1966, 44–46) asserts that power is the most important variable among the aforementioned three elements, as it is the variable that most crucially determines the distribution of surplus produced by a given society.

21. Lenski 1966, 79–82.

22. Ibid., 79.

23. Ibid., 79–80. The degree of inequality in the distributive system changes according to the size of the surplus its society produces (ibid., 85). In Lenski's view, the most important variable that can change the amount of surplus is the technological level that a society has reached. This is because a high level of technology has the power to transform the level of production and the size of the surplus in a given society. If a society's level of production and size of its surplus changes, the population of that society will change; and if the population changes, the social and economic systems for governing that population will change along with that society's form and type (ibid., 90).

24. For details on advanced agrarian societies, see chs. 2 and 8, below.

mining an individual's social status in Persian- and Hellenistic-era Palestine.<sup>25</sup> In this way, the distribution systems of Judean communities in Persian- and Hellenistic-era Palestine can be determined by multidimensional and multilayered factors within pluralistic class systems.

It is at this point that Lenski introduces the concept of status inconsistency.<sup>26</sup> Status inconsistency refers to a social phenomenon that emerges when an individual's resources within various social class systems become inconsistent. Lenski's theory is based on his assumption that humans strive to maximize their satisfaction even, if necessary, at the expense of others.<sup>27</sup> Lenski argues that, "where important decisions are involved, most human action is motivated either by self-interest or by partisan group interests."<sup>28</sup> For example, a person with strong economic power but weak political power would think of himself or herself in terms of his or her highest ranked status, namely, his or her position within the economic class system. A person of low rank in the occupational class who nevertheless had a high level of education would behave or think in a similar way. However, others in society who interacted with him or her would have a vested interest in treating the person in an opposite way, namely, in terms of that person's lowest ranked status.<sup>29</sup> In other words, an individual tends to define his or her social status in terms of the status that holds the most resources within his or her multidimensional class system, while others who come in contact with this individual will determine his or her status in terms of the status that holds the least resources. Because of this, a large gap emerges between both parties' expectations of social interrelations and how they actually treat each other. Lenski asserts that status inconsistency can be a cause of tension and conflict in a society.<sup>30</sup> According to Lenski, the individual who experiences social disadvantage derived from such status inconsistency tends to resist the political and economic system that the existing status quo legitimates and validates.<sup>31</sup> This phenomenon provides a logical answer to the intriguing question of why a select portion

---

25. *Ibid.*, 80–81.

26. *Ibid.*, 86–88.

27. Barnett 2004, 179.

28. Lenski 1966, 44.

29. *Ibid.*, 86–88; and Barnett 2004, 179.

30. Lenski 1966, 86–88.

31. *Ibid.*, 87.

of a society's upper and middle classes contributes to radical social and political movements.

According to Lenski, this type of social phenomenon is quantitatively small: it is rather an exceptional phenomenon.<sup>32</sup> However, there are cases throughout human history where the social phenomenon of political and economic radicalization of the upper and middle classes brought about by status inconsistency has produced qualitatively significant impacts and influences. The major force of movements to rapidly revolutionize the political and economic system of a society mostly derives from the desire and will of the lower stratum. However, it is extremely difficult for the lower stratum to execute such a radical movement and finally succeed without the support and direction of the upper and middle strata.<sup>33</sup> The social phenomenon of political and economic radicalization of the upper and middle strata deriving from status inconsistency explains why a large number of radical social movements throughout human history, including revolution, have succeeded with the active participation and dedication of the upper and middle strata.

In our view, some Judean communities in the exilic and postexilic periods experienced radical transformations of the distributive systems and accordingly dramatic amplifications of status inconsistency. For example, an elite individual of the kingdom of Judah such as a high-ranking priest exiled to Babylon must have suffered from extreme status inconsistency.<sup>34</sup> Until this tragic national disaster, no one would have questioned his high standing as an elite priest within his political, economic, occupational, educational, ethnic, and other class systems. But as soon as he became a captive, his former status would have been treated within all the class systems in the Babylonian Empire as though it were nonexistent. It is not difficult to imagine such status inconsistency causing acute discomfort and severe stress within this individual's mind.

Furthermore, in the Persian period the returnees from the Babylonian exile surely experienced a different type of status inconsistency, synchronic

---

32. *Ibid.*, 88.

33. *Ibid.*

34. This type of status inconsistency can be regarded as "diachronic status inconsistency" while the former example in the previous paragraph (i.e., a person with a high rank in the economic class system and a low rank in the political class system) can be called "synchronic status inconsistency." I posit that both types of status inconsistency are serious factors in stress and of conflict.



status inconsistency. The citizen-temple community gradually took form in Yehud after the completion of the Second Temple.<sup>35</sup> This community was composed solely of returnees from the Babylonian exile and was separate from the central administration of the Persian Empire.<sup>36</sup> A large number of returnees from the Babylonian exile had neither a social base nor an economic foundation in Palestine.<sup>37</sup> Rather, it is safe to assume that socioeconomic power in Yehud at this time was held by the descendants of

---

35. Weinberg's hypothesis, which he terms the "Bürger-Tempel-Gemeinde" (citizen-temple community), has strongly influenced the history of research on the socioeconomic structure of the province of Yehud in the Persian period. Weinberg's theory argues that Yehud in the Persian period is most properly evaluated in the context of a general pattern of urbanization and economic growth as a form of "pre-Hellenism" (1992, 17–33).

The demographic situation in the exilic as well as the postexilic Judean communities in Palestine is a hotly discussed issue (on this, see §3.3, below). This study does not accept all of the assumptions of Weinberg's citizen-temple community theory. Scholars have put forth a number of valid criticisms regarding the concept of the citizen-temple community (Grabbe 2004, 143–45; Carter 1999, 297–307; Cataldo 2003, 240–52; Bedford 2001, 207–30). In particular, Weinberg's exaggerated population estimate for the citizen-temple community requires reevaluation. According to Weinberg (1992, 43), before 458/457 BCE the population of the citizen-temple community was around 42,360 and constituted about 20 percent of the population of Persian Yehud. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to pursue the issue of the demography of Yehud in detail, it can be said that compared with the estimated population at the end of the preexilic period, there was a considerable reduction in settlement and population in Persian-era Palestine (see Carter 1999, 190–213; Lipschits 2003, 323–76; 2006, 19–40; Finkelstein 2010, 39–54; Faust 2013, 108–26; Guillaume 2014, 227–30). However, the demographic sparsity in Persian-era Palestine should not be taken to imply that the land of Yehud was empty when the exiles returned to Jerusalem. There is clear textual evidence in the book of Jeremiah of tension and conflict between the *golah* community on the one hand and those who remained in Palestine on the other (see, e.g., Pohlmann 1978, 183–207). If we avoid extreme positions regarding demographic conditions in the exilic as well as the postexilic Judean communities in Palestine, the seemingly contradictory models of the postcollapse society and the citizen-temple community can be employed diachronically for the analysis of Yehud/Judah in the Persian and Hellenistic era. In other words, with the Babylonian exile ancient Judean society radically changed to a postcollapse society and then, with the establishment of the Second Temple, Yehud started to gradually develop as a citizen-temple community within its socioeconomic framework as an advanced agrarian society.

36. See §3.3, below.

37. See §3.3, below.

those who had not been exiled.<sup>38</sup> It is probable that the descendants of דלת הארץ were outside the network of the citizen-temple community. That is, at least early on, the members of the citizen-temple community held a disadvantaged position in the economic class system of Judean society in Persian-era Palestine. However, the members of the citizen-temple community had a high opinion of their status within the religious class system, the ethnic class system, and the occupational class system. In most of recent discussions related to Persian and Hellenistic Judah, the concept of status inconsistency has been ignored and the socioeconomic strata have been regarded as consistent throughout the hierarchy of Judean society. Therefore, it is frequently presupposed that from the beginning the members of the *golah* community enjoyed consistent hegemony over the descendants of those who had not been exiled throughout the multiple class systems within Persian Judah. However, the socioeconomic position of the *golah* could have been much more ambivalent, at least at the initial stage.

It is no coincidence that we find a desire and a passion for a radically new, ideal society in the Deuteronomic Code (DC) and the Holiness Code (HC).<sup>39</sup> DC and HC have such a revolutionary character because they were shaped and formed by returnees experiencing status inconsistency. Steck claims that the Deuteronomistic literature of postexilic Judean society derived from eschatological theology.<sup>40</sup> Considered sociologically, it could be said that the eschatological character of Deuteronomistic literature was stimulated by the status inconsistency experienced by the nonpriestly returnees who composed such literature.<sup>41</sup> In this way, status inconsistency offers an indispensable key to understanding postexilic biblical texts and their theologies, which were influenced by the socioeconomic structure of postexilic Judean society.

As far as religionness in Yehud is concerned, several intriguing questions emerge. As the formation of the Pentateuch clearly indicates, it is obvious that Yahwism played a crucial role in the emergence of the iden-

---

38. See §3.6, below.

39. See §3.6, below. Of course, it is also true that there is a restorative and conservative tendency in the P material, as evidenced in Num 15:22–31 and 16:1–35. The writers of these texts attempt to restore the preexilic concept of the flawless “cosmos” (see §5.4, below). These contradicting tendencies within the P material are intriguing research topics that might demonstrate the literary heterogeneity of the P source.

40. Steck 1982, 311–15.

41. See §3.6, below.

tity of the Judean communities in the Persian and Hellenistic eras. In our view, the central questions are as follows: Was religionness limited and conditioned by literacy? How did the socioeconomic and demographic circumstances influence the development and transformation of Yahwistic religionness and vice versa? Which theological perspectives participated in the composition and editing of the prophetic books (e.g., the book of Jeremiah) and the Psalms (e.g., the psalms of the poor)? How were their theological thoughts and religious worldviews inherited and transmitted by subsequent generations? These and other questions will be dealt with from various angles in the present study. It is the author's sincere hope that, taken together, these eight chapters represent an array of studies that reveal new perspectives on the Judean communities in Persian- and Hellenistic-era Palestine and provide some implications for further research.

SBL Press