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Pakkala, Juha

Reditt, Paul; Boda, Mark

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THE DISUNITY OF EZRA–NEHEMIAH

Juha Pakkala

Introduction

Many scholars assume that the composition of Ezra–Nehemiah is fairly united. Unlike many other books of the Hebrew Bible, the text would derive from one or two main authors and would not contain a large number of additions and expansions. The additions would be limited in quantity and scale. This assumption is seen for example in the way the text of Ezra–Nehemiah is used as a historical source for the early second temple period in Judah/Yehud. The events described in these sources are assumed to give a relatively fair representation of the history of this period.¹ This aspect is significant since Ezra–Nehemiah is one of the few texts that describe events in this poorly known period in the history of Judah/Yehud.

However, the unity of Ezra–Nehemiah has to be questioned on both macro and micro levels. As for the macro level, it is usually accepted that the composition was combined from at least three different sources: Ezra 1–6; Ezra 7–10 + Neh. 8 and Neh. 1.1–7.4.² Although many scholars assume some unity among these sources, that assumption seems to be rather weak. Their

1. Thus for example Julius Wellhausen, *Geschichte Israels*, I (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1878), pp. 421–26; Kenneth G. Hoglund, *Achamenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* (SBLDS, 125; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1992), pp. 207–47; Peter Frei, *Die persische Reichsautorisation: Ein Überblick* (Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte, 1, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), pp. 1–35; Frei, ‘The Imperial Authorization: A Summary’, in James W. Watts (eds), *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (SBL Symposium Series, 17; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), pp. 11–12; Georg Fohrer, *Geschichte Israels* (Uni Taschenbücher, 708; Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 6th edn, 1995), pp. 211–15; Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 188–92; and Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), pp. 583–84.

2. It is usually accepted that these three sections may contain further independent sources: e.g., letters in Ezra 4 and 6; lists in Ezra 2 and Neh. 7. It is fair to assume that Neh. 9–13 mainly contains late material, which is dependent on a late version of Ezra–Nehemiah that already contained the three main sources.

original independence is seen in many features of the final text. If we can talk about any unity within the composition at all, it derives from later editors. However, the editor who combined the three sources does not seem to have made a great effort at creating a coherent composition. The sources were largely taken as independent units without much editing. Surprisingly, later editing also did not bring the sources much closer together.

The disunity of Ezra–Nehemiah is similarly evident on the micro level. It seems probable that the composition was edited for at least two centuries so that the final text can be characterized as a ‘snowball’, which accumulated material from different situations and circumstances. Due to the decay of the writing material, the text had to be copied in every generation. Before the text became too holy to be altered, each copyist was a potential editor, who expanded and in some cases even rearranged the older text.³

Any critical use of Ezra–Nehemiah, for example, its use as a historical source for the Early Achaemenid Period, requires that one recognize its complex development. Before using the text as a historical source, one has to distinguish between different sources and literary phases behind the final text. The final text contains material from different periods and contexts so that it cannot be accepted uncritically as a historical source. In other words, the critical reader has to understand the history of the text and how it developed before using it as a historical source.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the history of the composition of Ezra–Nehemiah is very complex and to show that the failure to recognize this leads the scholar astray. I will give examples from different parts of the composition in order to show, on a concrete level, the nature of the problems with which we are dealing. I will also show how great an impact even the smallest additions can have on the final text and on the reader’s understanding of it.

Disunity of the Composition

That the books of Ezra and Nehemiah contain three originally independent sources – their cores can be found in Ezra 1–6; Ezra 7–10 + Neh. 8 and Neh. 1.1–7.4⁴—and that they remain fairly independent even in the final composition can be seen in many details:

Firstly, the three sections are only vaguely related thematically. Ezra 1–6 primarily deals with the building of the temple and the reestablishment of the temple cult in the late sixth century BCE. All passages in these chapters are in

3. One should also not exclude the possibility that parts of the older text were rewritten or omitted, but this question lies beyond the scope of this paper.

4. It is evident that the original sources were heavily edited, but their original core should be sought in these chapters.

some way connected to this theme. The Ezra material (= Ezra 7–10 and Neh. 8) deals with the reinstatement of the Torah in Israel. This section describes how Ezra came from Babylon and introduced the Torah to the people of Judah/Yehud, who lived in lawlessness. Although this section contains passages with some interest in the temple cult and temple vessels, they are isolated in their contexts and very probably derive from later editors.⁵ The Nehemiah Memoir in Neh. 1.1–7.4 shows interest neither in the temple nor the Torah. This section deals with the (re)building of the ruined Jerusalem and especially its city wall. Thematically the three sections are thus only very generally related: they all describe how Judah/Yehud was restored in the Early Achaemenid Period by returnees from the exile. This general theme may be the reason that the three documents were combined into the same composition in the first place. Still, if the sections derived from the same author one would not expect such clear thematic differences between them.

Secondly, the technical transition between the sections is awkward. There seems to be no connecting element between Ezra 6 and 7. Ezra 6.19–22 describes how the community of the returnees from the exile celebrated the Passover in Jerusalem after the temple had been built, whereas Ezra 7.1 jumps to Babylon and begins to describe the journey of a scribe called Ezra. Besides the vague *ואחר הדברים האלה* at the beginning of Ezra 7.1,⁶ the text does not make any connection between the two passages, which are placed in sequence in the final composition. A similar jump can be seen in Ezra 10 and Neh. 1. Ezra 10 describes the annulment of mixed marriages in Judah/Yehud, whereas Neh. 1.1 jumps to the Achaemenid royal palace in Susa, Persia. There is no transition; the Nehemiah Memoir begins with *דברי נחמיה בן חכליה*, which was evidently meant as a beginning.

Thirdly, the three sections do not describe events in the same period and do not form a smooth chronological sequence. The events are dated into three different periods, even in different centuries. Ezra 1–6 describes the main events leading to the building of the temple in 515/514 BCE. The events in

5. See below and Juha Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe: The Development of Ezra 7–10 and Neh 8* (BZAW, 347; Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 56–63, 80–81.

6. It seems evident that the phrase *ואחר הדברים האלה* is a later addition. The original beginning of this section is *במכות ארתחשטא מלך פרס*, which is similar to the beginning of the book of Esther: *ויהי בימי אחשורוש מלך*. See also Alfred Bertholet, *Die Bücher Ezra und Nehemia* (KHAT, 19; Tübingen, 1902), p. 30; H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC, 16; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), p. 91; Dwight R. Daniels, 'The Composition of the Ezra–Nehemiah Narrative', in Dwight R. Daniels, Uwe Glessmer and Martin Rösel (eds.), *Ernten, was man sät* (Festschrift Klaus Koch; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991), pp. 311–28 (312); Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, p. 23. The phrase *ואחר הדברים האלה* is used as if the events described in Ezra 7 had occurred immediately after the events of Ezra 6, but even if one were to identify the Achaemenid king of Ezra 7 as Artaxerxes I, there is a gap of more than half a century.

Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 8 were probably meant to have occurred in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I in 458 BCE, whereas the events described in the Nehemiah Memoir are dated 13 years later. The text does not tell the reader what happened between the accounts. It proceeds by jumping to the following account, even if, as in the case of the transition from Ezra 6 to Ezra 7, more than half a century passed between the events recounted. If the three sections had been planned to form one composition, one would expect that the author/editor would have filled the chronological gaps. One now receives the impression that three sources were thrown together without much planning. In fact, it is rather surprising that not even the later editors have attempted to close the evident chronological gaps.

Fourthly, connections in themes and phraseology between the sections are made only in the latest editorial phases of the composition, but these connections remain surprisingly scarce even after considerable editing when the composition was already transmitted as one composition. The main thematic links between the sections were created by editors with Levitical interests. Especially the Ezra material contains additions which deal with the temple vessels and thus continue the themes of Ezra 1–6. The clearest examples can be found in Ezra 8, which contains large additions (e.g., in vv. 15b-20, 24-30) more connected to the themes of Ezra 1–6 than to those of the Nehemiah material. In any case, these sections disturb the main narrative and stick out as digressions. Peculiarly, the Nehemiah Memoir remains thematically isolated even though it was edited by successive editors. This may indicate that this section was combined with the rest of the composition at a relatively late stage. Also, Ezra 1–6 does not seem to contain many passages that connect the section with the other parts of Ezra–Nehemiah, but some late additions in Ezra 3.4-5 are distantly related to the themes of the Ezra material.⁷ I will discuss these passages in more detail below.

Fifthly, each of the three sections contains a conclusion that does not anticipate a continuation. They conclude the respective sections so that the preceding narrative comes to an adequate conclusion and its main problem is solved: Ezra 6.13-22 describes the completion of the temple as well as the ensuing consecration and celebration. The narrative describing the building of the temple is thus brought to an end. Ezra 10.16-44 describes the annulment of the mixed marriages and thus the practical application of the law introduced by Ezra. Ezra's task is thus concluded and the narrative does not anticipate any continuation.⁸ Neh. 6.15-7.3 describes the completion of the city wall of Jerusalem, which concludes the section.⁹ If the sections were

7. It is probable that the connection made in Ezra 3.4-5 is not conscious.

8. Note that Neh. 8 was probably originally located before the conflict over mixed marriages (Ezra 9–10).

9. It is probable that these verses contain later additions. It is possible that Neh. 6.15-

isolated documents, the reader would not expect the stories to continue.

Empirical Evidence for Editorial Activity

Turning to micro-level disunity in Ezra–Nehemiah, literary critical methods are not the only way to identify editors' activity. In Ezra–Nehemiah we are in the fortunate position of having three significant textual witnesses, 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras and the MT. Comparison of these texts shows, beyond question, that the textual tradition of Ezra–Nehemiah was open to major and minor additions during the Second Temple Period. I will give some examples to demonstrate what kind of literary processes took place in this tradition.

It seems that editors added entire passages to the text. 1 Esd. 3.1–5.6 contains a full scene that is missing in 2 Esdras and the MT. The scene, which describes a debate at the Achaemenid court, is generally accepted as a later addition.¹⁰ Its existence shows that new scenes only vaguely related to their context could be incorporated in the older text even in a relatively late stage of the text's transmission.¹¹ One should therefore be open to the possibility that larger additions were also made to parts of the text where we do not possess competing textual variants.

Small differences between the witnesses are found throughout the text. They imply that minor additions were constantly made during its transmission. Many of them may derive from copyists, who did not intentionally edit the text, but whose additions may likewise have had considerable impact on the final text. I will continue with examples from different parts of the composition.

Neh. 9.6–2 Esd. 19.6

2 Esd. 19.6 ($\approx$ Neh. 9.6) mentions Ezra as the spokesman of the national prayer of vv. 6–37, whereas the MT of the chapter does not mention Ezra at all.¹² In the Greek text, Ezra peculiarly replaces the Levites, who were presented as the spokesmen of the people in v. 5.

16 is the original conclusion and that Neh. 6.17–19 and 7.1–3 represent further additions; see Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, p. 276.

10. Although 1 Esd. 3.1–5.6 is integral to the final composition of 1 Esdras, the passage is a later development when one regards the whole development of the tradition.

11. The assumption that 1 Esd. would preserve the original reading would mean that omissions of large passages were made in the transmission of the text. However, in this case, it is unlikely that the scene is original.

12. It is commonly accepted that 2 Esd. 19.6 is secondary in this respect.

<i>Neh. 9.6</i>	<i>2 Esd. 19.6</i>
... וַיִּאמְרוּ הַלְוִיִּם	καὶ εἰποσαν οἱ Λευῖται
... אַתָּה הוּא יְהוָה לְבָדֶךָ	καὶ εἶπεν Εσδρας ...
	Σὺ εἶ αὐτός κύριος μόνος ...

In the final text of the Greek version, the only function of the Levites is to praise God (in v. 5) before Ezra begins with the actual prayer. A very small addition has had significant impact on the whole passage. 2 Esdras implies that Ezra was the leader of the community and that the Levites only assisted him, but in the Hebrew text, which is generally assumed to preserve the original reading, the Levites are in charge throughout the entire chapter, leading the community. If only the Greek had been preserved, interpretations of the whole chapter would be considerably different. In this case, one would probably be more inclined to ascribe Neh. 9 to the Ezra material and thus to date it earlier than it currently is. In the final Hebrew version the connection between Nehemiah 9 and the Ezra material is weak, because Ezra is not mentioned at all in Nehemiah 9. Accordingly most scholars assume that Nehemiah 9 belongs to the later additions to the composition.¹³

Ezra the High Priest?

1 Esd. 9.39, 40 and 49 present Ezra as the high priest, whereas the equivalent verses in 2 Esdras and the MT refer to him as a regular priest or a scribe.¹⁴

<i>1 Esd. 9.39, 40, 49</i>	<i>2 Esd. 18.1, 2, 9</i>	<i>Neh. 8.1, 2, 9 (MT)</i>
Ἐσδρα τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ	τῷ Ἐσδρα τῷ γραμματεῖ	הַכֹּהֵן
Ἐσδρας ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς	Εσδρας ὁ ἱερεὺς	הַכֹּהֵן
Ἐσδρα τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ	Εσδρας ὁ ἱερεὺς καὶ γραμματεὺς	הַכֹּהֵן הַסֵּפֶר

It is generally accepted that 1 Esdras preserves a secondary reading. An editor in the tradition of 1 Esdras made Ezra a high priest. This is a good example of how a very small change can have significant impact on the reading and interpretation of an entire passage or even composition. The reader of 1 Esdras is bound to interpret Ezra's actions through his assumption that Ezra is acting as the high priest. For example, the reader of 1 Esdras is

13. See Gustav Hölscher, *Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia* (HAT, 2; Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1923), p. 544; Sigmund Mowinkel, *Studien zu dem Buche Ezra-Nehemia. I. Die nachchronistische Redaktion des Buches, Die Listen* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1964), pp. 62-58; Reinhard G. Kratz, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Uni Taschenbücher, 2157; Göttingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), pp. 88-90. See also Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, pp. 180-84.

14. Note that 1 Esdras presents Ezra as the high priest only in the passage that describes the reading of the law.

more disposed to see the events as taking place in a liturgical and ceremonial setting than a reader whose Ezra is primarily a scribe. In addition to illustrating that small alterations were made in the tradition of Ezra–Nehemiah, the example emphasizes the importance of recognizing even small changes made to the text by later editors.

Ezra 8.15–1 Esd. 8.42

According to the MT and 2 Esdras version of Ezra 8.15, Levites were missing from Ezra’s company of returnees, but 1 Esd. 8.42 secondarily adds that priests were also missing.

1 Esd. 8.42	<u>καὶ ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν τῶν ἱερέων</u>	καὶ ἐκ τῶν Λευιτῶν οὐκ εὗρὼν ἐκεῖ
2 Esd. 8.15		καὶ ἀπὸ υἱῶν Λευὶ οὐχ εὗρον ἐκεῖ
Neh. 8.15 (MT)		ומבני לוי לא־מצאתי שם

Such a small difference may seem insignificant, but is probably a conscious addition in the tradition of 1 Esdras. It increases the importance of Ezra’s journey and magnifies his function in setting up the religious community after the exile, which corresponds to Ezra being the high priest in 1 Esdras. The addition in 1 Esdras also raises questions about the existing temple cult in Jerusalem. Did the author want to imply that the temple in Jerusalem did not have an adequate priesthood because Ezra had to bring new priests from Babylon? Can one read implicit criticism of the temple priesthood in this passage? This is not the place to answer these questions, but they show how great implications even the smallest additions can have.

Ezra 7.6b–1 Esd. 8.4

Sentences were also added. 1 Esd. 8.4 contains a sentence that is missing in the parallel verse of 2 Esdras and the MT (Ezra 7.6b). According to the common text, Artaxerxes, the Achamenid king, granted Ezra all that he requested, but 1 Esdras secondarily adds that Artaxerxes also honored and praised Ezra (καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ βασιλεὺς δόξαν). The addition is small, but reverses the setting between Ezra and the king, and gives a very different impression of Ezra’s position from the MT/2 Esdras version. In the MT/2 Esdras, Ezra begs the king to support the mission, whereas 1 Esdras implies that the king is in awe of Ezra.

Ezra 4.1–24–1 Esd. 2.16–30—Passage Relocated

The unity of the composition is also challenged by the possibility that some editors rearranged the location of passages in the older text. In 1 Esdras, the passage that describes the hostility to the building of the temple is found already before the list of returnees (in 1 Esd. 2.16–30), whereas in the MT and

2 Esdras it comes only after the altar has been built (Ezra 4.7-24). For the purposes of this paper, it is not necessary to discuss which location is original,¹⁵ but it is important to note that the extant main witnesses of Ezra–Nehemiah show differences in the order of the passages. This implies that editors in the textual tradition of Ezra–Nehemiah could have rearranged the older text. It means that we have to be open to the possibility that the location of passages may not be original in other parts of the composition as well.

Literary Critical Evidence

Textual witnesses give only a glimpse of the development of the text because the three main witnesses represent a relatively late stage.¹⁶ To understand the entire development of the text, it is necessary to resort to literary critical methods, without which our understanding of the text would remain limited. I will give some examples from different parts of Ezra–Nehemiah in order to demonstrate that the text was heavily edited and that its history is complex. I will also try to demonstrate how small additions can change the meaning of the text and how a failure to recognize them can distort its interpretation. In addition to being examples of editorial activity, the first three cases illustrate that additions were used to tie the three originally independent sources together in the final composition (see above).

Neh. 8.9

It is generally agreed that Neh. 8.9 is problematic, but the nature of the problem is debated. In my view, this verse is the clearest editorial attempt to link the Ezra material with the Nehemiah Memoir. This is the only verse in the Ezra material or in the Nehemiah Memoir where these two characters are mentioned together.¹⁷ That Nehemiah is secondary in this verse is evident: The verse lists several subjects (Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites), but the verb is in the singular (וַיֹּאמֶר) as is the verb of the following verse. Moreover, the verb in v. 10 does not mention the subject, which implies that the subject

15. It is usually assumed that 1 Esdras represents a secondary development. The reason for the relocation of the passage is apparent. It is poorly connected to its context and its function remains unclear.

16. Note that towards the end of the Second Temple Period, the text became too holy to be altered, except for some minor corrections and clarifications. The main development of the text occurred in the Achaemenid and Hellenistic Periods, but the differences between the MT and the Greek versions are the only witness to developments that took place in the Hellenistic Period.

17. Ezra and Nehemiah are also mentioned in Neh. 12.26, but it is generally acknowledged that this chapter primarily contains late material that was written after the three sections were combined to one composition.

was clear in the original text. It is not clear at all in the final text we possess. Therefore, it is apparent that the original text contained only one subject. Since Nehemiah does not have any role in the rest of the chapter and the main actor of the rest of the chapter is Ezra, the subject of the original text of Neh. 8.9 has to have been Ezra. The reference to Nehemiah derives from an editor who wanted to present Ezra and Nehemiah in the same passage leading the community together. This created a link between the otherwise independent and unrelated Nehemiah Memoir and the Ezra material.¹⁸ Failure to acknowledge that Nehemiah was added to this verse would have considerable implications for one's view of the relationship between the Ezra material and the Nehemiah Memoir on the one hand, and between Nehemiah 8 and Neh. 1.1–7.4 on the other.

Ezra 8.15b-20

Some expansions in Ezra 7–10 attempt to continue the themes of Ezra 1–6, thus creating some ostensible continuity between the sections. Ezra 8.15b-20 deals with the cultic personnel, especially with the temple servants who, according to v. 17, were needed in the temple. This deviates from the themes of Ezra 7–10.

Several technical details reveal that Ezra 8.15b-20 must be a later addition. According to v. 15a, the Israelites remained by the river Ahava for three days, but it is hardly possible that the events described in vv. 15b-20 could have been carried out in three days. Ezra beseeches the community leaders to search for cultic personnel in other towns. The cultic personnel were then given further time to prepare themselves for the unexpected journey. The author of vv. 15b-20 would not have limited the time to three days. It seems probable that the three days of v. 15a originally referred to the length of the fast proclaimed in v. 21. Verses 15b-20 broke this connection and made the reference to the three days irrelevant. A small but obvious addition in v. 21 confirms that we are dealing with an expansion in vv. 15b-20. Verse 21 refers to the river Ahava twice: שם and על-הנהר אהוא. These two references are unnecessarily redundant. שם is the original reference, because its addition would make little sense, whereas the addition of על-הנהר אהוא is an understandable clarification in the edited text that contained vv. 15b-20. That שם referred to the river Ahava was originally clear but became ambiguous after an editor added vv. 15b-20, which refers to another geographical location, Casiphia. To avoid the ambiguity, an editor had to add על-הנהר אהוא to

18. For more details and argumentation on this verse, see Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, pp. 149–50. Many scholars have assumed that the reference to Nehemiah in Neh. 8.9 is a later addition, most recently Mark Boda, 'Ezra', in E.T. Arnold, H.G.M. Williamson, and D. G. Reid (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (Dowers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), p. 278.

v. 21. However, the addition caused a grammatical confusion because the original שם was not removed.¹⁹

v.	<i>The Expanded Text</i>	<i>The Original Text</i>
15a	ואקבצם אל־הנהר הבא אל־אחוא ונחנה שם ימים שלשה	ואקבצם אל־הנהר הבא אל־אחוא ונחנה שם ימים שלשה
15b-20	ואנינה בעם ובכהנים... כלם נקבו בשמות	
21	ואקרא שם צום על־הנהר אחוא להתענות לפני אלהינו	ואקרא שם צום להתענות לפני אלהינו

Ezra 8.24-30

Ezra 8.24-30 is another example of an expansion in the Ezra material that is connected to Ezra 1–6. This passage describes how Ezra gave the silver, gold and cultic vessels to priests so that they would bring them to Jerusalem. The theme is not related to the rest of the Ezra narrative, which deals with a scribe who came from Babylon to introduce the Torah in Judah/Yehud, but it is well in line with Ezra 1–6. The bringing of cult vessels by Ezra would support the message of Ezra 1–6 that the establishment of the cult in the new temple was successful. That Ezra 8.24-30 is a late addition is seen in the way vv. 21-23 were written as an introduction to the departure from the river Ahava. After the community had prayed and fasted for a safe trip to Jerusalem in v. 21, verse 23b confirmed that God was favorable to their request. The departure is then described in v. 31. The account about the distribution of the cultic vessels and money to the priests in vv. 24-30 is a long digression and buries the original connection between vv. 21-23 and 31.

Ezra 3.4-5

Ezra 3.1-6 describes the building of the altar before the temple was built. It is probable that vv. 4-5 do not belong to the original text for the following reasons.²⁰ The connection between vv. 3 and 6 is disturbed by vv. 4-5. After

19. Williamson (*Ezra, Nehemiah*, p. 115) does not discuss the problems that the double reference to Ahava, שם and על־הנהר אחוא, cause to the verse, but states that the reasons for regarding the passage as late ‘are very weak...and certainly cannot stand apart from similar conclusions for comparable passages...’ In my view, reference to other passages is a problematic way to solve the difficulties of this verse.

20. Similarly Hölscher, *Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia*, p. 511; Antonius H.J. Gunneweg, *Esra* (KAT, 19/1; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1985), p. 73, and Georg Steins, *Die Chronik als kanonisches Abschlußphänomen: Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie von 1/2 Chronik* (BBB, 93; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum Verlag, 1995), pp. 332-35. However, many scholars imply that these verses were written by one author, e.g., David J.A. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (NCB, London; Morgan & Scott; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 63-65, and Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra–Nehemiah: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1988), p. 98. Other suggestions on the development of these verses

the altar was finished in v. 3a, the community began sacrificing in v. 3b. Verse 6 is a logical continuation to this, for it provides the date when the sacrifices on the altar were begun. By referring to the yearly feasts and their sacrifices, vv. 4-5 digress from this theme. Thematically v. 4-5 are not unrelated, but a reference to the actual celebration of the Sukkoth in v. 4a (וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת כַּכְּתוּב) betrays the secondary origin of these verses. Verse 6 is still in the first of the seventh month, whereas the Sukkoth is celebrated later during this month.²¹ It should also not go unnoticed that v. 6 only makes reference to the *עֹלֶה* sacrifices, whereas v. 5 also mentions the *נִדְבָה* sacrifices.

It is probable that an editor interested in the sacrificial cult wanted to emphasize that the feasts with their proper sacrifices were also now continued. However, he failed to notice that v. 6 referred to the date of the initial sacrifice and thus broke its original connection to v. 3. If we fail to acknowledge the secondary nature of vv. 4-5, we also fail to notice increasing interest in the cultic aspect of feasts. This addition is only one of the many additions that show how cultic issues became more and more prominent in the later phases of Ezra–Nehemiah's development in the Achaemenid Period. This information could not be obtained without recognizing the additions that were made to the composition.

Ezra 6.16-22

Ezra 6.16-22 concludes the first independent section of Ezra–Nehemiah. It is not possible to examine the entire literary history of this passage because it was heavily edited and developed in several stages.²² I will present only its general development.

Ezra 6.16-17 is a later addition to the previous text. This can be seen in the way that the older text refers to Judah, people of Judah, the inhabitants of Judah and the Judahites,²³ whereas v. 16 calls the members of the community the sons of Israel (בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל). The change in perspective is clear.²⁴ It should also be noted that in other parts of the book of Ezra, בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל are also found

can be found as well.

21. One could assume that the author referred to an older Sukkoth law where the time of the feast had not yet been fixed to the seventh month, but it is more probable that Ezra 3.4 is dependent on a Sukkoth law where the feast had already been fixed to the seventh month in general or to the 15th to 121st of the seventh month. See Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, pp. 158-65.

22. For a detailed literary critical analysis of this passage, see Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, pp. 69-73.

23. יְהוּדִיָּא in Ezra 4.12, 23; 5.1, 5; 6.7, 8, 14, עַם־יְהוּדָה in Ezra 4.4 and יְשִׁבֵי יְהוּדָה in Ezra 4.6.

24. Whereas Judah/Yehud has a more political perspective, the word Israel in the Second Temple Period primarily refers to the religious community.

in later additions.²⁵ One is also surprised about the sudden emphasis on the Gola, which is lacking in the previous passage.²⁶

Verse 18 is a further addition to vv. 16-17. Dealing with the priestly divisions ordered in the Torah, the verse is thematically unconnected to the previous text which deals with the ordination ceremony of the temple. The editor probably wanted to emphasize that the priestly divisions were reorganized immediately after the building of the temple, thus showing the reader that the Torah was properly followed already from the beginning of the founding of the second temple.

Ezra 6.19-20 is probably another addition to vv. 16-17, because the language is, without any apparent reason, changed from Aramaic to Hebrew. One should also note that vv. 19-20 refer to the Gola as the only actor of the Passover feast, while in vv. 16-17 the Israelites and the Gola act. Verse 21 is probably yet another expansion to vv. 19-20. This verse implies that non-exiles also have the opportunity to join the community of the exiles. One should further note that the vocabulary in reference to the Gola is different in this verse than in vv. 19-20.

This passage is a good example of how even short passages can contain several conflicting views and how they can provide significant evidence about historical developments during the time that the book took shape. On the basis of this passage, it is possible to see how the editors' views on the Gola developed during the Achaemenid Period.

As already noted, the preceding narrative does not put any particular emphasis on the Gola. This emphasis is introduced by the author of Ezra 6.16-17, who refers to the community as בני־ישראל...בני־גולה (the sons of Israel and the remnants of the Gola). The Gola already plays a significant role in the community of the author, but remains only one part of it. For a later editor who is behind vv. 19-20, 22 the Gola equals Israel. Only the Gola participates in the Passover feast: ויעשו בני־גולה את־הפסח... It is hardly a mistake that only the Gola is mentioned as the subject in the first feast after the temple was finished. The author of this verse does not seem to acknowledge any other Israel, or he intentionally ignored any other people who claimed to be part of it. A third editor responsible for v. 21 moderated the position of the previous editor by allowing other people to join the community of the Gola if they separate themselves from the impurity of the people of the land (הנבדל מטמאת גוי־אֶרֶץ). Although this editor still regards the Gola to be Israel, he is aware of the problem caused by the older text in vv. 19-20 where only the members of the Gola act. Our interest in this context is not the historical development itself, which I have dealt with in

25. Ezra 3.1; 6.21; 7.7; 8.18.

26. Of course, the previous narrative also describes the activities of the returnees from the Gola, but the emphasis and explicit reference to the Gola is a new development.

another context, but the fact that the text contains different kinds of positions towards the Gola and thus reflects a historical development. Editors seem to have constantly updated the older text to correspond to their own context or to their own views. In the hands of successive editors, the text developed like a ‘snowball’ gathering views on the Gola, and other subjects, from different contexts and periods. This example witnesses to four different literary stages from four different contexts. The final text is contradictory and the uncritical reader is puzzled about the lack of unity in the text’s position towards the community.

Ezra 7.7

Ezra 7.1–10 was heavily and successively edited, but we have space for only one example from these verses. Verse 7, which lists the people who traveled with Ezra, contradicts several details in the narrative. The subjects in the immediate context are problematic. The singular (וַיֵּבֶא) is used in v. 8 and can only refer to Ezra. The author of v. 8 was evidently not aware of the company mentioned in v. 7. In addition, Ezra is not reintroduced as a subject in v. 8, although the subject has been changed twice in vv. 6b–7: the subject of v. 6b is the Achaemenid king (וַיֵּתֵן לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ) and Ezra’s travel companions are the subjects of v. 7 (וַעֲלֹ מִבְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל).²⁷ The repetition of the king’s name and the date in v. 7 is a further argument that we are dealing with an addition. The main author of the text would not need to repeat his name, but later authors tend to repeat elements of the older text unnecessarily.²⁸ Moreover, Ezra 8.15b–20 refers to the lack of Levites in the company of the returnees. With its reference to Levites being with Ezra, Ezra 7.7 undermines this passage. It is therefore probable that the author of Ezra 8.15b–20 was not familiar with Ezra 7.7. Since Ezra 8.15b–20 is a late addition, as seen above, Ezra 7.7 is probably an even later addition, which builds on a late form of the following chapter. This is not the place to discuss the wider implications of these additions, but it should become evident that it is of major significance to any interpretation of the text that passages which refer to the Levites are later additions. The failure to notice that references to Levites²⁹ are later additions would severely hamper the researcher’s understanding of the text and its development. He would not notice the increasing Levitization of the composition.

27. Attempts to harmonize the verbs, for example by Wilhelm Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia samt 3. Esra* (HAT, 20; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1949), p. 67, without proper textual evidence are not convincing.

28. They try to attach to the older text by repeating its elements.

29. It would seem that all references to the Levites are met in later additions, at least in the Ezra material of Ezra–Nehemiah. See Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, pp. 266–74, for details.

Ezra 9.4

Ezra 9 consists of Ezra's prayer in vv. 6-15 and an introduction to the prayer in vv. 1-5. The chapter contains several additions, but one example should suffice in this context. Verse 4 repeats elements from the surrounding text in a way characteristic of later editors' techniques: In order to attach to the older text, it repeats the last words of v. 3 and the beginning of v. 5.

	ואשבה משומם ...	3
אני ישב משומם עד למנחת הערב		4
ובמנחת הערב קמתי		5

In the final text the repetitions seem peculiar and unmotivated, but from the perspective of an editor who wanted to add an issue and return to the old text after the addition, the repetitions are understandable. One should further notice that the fearers (חרדים), mentioned in v. 4a, are not found in the rest of the chapter. For example, v. 5 implies that Ezra prayed alone. Consequently, v. 4 should be regarded as an addition from an editor who wanted to emphasize the role of the Gola. Note that this verse specifically refers to the sins of the Gola, which is not mentioned in the rest of the chapter. The fearers may be a group of faithful believers, who had an important function in the author's community and/or historical context. Since many studies on Ezra–Nehemiah build on the occasional references to the Gola, it would be of crucial importance to recognize whether they derive from later editors or are part of the original text. It seems that references to the Gola in other parts of the Ezra material, and also in other parts of Ezra–Nehemiah (e.g., Ezra 6.16-21; see above), derive from later editors as well, which is not an insignificant result for the reconstruction of the history of the Achaemenid Period in Judah.³⁰

Neh. 13.16

Nehemiah 13 is a heavily edited chapter. I will take one example that will show how additions can provide invaluable historical information that would not be available without recognizing the addition. According to v. 16, Tyrian merchants broke the Sabbath by selling fish and other merchandise to the Jews on a Sabbath. Several details in the text imply that we are dealing with an expansion.

(1) The main problem, violation of the Sabbath by Jews who produce and sell their products in Jerusalem on a Sabbath, is described in detail in v. 15a, followed by Nehemiah's condemnation of the practice in v. 15b. The sin is then described again in v. 16, but now the selling of merchandise by foreigners is described. If the same author were behind vv. 15 and 16, he

30. See Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, pp. 263-65.

would probably describe all violations of the Sabbath first and then condemn them. The expected order of the verses would therefore be v. 15a, v. 16 and v. 15b. That additional details or circumstances are described in an illogical location, in this case too late, is often an indication that the text was edited.

(2) Outside v. 16 the passage does not refer to Tyrians or any other foreigners. For example, Nehemiah does not criticize or attack the foreigners at all.³¹ The problem is merely described; Nehemiah does not comment on it any further. In v. 20 Nehemiah refers to merchants in general, but foreign merchants are not mentioned. It is probable that v. 20 refers to the Jews who came to sell in Jerusalem in v. 15.

(3) Verses 19–21 do not offer a solution to the problem described in v. 16. According to v. 16, the Tyrian merchants lived in Jerusalem (הַצִּירִים יֹשְׁבוּ בָהּ), but vv. 19–21 imply that the solution to the problem is to close the gates for the Sabbath and thus hinder the merchants from coming to the city. This would solve the problem described in v. 15, since this verse implies that the merchants came to Jerusalem only to sell there, but would not solve the threat to the Sabbath caused by the Tyrian merchants who lived in Jerusalem. In other words, the author of vv. 19–21 does not seem to have been aware of the problem described in v. 16.

(4) Verses 16 and 20 use different words for merchandise: מִכָּר in v. 16 and מִמְכָּר in v. 20. It is improbable that the same author would use different words to refer to merchandise in the same passage.

That v. 16 is a late addition may not seem an important result at first, but it provides significant information about the development of problems related to the keeping of the Sabbath laws.³² The oldest text of the passage implies that the problem was internal and that the violators, the ones who sold on a

31. Note that, elsewhere in the book, Nehemiah is presented as a person who was more than willing to attack anything related to foreigners, foreign influence or foreignness (e.g., Neh. 3.33–4.17; 13.1–3, 23–30).

32. It further influences our understanding of the literary development of the book. First of all, the conclusion that v. 16 is not part of the original text influences the discussion about the relationship between Neh. 10.31–40 and Neh. 13. It is generally accepted that these two passages are literarily dependent, but the direction of dependence has been debated. Our particular interest is in Neh. 10.32, which prohibits Israelites from buying from foreigners who sell on Sabbaths. Neh. 10.32 and Neh. 13.16 are therefore closely related. The conclusion that Neh. 13.16 is not original in its context seems to betray the chronological relationship between Neh. 10.31–40 and Neh. 13.15–22. Since Neh. 10.32 is part of the main text of Neh. 10.31–40, it seems probable that the author used an edited version of Neh. 13, which already included v. 16. If Neh. 10.31–40 had functioned as the oldest text, two editors of Neh. 13.15–22 would have subsequently used Neh. 10.31–40. In other words, it is easier to assume that the one author behind Neh. 10.31–40 used a late version of Neh. 13.15–22 that already contained v. 16 than to assume that two different authors of Neh. 13.15–22, that of the basic text and the editor behind v. 16, subsequently used Neh. 10.31–40 as a source (Occam's razor).

Sabbath, were members of the Jewish community. At a later stage, the threat from outside may have grown more acute than the threat from inside. With growing international contacts and non-Jewish immigration to Jerusalem, merchants who were not members of the Jewish community, and were thus not bound by Jewish religious customs, caused a situation where merchandise was available to Jews also on Sabbaths. Because of the new development, an editor wanted to update Neh. 13.15-22 to correspond better to the new circumstances.³³ Without recognizing that v. 16 is a later addition one would miss this shift in perspective and its implications for our understanding of the development of the Sabbath law in the Second Temple Period.

Summary

In this paper I have challenged the unity of the composition. The final text of Ezra–Nehemiah is a result of a complex process where three independent sources were combined into one composition and further edited by successive editors. There is empirical evidence in the form of three partially competing witnesses (the MT and two Greek versions) that the textual tradition of Ezra–Nehemiah was open to minor and major expansions. Some passages could even have been relocated. My examples represent only a fraction of the differences between the three witnesses and represent additions and changes made relatively late in the transmission of the text.

Literary critical observations on the text show that editorial activity was not restricted to differences seen between the witnesses. Additions and changes were made also in the earlier phases of the text's transmission. It seems that the composition was edited by successive editors for a considerable period.

The given examples show that even the smallest additions can have considerable impact on the meaning and message of the text. Although many of the additions may be difficult to identify, failure to do so may lead an interpretation of the text in a very misguided direction. Therefore, the critical reader, the scholar, has to take the literary history of Ezra–Nehemiah into consideration if he is to use the text for historical and/or critical purposes. That may mean that he has to examine the nature of the composition, of each passage, verse, sentence or even word before he uses it as a source. That may sound like a massive task, but, because of the nature of our text, we have no alternative. The unity of the composition, on any level, cannot be taken for granted.

33. Neh. 10.32 may be a further development by an author who wanted to make a stipulation to forbid Israelites from buying from foreigners on Sabbaths.