

which is depicted with antipathy and ambivalence. Eidevall then looks into how the book reacts to the Persian Empire, concluding with an examination of the imperial enterprise in which YHWH is the overlord.

In his contribution on the book of Isaiah (“The Theological Politics of Deutero-Isaiah”), Joseph Blenkinsopp focuses on the figure of Cyrus as a Davidic figure, who replaces the “native” Judean kings as the divinely chosen leader. As Blenkinsopp shows, Isaiah 40–66 is the only mention of David in Isa 55:1–5. The reference to a “nation you do not know and a nation that does not know you will come in haste” (Isa 55:5) is explained as a reference to Cyrus (see, e.g., Isa 41:25; 42:6; 45:3, 4).

Ehud Ben Zvi approaches the prophetic corpus (“The Yehudite Collection of Prophetic Books”) as it would have been read by *literati* in the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods. After a short review of some recent studies on ancient empires, Ben Zvi turns to an introduction to social memory and the way that Persian period Yehudian (Judean) *literati* (re-)read their traditions, added to them, and constructed authors, authority, and their (hybrid) world. Ben Zvi asks why there is not more criticism of the Persian Empire in texts of the early Hellenistic period, since by then the necessity to express such criticism through *hidden transcripts* (à la Scott) would have ceased.⁷ Ben Zvi argues that the absence of a negative indictment on the Persian rulers and Cyrus in particular should be regarded as significant. Ben Zvi and Blenkinsopp follow similar lines of argumentation here, with the proviso that according to Ben Zvi Cyrus is only “partially Davidize[d].” Indeed, Ben Zvi sees Isa 55:5 as an “example of appropriation and reshaping of imperial memories.” However, Ben Zvi then goes on to ask why there is so little about Cyrus in the prophetic corpus, if he is understood as a new Davidide. Ben Zvi looks to the (partly pseudo-)historical setting of prophetic books in the pre-Persian period and more importantly to the trend to understand world history as moving toward a new empire to come, namely, Yehud’s empire. According to Ben Zvi, this represents fairly standard “under-dog dream of empire,” in which the rhetoric of the human political empire has been internalized. Against the historical “Arameanization” of Yehud stands the theological ‘Israelization’ of the entire world.”

The last essay in this volume (“Power, Politics, and Prophecy in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism”) by Alex Jassen moves the discussion yet further in time to the late Second Temple period. Jassen understands the various groups behind the Dead Sea Scrolls as generally being in a politically weaker position than other groups, such as the Hasmoneans and the Jerusalem priesthood.

⁷ This is particularly surprising as the royal historiographical tradition and criticism of certain rulers is very much part of the Hellenistic tradition in cuneiform. In Mesopotamia, the criticism takes the form of a *hidden transcript*. For an example see Caroline Waerzeggers, “The ‘Nabonidus Debate’ in Babylonia, c. 200 BCE,” in *Jewish Cultural Encounters in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern World Debate* (ed. M. Popovič; Leiden/Boston: Brill), forthcoming.

Significantly, the dynamics described by Jassen are similar in nature to those described for the late Persian and early Hellenistic period with their emphasis on eschatological retribution within a divine empire; what appears to be relatively new or at least given much more emphasis is the describing of prophets whose messages are not aligned with that of the author of the particular manuscript as “false prophets.”

The essays collected in this volume cover a wide scope: from diplomatic correspondence in second millennium BCE Mari to the eschatological hopes expressed in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The common goal is to understand how “empire” influenced prophetic and divinatory communication between the divine and human realms and how this was put to use as and influenced by propaganda from those in power.

We would like to thank de Gruyter for allowing us to print Beate Pongratz-Leisten’s essay on divination and cosmology, which forms part of chapter nine of her *Religion and Ideology in Assyria* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), as well as Eerdman’s Publishing for permitting us to print the essay by Joseph Blenkinsopp, which is nearly equivalent to chapter four of his *David Remembered: Kingship and National Identity in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 54–70.

Finally, we would like to thank Ehud Ben Zvi, Roxana Flammini, and Martti Nissinen for accepting the volume into the *Ancient Near Eastern Monograph* series of the Society of Biblical Literature. We hope that publishing the studies through this venue will make them available to a wide readership.

February 2014

