

objects to cities on the periphery of an empire, so the ideological requirements for temple-rebuilding after conquest cannot be met.

*A Schema of Temple Restoration
in the Ancient Near East*

Based on a comprehensive study of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic inscriptions, Hurowitz delineates the typology of temple-building accounts ubiquitous in the ancient Near East (Hurowitz 1992: 131–310). His work agrees with Ellis's (1968) previous effort on foundation deposits and ceremonies. As Younger's (1990) study of the role of ideology in history-writing makes clear, stages in ancient Near Eastern building stories are more than a series of episodes in an inscription; they present the *ideology* of temple building. They encode the grammar that enables a particular temple-building project to be understood. Hurowitz's schema (augmented by the work of Ellis) is as follows:

- A. A brief history of the temple—why was it in ruins?³
- B. The decision to build
 1. The king receives a divine command
 2. Additional aspects may be included
 - a. The god is reconciled to his city or temple
 - b. A specified, preordained period of time is concluded
 - c. The king clarifies the divine will—through extispicy, divination, prophetic visions, and so on. Rarely, the initiative comes from the king himself, in which case this last step is doubly important.
- C. The acquisition and preparation of building materials
 1. Building materials are brought from the ends of the earth
 2. Foreign peoples contribute (involuntarily during the Assyrian period; voluntarily in the Persian period)
 3. Wood is brought from Lebanon and floated down the river to the building site.
- D. Laying the foundations and preparation of the site
 1. The ruler participates in the foundation rites, and they are often done according to the prescription of a diviner or prophet.
 2. If a new temple is built on the site of an old one, lamentations are sung by lamentation priests to placate the gods and bridge the gap between the old temple and the new. A stone taken from the old temple is placed in the new one during construction. Lamentations are made for the old temple until the new temple is completed.
- E. A ceremony for later building stages (e.g., the dedication of the altar or the anointing of doors and sockets in preparation for the god's entrance)

3. The following schema is based on Hurowitz (1992) with expansions from Ellis (1968).

- F. The description of the completed temple and its furnishings
 1. A description of the temple
 2. A statement that the temple has been built
- G. The dedication ceremony of the finished building
 1. The god is installed in the temple and takes up residence
 2. Celebration
 3. Presentation of gifts and appointment of temple personnel
- H. Prayer or curses

The Ideology of the Temple's Restoration in Jerusalem

The description of the Jerusalem Temple's restoration appears in Ezra 1–6. These chapters begin with a notice of the decision to build under Cyrus (Ezra 1:1, 2) and end with a statement that the Temple was finished, a description of its dedication, and a subsequent celebration under Darius I (Ezra 6:13b–22). It is clear, however, that these chapters do not comprise a building inscription. It is not possible to go through the intervening verses and place them in the schema outlined above in the way that was possible of the conquest account in 2 Kings 24–25. These initial chapters in Ezra are a hodgepodge: they are in both Hebrew and Aramaic, they include letters to and from a series of different Persian kings, as well as a narrative segment about squabbles between various groups of residents. Williamson has suggested that the historian who compiled Ezra 1–6 wrote his narrative long after the events described based on a set of independent sources that he had at his disposal (Williamson 1983: 1–30; 1985: xxiii–xxiv). Indeed, these chapters could not have been completed before 465 and the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes I, since they include letters to and from that king (4:7–22). Williamson considers the historian's sources to be: (1) the decree of Cyrus (1:2–4); (2) the inventory of temple vessels (1:9–11); (3) the list of people returning (chap. 2); (4) two letters that the historian summarizes in 4:6 and 7; (5) a letter in Aramaic from Rehum and others to Artaxerxes (4:8–16); (6) Artaxerxes' reply (4:17–22); (7) a letter from Tattenai to Darius (5:6–17); and (8) Darius's reply (6:3–12), which includes the transcript of a separate decree by Cyrus (6:3–5; Williamson 1983: 1–30; 1985: xxiii–xxiv). To Williamson, the remaining material was composed freely by the historian based on the prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah and on events from his own day. It is proposed here that, in addition to sources 2–8, and instead of a decree by Cyrus, the historian had the Second Temple's building account available to him as a separate source.

If the material available to the historian included a building inscription, it should be possible to weed out the extraneous narrative portions, lists, and letters that he added. The result should be a building story that corresponds to the schema outlined above. Hurowitz suggests that Ezra 1–6 was written as a composite of two separate building accounts, one describing its beginning under Cyrus and the other its completion under Darius (Hurowitz 1992: 118). This is possible, since the first part (set in the time of Cyrus) is in Hebrew, and the second part (set in the time of Darius) is in Aramaic. On the other hand, a single building account could have been supplemented later. The Inscription of Udjahorresnet may be an example: it describes temple restoration activities under Cambyses and then later under Darius (Lichtheim 1980: 36–41). It is also possible that an original unitary building inscription—written after the final dedication in the sixth year of Darius—was bilingual. It would have been composed in Hebrew for the local population and in Aramaic for the chancellery. Such bilingual inscriptions were usual in the Achaemenid Empire (Fried 2002). If such a building inscription lies within the initial chapters of Ezra, it would reveal Jewish history and ideology in the last third of the sixth century.

A. Brief History of the Temple

This is not present in Ezra 1–6 except in Tattenai's letter to Darius, a separate source.

B. The Decision to Build

1. *The king receives a divine command, usually in his first year*

In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, in order to complete the word of YHWH by the mouth of Jeremiah, YHWH stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, and he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also by writing, saying: Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, "All the kingdoms of the earth YHWH, God of Heaven, has given me, and he charged me to build a Temple for him in Jerusalem which is in Judah." (Ezra 1:1, 2)

These statements contain the requisite ingredients for the beginning of a temple-building inscription. They name the king, they state his year in office (the appropriate first year), they state the god whose temple it is, and most importantly they state that the impetus for the temple-building came by a divine command from the god to the king.

Consistent with a building inscription for a Temple of YHWH in Jerusalem, it is written by and for Jews. The language is Hebrew, the

reference to Jeremiah is relevant only to Jews, and the phrase "to stir up the spirit" is a Hebrew idiom. These are strange if interpreted as a genuine edict of Cyrus (or even if interpreted as Cyrus's response to an official Jewish request). However, they are entirely appropriate in a building inscription for a Jerusalem Temple. There is no need for building inscriptions of local temples to use the language or idioms of the Achaemenid bureaucracy.⁴ The Inscription of Udjahorresnet describes the restoration of the temple of Neith in Sais, Egypt, which was begun under Cambyses and completed under Darius. It is written completely in hieroglyphs, uses expressions and idioms peculiar to Egyptian culture and, while naming the Persian emperors, gives due credit to Neith, the mother of God (Lichtheim 1980). Kuhrt and others (Kuhrt 1990: 119–55; Harmatta 1974: 29–44) have shown that the famous Cyrus Cylinder is a foundation document for the restoration of the Esagil, the temple of Marduk in Babylon. That too employs the language and idioms of the Babylonian priesthood, not the Achaemenids.

Halpern (1990: 88) objects that there is no narrative statement that the exiles actually decided to build the Temple. This is true and conforms completely to the building-story genre. In the ideology of temple-building, it is not the exiles who decide to build. The decision to build comes from the god to the king who has the power to build it.

Some commentators argue the text is "a free creation of the editor" and point to the numerous discrepancies between it and Cyrus's command to Sheshbazzar described in Tattenai's letter to Darius (Ezra 6:3–5; Bedford 2001: 128, 180; Blenkinsopp 1988: 74). If it is a free composition of the historian, it is odd that the king named is no native king—neither Sheshbazzar nor Zerubbabel—but the Persian emperor. Naming Cyrus as the king to whom YHWH gives his command is a recognition that he, not the Davidic heir, is YHWH's choice as interlocutor. This is unlikely to have come from the historian himself.

It has been argued that Cyrus's title "King of Persia" is anachronistic (Bedford 2001: 120–22; Halpern 1990: 91). The title is never used in any of Cyrus's inscriptions and is not used for Achaemenid kings before Darius I (Kent 1950; Lecoq 1997). However, this is precisely when this building inscription must have been written—the 6th year of Darius I, at the time of the building's dedication (Ezra 6:15). Bedford argues that the term "God of heaven" is anachronistic (Bedford 2001: 122–28). This term is sometimes applied to local gods by non-Persians in an attempt

4. This has been the major problem in accepting the authenticity of the so-called Cyrus Edict in Ezra 1:2–4. An excellent review of the literature can be found in Bedford (2001: 114–81).

to equate their god with Ahura Mazda,⁵ but Ahura Mazda only became the god of the Achaemenids under Darius I.⁶ The phrase is anachronistic if the text is offered as a genuine edict of Cyrus but not if it is a building inscription from the 6th year of Darius. It has also been thought odd that Cyrus, the Persian emperor, would use the term "God of Israel" when the Achaemenid bureaucracy customarily referred to the area as Yehud. Yehud and Shomron are the terms used on official seals, never Israel (Avigad 1976). The term *Israel* seems to have been used only by the Judean exiles in Babylon (Bedford 2001: 116; Williamson 1994: 41–42). Both Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel refer to the exiles as the People Israel, or the House of Israel. Deutero-Isaiah may have created YHWH's title as the Holy One of Israel (Williamson 1994: 41–42). Bedford notes that the term is not used in the Elephantine papyri and concludes that it originated among the exiles in Babylon. If so, it points to the Babylonian origin of the author of the underlying building account. None of these supposed anachronisms is a problem if these verses are understood to stem from a building inscription written in the 6th year of Darius I by a Jewish returnee from Babylon.

According to Ezra 1:1, 2, a herald announced the decision to rebuild the Temple throughout the kingdom and there was also a written document, this last remark stated almost as an afterthought (1:1). A written document disseminated throughout the kingdom is not likely. Had there been one, the Jews would have been able to present it to Tattenai when he requested it (5:3; Halpern 1990: 91). It was lack of a written edict that necessitated Tattenai's letter to Darius. Nor is it likely that a herald was sent throughout the Empire without a written edict. As one of Arsames' letters makes clear (TAD A6.1), and as was true throughout history, heralds were high court officials who read the edicts they proclaimed; they did not recite official proclamations from memory (Postgate 1992: 285–86).⁷ More likely, the situation was as described in Tattenai's letter to Darius: Cyrus gave an order to Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor, to take YHWH's vessels from

5. Herodotus equated Zeus (I 131) with Ahura Mazda and implied that the Babylonians equated Marduk with him (I 183). The Elephantine Jews equated Yhw with him in TAD A 4.7. See T. M. Bolin 1996: 127–42.

6. Cyrus's religion is unknown, but the first Achaemenid royal inscriptions to mention Ahura Mazda are those of Darius I.

7. A text (KAJ 310:20 [MA]) cited in CAD Š/2 167 affirms that proclamations are physical tablets read out by the herald:

1 *quppu ša sasu nagiri ša bitati ša GN*

1 chest containing the proclamations of heralds concerning the (purchase of) houses in the city of Assur.

the Esagil to Jerusalem, to rebuild the Temple there, and to install the vessels in it. Presumably Sheshbazzar did not go alone but brought with him a contingent of Jews. The phrase מִכָּל־מְדִינָה in Tattenai's letter is used throughout Arsames' letters (TAD A6.1, A6.3, A6.7, etc.) to indicate a simple command to a subordinate. There is no mention in either Tattenai's letter to Darius or in Darius's response of an order to anyone but Sheshbazzar. Had there been a general edict, the Jews certainly would have retained a copy of it.

The language of these two verses fits the language of a building inscription; it does not fit the language or idioms of an official Persian edict.

C. The Acquisition and Preparation of Building Materials

1. *Contributions come from all over the world, from foreign peoples and kings*

Who among you from all his people, let his God be with him. Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of YHWH the god of Israel, that is, the God that is in Jerusalem. And all who remain in the places where he had sojourned, the men of his place, they shall assist him with silver, gold, cattle, and animals, along with the freewill contributions to the house of the God in Jerusalem.

The heads of the clans of Judah and Benjamin, the priests, and the Levites, all whom the God stirred up his spirit to go up and build the house of YHWH that is in Jerusalem got up. And all around them strengthened their hand with vessels of silver, of gold, with cattle, and animals. (Ezra 1:3–11)

This idea is common to building inscriptions in the ancient Near East.

Commentators explain this "despoliation of the neighbors" as the historian's "direct concern to present the return as a second Exodus" (Blenkinsopp 1988: 75–76; Williamson 1985: 16). It may point instead to Persian embellishments of an original exodus story. As noted above, a common component of temple-building inscriptions is that men and kings come from all over the world to contribute their wealth to the new temple. If those in this passage described as "left behind" are considered to be non-Jews making free-will offerings to the Jews who return, then this is reminiscent of Persian-period building inscriptions (Hurowitz 1985: 21–30; 1992: 207; Root 1979: 17–23). At that time, a description of free-will donations from foreigners was common in building inscriptions. As Hurowitz (1992: 208–10) notes, although this is not

unique to the Persian period and goes back to Gudea, it is still quite different from Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian building accounts. In these accounts, materials are also brought from all over the world, but they are from vassals subject to the Assyrian and Babylonian kings; they are not portrayed as free-will offerings. It is by the mighty strength of the Assyrian or Babylonian gods that the material is brought, rather than because of a spontaneous desire to honor the temple and the god, as is portrayed in building inscriptions from the time of Darius.

The text continues with a reference to the Temple vessels:

King Cyrus brought out the vessels of the house of YHWH that Nebuchadnezzar had brought out from Jerusalem and deposited in the house of his god. Cyrus, king of Persia, had them brought out by Mithradates the *ganzabara*, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar, the *Nasi* of Judah. (1:7-11)

Halpern (1990: 89) objects that Sheshbazzar's return is referred to obliquely here but not directly reported. However, according to the literary genre of the building story suggested here, the goal is not to report a history of the return but to portray the wealth of nations pouring in from all over to contribute to the Temple's construction. Sheshbazzar is named here because he is part of this portrayal. He has no independent significance. Halpern (1990: 89) argues further that, since the original decree provided for the vessels' return (6:3-5), the notice of their return should have been included as part of the edict quoted in 1:2-4. Yet, the inclusion here, as part of the wealth flowing to the Temple, and its exclusion from the description of the decision to build are consistent with the format and ideology of a building inscription.

These [vessels] that were counted out were:

<i>Agartley</i>	gold	30
<i>Agartley</i>	silver	1000
<i>Maḥalaphim</i>		29
<i>Kiphorey</i>	gold	30
<i>Kiphorey</i>	silver	90
Other vessels		1000
All the vessels of gold and silver		5400

All these, Sheshbazzar brought up with the ones who went up of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem.

The form of the list is identical to accounts in the Elephantine papyri and in the Persepolis tablets (Hallock 1969; Porten and Yardeni 1986). The names of the items are obscure and may be Persian. The amounts

do not total correctly; the list has become corrupt in transmission. This inventory is not likely to have been part of the original building inscription and stems from a separate source. Most commentators (Blenkinsopp 1988: 78–79; Williamson 1985: 7–8) agree that it goes back to a genuine list of vessels returned to the Temple of YHWH in Jerusalem. In its present position in the building story, the list of Temple vessels simply represents another aspect of building materials coming from all over the world—including from foreign kings like Cyrus.

In his discussion of the Temple vessels, Ackroyd (1987) argues that the intent of the final redactor of 2 Kings 24 and 25 was to stress that these vessels were brought to an end. To Ackroyd, the list in Ezra 1 is fictitious; the account in Kings leaves “no room for restoration” (Ackroyd 1987: 53). As noted above in the discussion of the Kings passage, it is not necessary to translate the Hebrew of 2 Kings to imply that all the vessels were destroyed, and many commentators do not (Cogan and Tadmor 1988: 316).⁸ Moreover, it is well known that Nebuchadnezzar regularly deposited captured booty in the Esagil. According to Vanderhooft (1999), the following text is representative of Nebuchadnezzar’s inscriptions:

Gold, silver, exceedingly valuable gemstones, thick cedars, heavy tribute, expensive presents, the produce of all countries, goods from all inhabited regions, before Marduk the great lord, the god who created me, and Nabû his lofty heir who loves my kingship, I transported and brought into Esagil and Ezida.⁹

It is most likely that gold and silver vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem were among the goods contributed to Marduk’s store. Ackroyd (1987: 57) stresses that the vessels’ return is a continuity theme for the writer, whom he considers to be the Chronicler. But their return is more than a literary topos. As Williamson (1985: 16) notes, “the deposit [of temple vessels] in the temple of the victor’s god was intended to underline to the devotees [of the conquered god] the inability of their god to save.” It also indicated the power of the god in whose temple the items were stored over the god who was conquered.

The text of Ezra continues in chap. 2 with a list of the returnees. This is not likely to have been part of an original building inscription but was likely inserted by the historian. It is a natural place to insert the

8. See Gesenius (§123e) and note d, p. 27 above.

9. CT 37 pls. 6–7 (= Zyl III, 6) i 25–29; cf. PBS 15 79 (= ZYL III, 8) i 22–28. Cited in Vanderhooft 1999: 46.

list. A list of people returning from Babylon to Judah follows naturally on the heels of the list of vessels also returning from Babylon to Judah.

Following the list of returnees, the text jumps to "the seventh month when the people Israel are in their cities" (3:1). This phrase is repeated in Neh 7:72b[73b] where it introduces Nehemiah 8. This chapter fits uneasily in its context, so it is difficult to know the statement's origin. Here, in Ezra 3:1, the verse is followed by a reference to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Yeshua, the high priest, implying the seventh month of a year in the reign of Darius. The text continues to describe the erection and the dedication of the altar (3:2, 3) and adds that all the traditional holidays were celebrated—the Feast of Sukkot, as well as the daily and monthly offerings (3:3b–6a). Compared to traditional building accounts, the dedication of the altar here is out of order. Later, the text states that the foundations were not yet laid (3:6b), a resumptive clause. The historian rearranged the order traditional to building accounts (laying the foundations, building the temple, building the altar, dedicating the temple) to convey the zealotry of the returnees and to imply that all the offerings were performed according to the prescribed law from the first arrival in Jerusalem. The erection of the altar actually belongs to one of the last stages of Temple construction (Ellis 1968: 32–33). The altar will be discussed below in the context of its likely original position in the Second Temple's building account.

2. Wood is brought from Lebanon and floated down a river to the site

And they gave silver to the stonemasons and woodcutters, as well as food and drink and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar wood from Lebanon to the sea at Yaffo, according to the grant that Cyrus king of Persia gave us. (Ezra 3:7)

This statement is common to temple-building inscriptions, even to the point of floating wood from Lebanon down to its destination. Commentators uniformly note the similarities between this and the building account of the First Temple in 1 Kings 8. They assert that, because there is no reference to timber in either Tattenai's letter to Darius or the return letter from him, its mention here is simply to recall the First Temple. More likely, the references in both building accounts are simply aspects common to building inscriptions in the ancient Near East. They are part of the genre. This does not make it fictitious. The roof of the temple of Yhw in Elephantine was of cedar beams (TAD A4.7); they must have been shipped from Lebanon by sea in the manner described here. Further, the items paid the Sidonians and Tyrians are typical of allocations to workers reported in the Persepolis tablets (Hallock 1969).

Following the statement of gathering wood from Lebanon, another insertion appears—another comment about Zerubbabel and Yeshua, the priest:

In the second year of their coming to the house of God in Jerusalem in the second month, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and Yeshua, son of Yoza-dak, and the rest of their brothers, the priests and the Levites and all who came from the captivity to Jerusalem, began and they appointed Levites from 20 years old and up to supervise the work of the house of YHWH. And Yeshua appointed his sons and brothers Qadmiel, and his sons the sons of Judah, to supervise the carrying out of the work on the house of God. (Ezra 3:8–9)

It is likely that this is an insertion from a later point in the building story—or even a free creation of the historian. Hurowitz (1992: 56) has shown that temple personnel are usually appointed after the temple is constructed and after the god is brought into it. That seems the appropriate place. The reference to Zerubbabel and Yeshua the priest in the second year of their coming to Jerusalem gives the impression that they came to Jerusalem in the first year of Cyrus, under Sheshbazzar. This is an attempt by the historian to compress the entire Temple-building process into a few years to convey the zeal of the founding community. If part of the original building inscription, it may be that Zerubbabel and Yeshua came to Jerusalem in the second year of Darius (as implied by the writings of Haggai and Zechariah), and in the fourth year, the second year of their coming, they inaugurated a priesthood. Inauguration at this later stage would be more consistent with traditional building accounts in the ancient Near East.

Next comes the text that describes the actual foundation-laying and the ceremonies surrounding it.

D. Laying the Foundations

1. *Mesopotamian rulers usually participated in the foundation rites, and they were often done according to the prescription of a prophet or diviner*

And the builders laid the foundations of the Temple of YHWH. (3:10a)

There is no mention here of Sheshbazzar or any other ruler, leading the ceremonies. Because of this, Williamson states categorically that Sheshbazzar did not lay the foundations and that the work did not go on continuously from then until the first year of Darius as reported in Tattenai's letter to that king (5:16; Williamson 1985: 79). Yet, these assertions are corroborated by Tattenai's own assessment of the situation

in 5:8, to which Williamson (1985: 78) has no adverse reaction. Blenkinsopp (1988: 122) agrees that Sheshbazzar did not participate in temple-building. To him, the statement in Tattenai's letter to Darius regarding Sheshbazzar was fabricated by the Jewish community in Jerusalem to gain prestige for the temple. He also suggests that the way in which Sheshbazzar is referred to (for example, "a Sheshbazzar by name," 5:14) is not complimentary and that the man had become *persona non grata* to the Persians (Blenkinsopp 1988: 122–23). If so, it is difficult to see how mention of his name would add prestige in Darius's eyes. Furthermore (assuming the historical reliability of the letters [Hensley 1977; Porten 1978–79: 174–96]¹⁰), it is not likely that the Jewish community would risk falsifying the facts; Darius did not look kindly upon the lie (*drauga*). It is more likely that Sheshbazzar's name was omitted from the building account just because he had become *persona non grata*, and that in fact he had laid the foundations as is reported in the letter.

2. *Ceremonies are conducted when the foundations are laid*

The priests attended in their vestments with their trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with their cymbals, to praise YHWH. . . . And they answered in praise and thanksgiving to YHWH, because he is good and his steadfast love is forever over Israel. And all the people gave a great shout in praise to YHWH because of the foundations of the Temple of YHWH. (Ezra 3:10b–11)

This type of statement is typical of temple-building inscriptions.

3. *If a new temple is built near the site of an old one, lamentations are sung by lamentation priests to placate the gods and to bridge the gap between the old temple and the new*

And many of the priests, the Levites, the heads of the clans, the elders, who saw (ראו) the First Temple on its foundations (this is the Temple in their eyes) wept with a loud voice. (Ezra 3:12)

The verb (ראו) is usually translated 'had seen' and interpreted as referring to elderly people who had seen the original Temple, perhaps fifty years earlier. This may not be the intent of the verse. Thureau-Dangin (1921: 35–59) has published the Mesopotamian *kalû* ritual, the ritual prescribed for building new temples when an old temple lies in ruins.

10. Bedford (2001: 181) concludes the letters are genuine, but they are an "unreliable witness when compared to the writings of Haggai and Zechariah 1–8."

The only text extant is from the Seleucid period, but it likely goes back to an older practice, certainly to the Persian period, if not before. The following are the instructions for the *kalû*, or lamentation priest:

When the wall of a temple falls into ruin, in order to demolish and then rebuild¹¹ that temple, . . . the builder of that temple shall put on clean clothes and put a tin bracelet on his arm; he shall take an ax of lead, remove the *maḥritu* brick, and shall put it in a restricted place. You set up an offering table in front of the brick for the god of foundations, and you offer sacrifices; you shall sprinkle every type of (aromatic?) grain; you will pour beer, wine, and milk (over the brick?); you will prostrate yourself (before the brick?). As long as you [they?] demolish and (re)build [the temple] you will offer water. Then the *kalû* priest will make a libation of honey, cream, milk, beer, wine, and [good] oil (over the brick?). The *kalû*-priest [shall recite] the (composition called) "*Enūma Anu ibnū šamē*" . . . [A]s long as the demolishing and rebuilding (are going on), offerings and lamentations shall be made and the *kalû*-priest shall not cease strewing (aromatic?) flour and making libations and recitations. (Thureau-Dangin 1921: 40–43)

In his discussion of the enigmatic term *libbitu maḥritu* (the *maḥritu* brick) in this text, Ellis (1968: 26–29) concludes that it does not mean 'first brick', as it is often translated, but a previous brick, any previous brick from the former temple. It cannot be the first brick that was laid when the original temple was built. Bricks cannot be recognized by their inscriptions, because they are usually laid face down. In the *kalû* ritual, the builder removes a designated brick or stone from the old temple. He sets it aside. A *kalû* priest makes offerings and sings lamentations as long as the old temple is being demolished and the new temple is being constructed. He continues to sing lamentations until the new temple is completely built.

Rather than referring to the weeping of very old men who remembered the first temple from almost fifty years earlier, the crying may refer to prescribed lamentation rites for the old Temple, whose ruins they still see before their eyes. Jacobsen suggests that the city lament, or *balag*, was composed after the destruction of a city for just such a purpose. Its recitation by *kalû* priests was an indispensable part of the

11. Thureau-Dangin (1921; followed by ANET, 339–42) and Ellis (1968: 184) translate the verb 'to lay the foundations', interpreting *uš-šu-ši* from *uššu* 'foundation'. Van Soden (AHw 1442) suggests rather the verb is the D stem of *edēšu* 'to renew' (AHw, *uššu[m]*). It is clear from the final section of the ritual, quoted here, that the rites continue during the entire construction of the building, not just when the foundations of the new temple are laid.

kalû ritual accompanying the restoration of the destroyed city's temples (Jacobsen 1940: 219–24). The *balag*-lament includes a vivid description of the city lying desolate and of the attack that devastated it (1940: 222–23). Whether the city has been rebuilt or not, it is lamented as being in ruins and empty until the new temple is finished and dedicated.¹²

The weeping described in Ezra 3 may be part of such a lamentation ritual, perhaps over a stone that had been set aside from the ruins of the first temple. Indeed, the אבן הראשה that Zerubbabel brings out (Zech 4:7) may be a stone that had been set aside by the “builder” during the foundation ceremony (Ezra 3:10a).¹³ The phrase אבן הראשה has been translated ‘head stone’, ‘premiere stone’, ‘first stone’, and ‘top stone’.¹⁴ Yet there is reason to think it ought to be translated ‘former-years’ stone’, which is also appropriate for the *libbitu mahritu*. BDB defines ראשה, vocalized *ri’sah*, the singular of *ri’sôt*, as ‘beginning time, early time’. I might also suggest ‘former time’. This translation is based on Ezek 36:11, “I will increase upon you man and beast; they will greatly multiply, and I will cause you to dwell as in your early times (כקדמותיכם), and I will cause more good than your former times (מראשותיכם), and you will know that I am YHWH.”

At some point, the *libbitu mahritu* is incorporated into the new building. It is difficult to know when this occurs. The *kalû* ritual suggests it occurs very late in the construction process. Perhaps when the building is near completion but before the walls are paneled. It may be only then that the new temple becomes the temple in actuality; the act of inserting the brick may be what makes the transference complete. (Ezra 3:12 suggests that the old Temple lying in ruins was still the Temple in the eyes of the people.) If so, Zerubbabel’s incorporating the “former-times” stone into the walls of the new Temple may be akin to laying its foundations (יסד; Zech 4:9; Hag 2:18). However, the *kalû* ritual

12. This is reminiscent of the current Jewish lamentation rite for the Temple on Tisha b’Av, the anniversary of the Temple’s destruction. Jews will continue to wear mourning garb, fast, and recite the book of Lamentations on Tisha b’Av until the Temple is rebuilt. The book of Lamentations, describing the devastation and desolation of Jerusalem in the present tense, is read even though the city is now a bustling metropolis.

13. See Halpern (1978: 167–89) and other references cited there. The application of the ritual proposed here is different from that proposed by Halpern. Rather than Zerubbabel’s removing the stone from the ruins or from the mountain (where it was quarried?), I suggest that he simply brought it out from the restricted place where it had been kept.

14. “Top stone,” NRSV; “premiere stone,” Meyers and Meyers (1987: 228, 248). They consider it to be a stone from the First Temple, as does Petersen (1984: 237–42), who refers to it as “the former stone.”

prescribes that laments be sung for the old Temple as long as demolishing and rebuilding continue, presumably until the New Temple is dedicated, even after the *libbitu mahritu* is installed. Laments for the Temple in Jerusalem still continued into the 4th year of Darius, even after Zerubbabel laid the *'eben ri'sah* in the second year (Zech 7:1-3). In the light of the *balag* and the *kalû* ritual, Haggai's and Zechariah's references to the Temple still in ruins and to the city still devastated does not indicate that Temple-building had not been in progress since the return under Sheshbazzar. Ritual laments are prescribed throughout the building process until the new temple is dedicated.

E. Ceremonies Are Held during Later Stages of Building, for example, the dedication of the altar or the anointing of doors and sockets

In the seventh month . . . Yeshua, son of Yozadak, and his brothers, the priests, and Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and his brothers arose and built the altar of the God of Israel and sacrificed burnt offerings upon it, as is prescribed. . . . And they erected the altar on its place. . . . And they offered burnt offerings upon it to YHWH morning and evening. (Ezra 3:1-3)

The reference to Yeshua, the priest, and to Zerubbabel suggest that this took place during the reign of Darius; the writings of Haggai and Zechariah place these men securely in this period. Although the location of these verses in the book of Ezra implies the altar was dedicated prior to laying the foundations, this is not likely. As stated above, altars are routinely built during later stages of construction, not before the foundations are laid (Ellis 1968: 32-33). It is impossible to know when this occurred. The reference to "the seventh month" is not reliable; such an auspicious month may have been inserted to suit the theological goals of the historian. Halpern (1978: 177-78) suggests that the four horns that symbolize the four enemies of Judah and Israel, mentioned in Zech 1:18ff., are the four horns of the altar. If so, the altar dedication would have occurred on the 24th day of the 11th month of Darius's 2d year (Zech 1:7).

Placing the building-story components according to their order in typical building accounts may provide the historical order of the Second Temple's construction: the foundations were laid under Sheshbazzar; the altar much later, during the reign of Darius. At the foundation ceremony under Sheshbazzar and Cyrus, one designated "the builder" removed the "former-times" stone from the ruins of the old Temple. Later, during the reign of Darius, Zerubbabel installed it in the walls of the new Temple (Zech 4:7). No date is given in Zechariah, but Haggai

refers to a foundation ceremony in the 24th day of the 9th month of Darius's 2d year. It is likely that this is the date when the *'eben ri'sah*, the "former-times" stone, was brought out and incorporated into the new building (Zechariah 4; Hag 2:18).

After the statement of the dedication of the altar, the usual building account in the ancient Near East would have a description of the building and its furnishings. Instead, there is an account of a struggle between two groups (4:1–5), some letters to and from Kings Artaxerxes (4:7–22) and Darius (5:6–6:12), and an aborted letter to Xerxes (4:6). These were added by the historian to the original building account. The conflict between the Judeans and their "adversaries" was likely drawn from the historian's own time and reflects his own world view. As has been pointed out (Bedford 2001: 172–180; Halpern 1990: 104), Haggai and Zechariah, writing in the time of Darius, give no indication of conflicts between various groups of people.

F. The Description of the Temple and Its Furnishings

1. *A description of the Temple*

This component is unaccountably missing.

2. *A statement that the king has built the Temple*

Then Tattenai, governor of Beyond the River, Shatar-bozenai, and their colleagues did diligently just as Darius the king ordered. [. . .] [T]hey built successfully by means of the prophesying of Haggai, the prophet, and Zechariah, son of Iddo, and they finished according to the command of the God of Israël and the command of Cyrus and Darius . . . king of Persia. They completed this house on the third day of the month of Adar, which is the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. (Ezra 6:13–15, Aramaic)

Although in Aramaic, this statement is typical of building inscriptions in the ancient Near East. The switch to Aramaic in the building account is worth noting. The original building inscription may have been bilingual, Hebrew and Aramaic, as was customary in contemporary official texts. The historian began by using the Hebrew version and switched to Aramaic when he inserted the Aramaic letters into his narrative. As appropriate in the Aramaic version, the credit for the Temple is given to Tattenai, the satrap, and to Shatar-bozenai and his colleagues, satrapal officials. The reference to "the elders of the Jews" may have been added by the historian or taken from the Hebrew version of the inscription.

G. The Dedication Ceremony

1. *The god takes up residence in the temple*

This component is noticeably missing. The mention above to Zechariah's and Haggai's prophecies may allude to their prophetic assurances that YHWH has reconciled himself to his people and has entered the Temple.

2. *Celebration*

And the people Israel, the priests, and the Levites and the rest of the exiles dedicated this house of God with joy. And they offered at the dedication at the house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and he-goats as a sin offering on behalf of all Israel, twelve for the twelve tribes of Israel. (Ezra 6:16, 17, Aramaic)

This statement is typical of building inscriptions.

3. *Presentation of gifts and appointment of Temple personnel*

And they established priests according to their orders, and Levites according to their courses for the service of the God that is in Jerusalem [as has been prescribed]. (Ezra 6:18, Aramaic)

It is likely that this passage is original to the building inscription, rather than the earlier passage of Ezra 3:8, 9. That one may have been a free composition of the historian based on events from his own day. Zechariah 3 seems to refer to a ceremony for the inauguration of the high priest. If so, it may have occurred here after the dedication, in the 6th year of Darius. Or the high priest could have been installed in a separate ceremony earlier, perhaps when the altar was dedicated and the rest of the Temple personnel installed after the dedication.

The source seems to end here. The historian himself added the celebration of the Passover (6:19–22), which is in Hebrew.

H. Prayer or Curses

The building account proper does not include a curse or prayer, although Darius places a very lovely one at the end of his letter. Perhaps his curse was included in the original building inscription and not repeated by the historian:

I issue an order that anyone who changes a word of this edict—a beam will be torn out of his house, he will be beaten and impaled upon it, and his house will be made into a dunghill on account of this. May the God who [causes his name to] dwell(s) there overthrow any king or people

who sends his hand to change or to harm the house of this God that is in Jerusalem. I, Darius, issue an order; let it be done with all diligence. (Ezra 6:11, 12)

The historian seems to have doctored Darius's curse a bit to make it conform to Deuteronomistic theology.

Conclusion

The above analysis suggests that the historian who wrote Ezra 1–6 built his narrative around a building story, perhaps the Second Temple's authentic bilingual building inscription. Nearly every component of the structure that marks the typical ancient Near East building account is present. The historian simply rearranged some of them to suit his theological motives; note, however, that the only items out of order are the notice of the altar dedication and the early notice of the priestly inauguration, both in chap. 3. He supplemented the building inscription with narrative, letters, a list of returnees, and a list of Temple vessels.

To interpret the basic genre of Ezra 1–6 as a building account radically restructures the understanding of the history of this period. When the components are rearranged into the order typical of building stories, the actual historical order of events appears. The *kalû* ceremony for the demolition and rebuilding of new temples provides ideological background for events not fully explained by the building account itself. As deduced here, the temple was begun under Cyrus and the foundations laid by Sheshbazzar, when the "former-times" stone, the *'eben hari'sah*, was removed by a person called the builder. It was brought out later by Zerubbabel from its protected place and installed when the Temple was near completion, probably in the 9th month of Darius's 2d year. (The altar was dedicated in a separate ceremony two months later.) The act of incorporating the stone from the First Temple into a wall of the Second was spoken of as a foundation ceremony, even though the actual foundations had been laid many years before. Prior to the new Temple's dedication, and as long as there was building going on, the Temple was spoken of as being in ruins, and laments were recited for it. There was no building gap; the Temple was continuously under construction from the time Sheshbazzar arrived, during the reign of Cyrus, until the 6th year of Darius, when it was dedicated.

In addition to providing a better understanding of the historical and ideological background of the period, interpreting the structure of

Ezra 1–6 as a building story does away with the need to posit a Cyrus Edict. The so-called Edict of Cyrus (Ezra 1:2–4) is recognized to be simply the typical beginning of a typical building inscription. Looked at this way, the discrepancies between Ezra 1 and the *dichrona*, or memorandum, in Ezra 6 disappear. That Ezra 1 is in Hebrew and uses Hebrew idioms is expected in a Jerusalem temple-building inscription. That it speaks of the wealth of foreigners flowing to aid in building the new Temple is typical of Persian-period building accounts. The Second Temple's building story was very likely available to the historian who wrote Ezra 1–6, and he manipulated it to reflect his own world view.

*Were the Returnees Necessary to Restore
the Temple in Jerusalem?*

The ideology behind the building-story genre of the ancient Near East is apparent in Ezra 1–6, even if the components have been rearranged slightly and augmented. As remarked above, an ideology is a set of beliefs that encode events. Events can only be understood within the framework of a belief system; they have no independent meaning. A temple's destruction by enemy conquest results from the anger and abandonment of its God; the temple's restoration occurs when the god has been appeased and has deigned to return to his people. The god's anger is expressed concretely by the capture of the image during conquest; his subsequent reconciliation is expressed in its return by the victorious monarch. Sixth-century Judeans shared this common world-view. The book of Kings describes the conquest in the same terms as other ancient Near Eastern conquest accounts. The book of Ezekiel describes how YHWH abandoned his Temple in anger, leaving both city and Temple open to destruction.

The Second Temple's building inscription underlying the book of Ezra indicates that Jews living at the end of the 6th century also shared the ancient Near Eastern view of temple conquest and restoration. Thus, the decision to rebuild could not be made without proof that YHWH had been appeased, that his anger had ended, and that he was willing to return to his Temple. Hurowitz (1992: 135–63) discusses the great lengths that kings went to ascertain the mood of the god. He states:

The king who builds a temple without permission [of the god] is courting disaster—either he will not complete the project successfully, or the completed building will not stand, and may collapse after completion. (Hurowitz 1992: 137)

A primary way of indicating the will of a captured god is if he really does return home to his temple. Practically speaking, this means the king who controls the image actually returns it. Even so, the return demonstrates the god's free will, as did its capture. If the God is an-
iconic, and the main representative of the God—the ark—has been destroyed, other objects must suffice to demonstrate his willingness to return (Ackroyd 1987). Temple cult vessels seem to have played this role. The location of his vessels indicates where YHWH condescends to live, where he has taken up housekeeping, as it were.¹⁵ Cyrus's return of the Temple vessels is mentioned three times in the first six chapters of Ezra: in the beginning of the building inscription (1:8–11), in Tattenai's letter to Darius (5:14, 15), and again in Darius' response (6:5). This suggests their importance. Deutero-Isaiah states what the return of the Temple vessels meant to him (Isa 52:11):

Depart! Depart! Go out from there!
Touch nothing unclean.
Go out from the midst of it,
Purify yourselves, you who carry YHWH's vessels.
You shall not go out in haste,
And you shall not go out in flight,
For YHWH shall walk before you;
The God of Israel shall be your rear guard.

To the Isaianic writer, the return of the vessels is visible proof that God himself is returning to his Temple in Jerusalem. In the same chapter, he writes:

8b. For eye to eye, they will see
YHWH's return to Zion. (52:8)

When Cyrus came into possession of the Esagil, and of YHWH's vessels stored there, he came into possession of the decision to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The decision was his, not because he controlled Jerusalem, but because he controlled the vessels. That the first line of the underlying building inscription states that YHWH stirred up the spirit of Cyrus and charged him to rebuild his Temple in Jerusalem demonstrates that the Jews participated fully in this common understanding of the mechanism of Temple-restoration after a military conquest.

The impetus to build could not come from the local Judean population, who did not control the tangible visible proof of YHWH's presence.

15. This idea was suggested to me by V. (A.) Hurowitz, personal communication.

No temple could have been prepared for him in Judah while his dwelling-place still remained in Babylon.

The biblical writers lament that their land lay desolate for seventy years. The *kalû* ritual provides the ideological background. It prescribes that the Temple and land be mourned from the time of the First Temple's destruction in 586 until the Second Temple's dedication in 516.

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