The Rebuilding and Settlement of Jerusalem in Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras

Juha Pakkala, University of Helsinki

Abstract: This paper reviews Dieter Böhler's theory about the conception of Jerusalem in MT Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras. According to Böhler, 1 Esdras preserves earlier versions in variants dealing with the rebuilding and settlement of Jerusalem, while the MT was revised to accommodate Ezra (and Neh 8) to the Nehemiah story. This paper argues that Böhler's theory is highly unlikely. It is based on things lacking in the MT, while there is little positive evidence for the theory in the MT variants. The theory also neglects many passages that contradict the conception of an unsettled and unbuilt Jerusalem before Nehemiah. Textual variants used in favor of the theory are often controversial, heavily edited, and/or the result of textual corruption. In none of the cases does 1 Esdras unambiguously preserve the original reading. A conceptional connection between the MT variants remains unclear or is based on the variants in 1 Esdras. The 1 Esdras variants are connected by Jerusalem, its physical spaces, and temple gates. This may be an attempt to highlight the accomplishments of the Davidic Zerubbabel, which fits well with the anti-Hasmonean stand of 1 Esdras. Nehemiah and his accomplishments (such as references to the wall) were omitted because he was a non-Davidic leader whose memory 1 Esdras sought to eradicate.

Introduction

The relationship between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah is an unresolved issue that continues to impact other research on these books. Despite many studies and discussion since the nineteenth century, the primacy of both versions finds advocates even today. In older research the general priority of 1 Esdras was more popular, but the primacy of Ezra-Nehemiah now finds more support.[1] Although both versions probably preserve original readings lost in the other version, the debate concerns the large compositional differences, which go back to a comprehensive revision in one of the versions. Was the Nehemiah story intentionally omitted when 1 Esdras was created as a separate composition, or was the Nehemiah story later merged with the book of Ezra after the textual traditions of the proto-MT Ezra and 1 Esdras diverged?[2] The most prominent recent advocate for the latter position is Dieter Böhler. His 1997 publication, *Die heilige Stadt*, and his commentary *1 Esdras*, published in German in 2015 and in English 2016, have rekindled the discussion.[3] Böhler's theory has been countered by some arguments,

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[1]   For a discussion, see Lisbeth S. Fried, ed., *Was 1 Esdras First? An Investigation into the Priority and Nature of 1 Esdras*, AIL 7 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), where both positions are represented.

[2]   Other key issues are the addition of the Story of the Youth, the additions of 1 Esd 1 (≈ 2 Chr 35–36), and the rearrangement of material in the first chapters of the book. These major differences are not necessarily interconnected and may derive from different scribes.

[3]   Dieter Böhler, *1 Esdras*, IECOT (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016); Böhler, *1 Esdras*, IEKAT (Stuttgart:

but Adrian Schenker has noted that his theory has not been "proved … false."[4] Although it is rarely, if ever, possible to prove theories in human sciences as correct or false, Schenker is right that Böhler's arguments have not been addressed as directly as they deserve, and they have kept the theory that 1 Esdras is original on the table.[5]

This paper engages a crucial area of Böhler's argumentation: the rebuilding and settlement of Jerusalem. According to Böhler, in the older version of the text, Jerusalem was not in ruins, and it was settled immediately after the exiles returned. The existence and general preservation of the city gates was assumed, and there were no references to their rebuilding. In Böhler's view, 1 Esdras largely preserved this conception of Jerusalem and its settlement. After the textual traditions behind 1 Esdras and Ezra diverged, the Nehemiah story would have been added to the book of Ezra. Since the Nehemiah story describes the rebuilding of Jerusalem and especially its walls and gates, the conception of Jerusalem had to be revised. References to existing gates and habitation in Jerusalem were omitted in the book of Ezra to accommodate the new composition that included the Nehemiah story.

As proof for this theory, Böhler discusses several text-critical variants between Ezra (+ Neh 8) and 1 Esdras, which in his view show the primacy of 1 Esdras. Although he acknowledges uncertainties when individual cases are evaluated, he argues that there is a connection between the variants that goes back to a conceptional difference between the two versions about Jerusalem in the time of Zerubbabel and Ezra. By following Occam's razor (German *Sparsamkeitsprinzip*), Böhler argues that the intentional revision took place in Ezra and Neh 8, because only then can we see a single motive that connects all the changes. The assumption that the readings in Ezra and Neh 8 are original would be less probable because it would lead to a more complicated theory without a connection between the variants.[6]

After discussing weaknesses in Böhler's general arguments and conceptions on this issue, I will look at the textual variants in key passages that Böhler uses in support of his theory.[7] I

Kohlhammer, 2015); and Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt in Esdras α und Esra-Nehemia: Zwei Konzeptionen zur Wiederherstellung Israels*, OBO 158 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997). In this paper all references to the commentary are to the English edition published in 2016.

[4]   Adrian Schenker, "The Relationship between Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras," in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?*, 45.

[5]   Although a number of critical points about Böhler's *Die heilige Stadt* were extensively discussed by many scholars in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?*, to my knowledge Böhler's more recent publications have not directly addressed the criticism. His commentary *1 Esdras* does not even mention this edited volume. With her theory that the Story of the Youth in 1 Esd 3–4 is the "raison d'être" of 1 Esdras as a separate composition, Zipora Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, SCS 47 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), also undermines Böhler's theory.

[6]   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 174: "Unsere These erklärt mehr als ein Duzend, teils kleiner, teils erheblicher Differenzen zwischen Esdr α* und Esr MT mit einem *einzigen* Motiv. Damit wird nicht nur jede einzelne Differenz hineinreichend erklärt, sondern auch deren Zusammenhand und einseitige Tendenz. Eine alternative These, die für jeden der angeführten Unterschiede zwischen Esdr α und Esr MT eine andere Erklärung anführt, könnte vielleicht ebenso jede einzelne Differenz in sich verständlich machen. Sie wäre aber aus zwei Gründen weniger plausibel: 1. weil sie komplizierter wäre und vor allem 2. weil ihr Erklärungswert deutlich geringer wäre, da sie weder den *Zusammenhang* der Differenzen untereinander erklären würde noch warum die Varianten alle in dieselbe Richtung gehen, während kein einziges Beispiel einer gegenläufigen Textveränderung existiert."

[7]   I will not repeat the partly extensive discussion and arguments in favor of the variant readings. Böhler himself discusses and counters critical positions presented in earlier research. Zipora Talshir's works, *I Esdras*, and *I Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, SCS 50 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), are also a significant contribution to the discussion about the variants.

will argue: (1) that in most cases it is likely that the variant in 1 Esdras is secondary, (2) that the evidence for a revision in Ezra to the effect assumed by Böhler is weak and conflicts with other passages, and (3) that a better conceptional motive and a connection between the variants can be established if 1 Esdras is assumed to preserve secondary readings in these cases.

General Considerations on Böhler's Theory

Although Böhler acknowledges that Ezra-Nehemiah is a composite work that contains later additions, his argumentation often fails to recognize this. Like many other books in the Hebrew Bible, Ezra-Nehemiah contains contradictory conceptions that have been commonly recognized in research.[8] The implicit assumption that this would not be the case in Ezra-Nehemiah leads Böhler to find more coherence than there is and to argue based on assumed consistency. For example, the references to a ruined Jerusalem before Nehemiah's activity are taken from the Nehemiah story (Neh 1:3; 2:3, 17).[9] In the Nehemiah story, Jerusalem was in ruins and could only be settled after it had been rebuilt because the rationale of Nehemiah's activity is the restoration of the city. Böhler uses references in the Nehemiah story to assume a similar conception in Ezra, where it is difficult to find references to a ruined Jerusalem. Böhler's examples in Ezra are few and forced, but he writes: "Während der ganzen Zeit Serubbabels und Esras bis zu Nehemias Ankunft liegt die Stadt nach der Darstellung von Esr-Neh in Trümmern."[10] Chapter 3.1, titled "Jerusalem wird zum Trümmerhaufen" (Jerusalem becomes a heap of ruins), does not contain any examples from the book of Ezra where Jerusalem is explicitly said to have been unsettled and in ruins. The examples are subtle at best and only if interpreted through a certain understanding of the composition. Notably, the examples are all based on references *lacking* in Ezra. Although Böhler assumes several scribal interventions, all omissions would be references to a built and settled Jerusalem, but in not a single case would the scribe have made a direct and explicit reference to a ruined and empty Jerusalem. An omission is a strong intervention to the older text that was not done lightly. The caution with omissions is clearly seen in the transmission of Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras, but also in the transmission of other biblical books.[11] Scribes were very hesitant to omit if the same effect could be attained by an addition. Böhler's theory assumes mainly omissions and replacements and no additions that refer to a ruined and uninhabited Jerusalem. Böhler's argumentation is thus based on absence of evidence.

Another severe problem in Böhler's theory is the several references to an inhabited and built Jerusalem in MT Ezra. This undermines his assumption of a thoroughly reworked[12] Ezra that was harmonized with the Nehemiah story. The habitation of Jerusalem is mentioned during

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[8]   See literary-critical approaches, e.g., Jacob Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers*, BZAW 348 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004); Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, *Esra* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1985); Ulrich Kellermann, *Nehemia: Quellen, Überlieferung und Geschichte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967); Sigmund Mowinckel, *Die Ezrageschichte und das Gesetz Moses*, vol. 3 of *Studien zu dem Buche Ezra-Nehemia* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1965); Juha Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe: The Development of Ezra 7–10 and Nehemia 8*, BZAW 347 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004).
[9]   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 78.
[10]   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 78.
[11]   For Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras, see Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 113–79. For other biblical books, see Juha Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted: Omissions in the Transmission of the Hebrew Bible*, FRLANT 251 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).
[12]   Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 16.

the activities of Zerubbabel, Sheshbazzar, and Ezra: Ezra 1:11; 2:1; 3:8; 4:6, 23; 5:1; 6:9; 7:7–9, 13; 8:29; 10:7. The exiles are said to have returned to Jerusalem (1:11; 2:1; 4:23), and those who had moved there also participated in the work on the temple (3:8). Ezra 4:6 refers explicitly to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (ישבי יהודה וירושלם). The Ezra story refers to the returnees mainly returning to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:7–9, 13). The whole scene in Ezra 9–10 takes place in Jerusalem, and the implicit assumption is that the city is inhabited. A proclamation is made throughout Judah *and Jerusalem* that the people assemble in Jerusalem (Ezra 10:7), which directly refers to people living in Jerusalem. There is no attempt to change the impression apparent throughout the Ezra story that people returned to Jerusalem and lived there. Had there been a tendency to deny that Jerusalem was settled in this time, one would certainly expect a clear and explicit reference, not a few subtle scribal changes (such as the one in Ezra 10:1) that are open to interpretation and based on a plus reading in 1 Esdras. The few variants presented by Böhler are hardly enough to assume a comprehensive revision where references to a settlement in Jerusalem were systematically removed.

Some passages in Ezra primarily discuss the rebuilding of the city and not the temple (see especially Ezra 4:12–13, 16, 21–23), which undermines the idea of the Nehemiah story. According to Ezra 4:12, the builders were already finishing the walls of Jerusalem (ושורי אשכללו), which contradicts Nehemiah's building activity and the references in Neh 1:3; 2:3, 17 that Jerusalem was in ruins. Although Ezra never mentions that the walls, its gates, and the city were completed, there is also no evidence of an attempt to explain or censor the evident inconsistency with the Nehemiah story. Tensions, inconsistencies, and even contradictions within Ezra-Nehemiah are understandable, for it is a composite work consisting of three originally independent stories, but the evidence challenges Böhler's assumption that Ezra-Nehemiah was extensively revised to create a harmonious conception of Jerusalem being in ruins before Nehemiah's activity.

Several of Böhler's cases relate to the gates, the references to which would have been secondarily removed in the book of Ezra. The general problem with Böhler's argumentation on the gates is that none of the cases explicitly refers to the gates of the city wall, although the gate to the east mentioned in 1 Esd 5:45 was probably meant to be one of the city gates. Nehemiah is said to have built the city wall and *some* of its gates (see below), but there is no reference to a temple gate that he would have built. The only reference to a gate in conjunction with the temple is found in the MT version of Neh 2:8, which refers to the building of the gates of the *temple fortress* or a fortress connected to the temple (שערי הבירה אשר לבית). This does not connect with temple gates being built earlier, but the MT reading may nonetheless be a secondary change. The usually faithful LXX lacks the reference to the temple fortress and merely refers to the gates, τὰς πύλας, which in this context can only refer to the gates of the city wall. A temple fortress is not mentioned elsewhere in Ezra-Nehemiah, and thus a reference to it is unexpected. It may be a scribal change from a later time when a fortress had also been built in connection with or close to the temple. The temple was already completed in Ezra 6:15, and a temple is bound to have gates. When the distinction is made between the temple gates and the gates of the city wall, there is much less contradiction than Böhler's theory assumes.

A further problem in Böhler's theory is the implicit assumption that gates of the city wall were completely built by Nehemiah, and therefore they could not be mentioned before he built them. This is contradicted by Neh 2:13–15, which refers to three existing gates (Valley Gate, Dung Gate, and Fountain Gate) when Nehemiah inspected the wall, and this scene takes place *before* he even started the construction work. Following Böhler's logic, the editor should have removed these references as well. In fact, these verses seem to imply that these gates were intact and that only the wall was in ruins, but other verses refer to gates being in ruins

or destroyed by fire (Neh 1:3; 2:3, 17). The alleged inconsistency may be explained by the text's complicated literary history,[13] but one should also not be overly rigid in expecting consistency. That Jerusalem is said to be in ruins and its gates burned (Neh 2:17 ירושלם חרבה ושעריה נצתו באש) does not mean that the gates had completely ceased to exist. Even the wall construction account in Neh 3 assumes the existence of gates before the work begins. The gates are also implied to be in varying condition. Some gates must be rebuilt (בנה, e.g., the Sheep Gate and the Fish Gate), some must be strengthened (החזיק, e.g., the Old Gate and the Valley Gate), and some gates apparently needed no repairs (e.g., the Water Gate and the Muster Gate). Here, too, one should not expect full consistency with the verbs that were used. According to Neh 3:13–14, Malchijah son of Rechab repaired and (re)built (בנה) the Dung Gate, but it is still not a problem to mention the gate in Neh 2:13 before the construction work.

Ezra 2:70, Neh 7:72a, and 1 Esd 5:45

The variants between Ezra 2:70, Neh 7:72a, and 1 Esd 5:45 have been extensively discussed since early research. Regardless of which version of the list of returnees (Ezra 2:1–70 or Neh 7:1–72a) is older, its duplication is the primary cause for the textural difficulties in these verses, and later cross-influences caused several variants. For example, the names of the list contain many challenging variant readings, plusses, and minuses. Most scholars acknowledge that both the MT readings and 1 Esdras are problematic and unlikely to be original,[14] and thus the question arises: Which one is older? The oldest text of Ezra 2:70, Neh 7:72a, and 1 Esd 5:45 may never be reached with any certainty.[15]

Our interest is in the 1 Esd 5:45 plus ἐν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καὶ τῇ χώρᾳ ("in Jerusalem and its vicinity"), which Böhler assumes to be original.[16] Due to the plus, 1 Esd 5:45 divides the people into two groups: those living in Jerusalem and its vicinity, and those living "in their towns." He argues that these words were omitted in Ezra 2:70 because it implies that people moved to Jerusalem to live there, which would conflict with the conception that Jerusalem was largely unsettled before Nehemiah's activity.

This theory is problematic because the reading in 1 Esd 5:45 results in the peculiar idea that the temple musicians and the doorkeepers lived outside Jerusalem. Groups assisting in the temple would certainly be expected to live in Jerusalem or its proximity and not in the

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[13]   See Wright, *Rebuilding Identity*, who has shown the complicated literary history of the Nehemiah story.

[14]   For example, Talshir, *I Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, 287, discusses problems in both readings. Hugh G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, WBC 16 (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 272, notes on Ezra 2:70 and Neh 7:72a that "neither text is likely to be original," but he also rejects the reading in 1 Esd 5:45. Loring W. Batten, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 106, assumes that none of the versions is original, but he reconstructs it partly using the reading in 1 Esd 5:45. According to him, the original text read: "And the priests and the Levites and the singers and the porters and some of the people were living in Jerusalem and all Israel [were living] in their villages."

[15]   Perhaps the best theory has been suggested by Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 271–73, who assumes that Neh 7:72a preserves the oldest version that "is not far from the text that left the hands of the final editor." Williamson assumes that the reading in 1 Esdras "is entirely secondary" and an attempt to clarify the text.

[16]   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 144–54. Similarly, but with minor differences, many other scholars since early research: for example, Julius A. Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra: Beiträge zu seiner Wiederherstellung*, FRLANT 14 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922), 35.

rest of the country. Although this peculiarity could speak for the originality of 1 Esd 5:45,[17] it can hardly be the original and intended meaning. This implies some confusion that may not have been intended even if it is assumed to be a later addition. Why would these two groups be mentioned separately from "all Israel"? The reference to *all* Israel living in their towns in all three versions is also peculiar, for one would not expect an inclusive reference after more detailed references to diverse groups. Therefore, וכל ישראל בעריהם could be the oldest text here, while all the other references were added later at different stages.[18]

For the issue discussed here, it is not crucial to decide which of the three preserved readings is original, since the beginning of the list in MT Ezra 2:1 already refers to the exiles returning to Jerusalem and Judah, each going to their towns: וישובו לירושלם ויהודה איש לעירו. There appears to be no problem for people coming back to Jerusalem in Ezra 2:1, and although it is not explicitly stated that they also lived there, this is clearly implied. For Böhler's theory, verse 1 is much more problematic than the confusing verse 70, which also does not exclude habitation in Jerusalem. Its concluding and inclusive clause, וכל ישראל בעריהם, should be understood in view of verse 1, which refers to some people moving to Jerusalem. It is questionable to use a verse that is text-critically very difficult as evidence for an intentional omission of Jerusalem in the list of returnees, when the same list has already referred to people returning to Jerusalem. Ezra 2:1 shows that no systematic attempt was made to remove references to Jerusalem's habitation. This undermines Böhler's assumption that the variant discussed here is connected to a revision in the proto-MT transmission because of a different concept of habitation.[19]

Ezra 3:1, Neh 8:1, and 1 Esd 5:46

Another related and complicated case is the relationship between Ezra 3:1, Neh 8:1, and 1 Esd 5:46. It is evident that something was revised here, and this is connected to the duplication of the list of returnees in Ezra 2 and Neh 7. For Böhler, the original text would be found in 1 Esd 5:46, which contains a reference to the gateway: εἰς τὸ εὐρύχωρον τοῦ πρώτου πυλῶνος τοῦ πρὸς τῇ ἀνατολῇ ("in the open area before the eastward-facing gateway").[20] The parallel in Ezra 3:1 refers only to Jerusalem. According to Böhler, the reference to Jerusalem was omitted in Ezra 2:70, and therefore it was necessary to add a reference to Jerusalem in 3:1. Böhler reads the MT so that people who live outside Jerusalem must come to Jerusalem, while in 1 Esdras some of the people already lived in Jerusalem, and therefore one could directly refer to a specific location in Jerusalem.[21]

If we look at the internal logic of 1 Esdras, this is the first reference to the gateway in the story after the exiles have returned.[22] The author takes it for granted that Jerusalem was meant, which is peculiar, since part of the population even in 1 Esdras did not live in Jerusalem but had to come there. First Esdras 5:46 takes it for granted that Jerusalem was meant. The text

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[17] One could suggest that the reference to Jerusalem and its vicinity was omitted because it is illogical.

[18] According to Wilhelm Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, HAT 20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949), 26, 1 Esd 5:45 partly preserves the original text. The reference to Jerusalem would be original, but καὶ τῇ χώρᾳ would have been taken from 1 Esd 9:37.

[19] See Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 144–51.

[20] Some translate the word πρώτου as "first" (e.g., NETS: "the first eastward facing gateway"), but in this context this was probably not meant here (cf. 1 Esd 9:38, 41).

[21] Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 94–95, 151–54. Similarly, others as well; for example, Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra*, 36, also assumes that the reading in Ezra 3:1 is a later correction.

[22] The passage 1 Esd 1:15 also refers to gateways, but this is part of the parallel with 2 Chronicles, and thus it refers to the city before the destruction of 587 BCE.

refers to people living in their towns (or homes) in different parts of the country, and thus a jump to the gates without introducing their location implies a particular focus on Jerusalem and its gates.[23] This implies neglect of the narrative logic that is unlikely to derive from a single author, but it is understandable from an editor for whom the gates were central.

The difference between these texts is difficult to resolve by neglecting the earlier history of the text.[24] It is likely that most (if not all) of Ezra 3:1 is an intrusion here.[25] The idea of the whole people gathering is peculiar and unmotivated in view of what follows. Verse 2 introduces the actual actors of the following passage (Joshua, the priests, Zerubbabel, and his colleagues/brothers), while the people are not mentioned again, and their presence thus has no purpose. Verse 2 is likely to be the original beginning of the passage. Verse 8 also implies that not all the people had come to Jerusalem, since only those who had settled in Jerusalem participated. It is thus likely that the idea of people gathering is late and probably adopted from Neh 8:1, where a very similar sentence begins the Torah-reading passage. The people are indispensable actors in Neh 8, as they are the primary audience, and they are also those who ask Ezra to bring the book of the law and read it (v. 2). The following text also implies that the people had gathered, for Ezra reads the book to the whole nation (v. 3). The sentence ויאספו העם כאיש אחד is thus more at home in Neh 8:1 than in Ezra 3:1.[26] Böhler rightly notes that the reference to the gate may be original, for it explains the connection between 1 Esd 5:46 and Neh 8:1. However, if we assume that the sentence ויאספו העם כאיש אחד in Ezra 3:1 was also taken from Neh 8:1, which seems quite likely, 1 Esd 5:46 must be dependent on a version of Ezra 3:1 that was already harmonized with Neh 8:1, and this is probable only after the duplication of Ezra 2/Neh 7, which establishes the closer connection between Ezra 3:1 and Neh 8:1. The duplication of Ezra 2/Neh 7 is possible only after the Nehemiah story had been added to the composition. Consequently, 1 Esd 5:46 and thereby 1 Esdras is dependent on a late version of Ezra-Nehemiah that included Neh 1–7 but was left out in 1 Esdras.

When Ezra 3:1 was influenced by Neh 8:1, it was more appropriate to use the word Jerusalem than to refer to a gate, since the text refers to people living in different parts of the country, and it is logical to refer to the town where they gather.[27] If they had all come from Jerusalem and the narrative context were to make it explicitly clear that Jerusalem was meant, one could use a more specific location. As such, a reference to the Water Gate would not have been impossible in Ezra 3:1. Nehemiah 3:26, where the Water Gate is mentioned in the wall-building report, does not say that this gate was constructed or even repaired. According to Neh 3:26,

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[23] The Greek translation ἑκάστου ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις ("each in their own") leaves out the noun and uses only the adjective. The translation softens the unexpected jump, since it can be understood as a reference to homes, and it is also thus translated in NRSV and NETS: "all in their own homes." Nonetheless, a similar translational technique is found in 1 Esd 5:8 as well. See the discussion in Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 256, 292–93.

[24] Many attempts to reconstruct the text's history have been made. According to Batten, *Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 107, "the simpler text of Ezr. is preferable here," but he also assumes that ובני ישראל בערים is an accidental duplication from the preceding verse. This solution does not explain why the people gather in Jerusalem when they have no clear function in the ensuing story.

[25] Similarly, Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 45–46.

[26] It is also likely that the clause ובני ישראל בערים was added, since it repeats what was already said in Ezra 2:70 but by using different forms (cf. וכל ישראל בעריהם). This raises the suspicion that the date was added, and the repetition would be an awkward attempt to return to the older text.

[27] Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra*, 36, who assumes that 1 Esd 5:46 preserves the original reading here, nonetheless notes that the MT reading אל ירושלם fits here best ("אל ירושלם ist hier die am besten passende Lesung"). This contradiction is explained if we assume that the whole reference is a late addition in Ezra 3:1 and that there was no reference to a gate in this verse.

"the temple servants living on Ophel [made repairs] up to a point *opposite* the Water Gate on the east" (והנתינים היו ישבים בעפל עד נגד שער המים למזרח).[28] Nehemiah 3:26 seems to imply that, unlike other gates such as the Fountain Gate (v. 15) or the Horse Gate (v. 28), the Water Gate did not need to be repaired. Therefore, the argument that the gate had to be removed due to Nehemiah's activity does not hold. Narrative logic is a more probable motive for the change.

The reading in 1 Esd 5:46 can be more easily explained as a literary rewriting using Ezra 3:1 and Neh 8:1.[29] A reference to the gate was more suitable for the conceptional purposes of 1 Esdras than Jerusalem. A reference to the Water Gate may have been inappropriate because it was associated with Nehemiah, a memory 1 Esdras seeks to eradicate (see below), and thus it was changed to "the gate to the east" (πυλῶνος τοῦ πρὸς τῇ ἀνατολῇ). This is clearly not the East Gate (שער המזרח), which is mentioned in Neh 3:29, and it more likely goes back to the Hebrew *Vorlage* שער למזרח, as also reconstructed by Talshir.[30] The only reference to "the gate to the east" in the Hebrew Bible is met in Neh 3:26: "the Water Gate to the east" (שער המים למזרח), which implies a connection between 1 Esd 5:46 and Neh 3:26.[31] Nehemiah 12:37 also refers to an eastern location of the Water Gate (שער המים מזרח), but Neh 3:26 only uses the same expression, למזרח ("to the east"), as 1 Esd 5:46. Notably, Neh 8:1 and 3 do not mention the gate's eastern location. If Böhler's theory is correct, there would be no reason to remove the reference to the gate's eastern location or the expression "to the east" in MT Neh 8:1 (or Ezra 3:1). Consequently, the most probable intertextual link between the Water Gate and its eastern location is Neh 3:26, which implies that the author of 1 Esd 5:46 was familiar with this verse and thus with the Nehemiah story.

Further consideration suggests that 1 Esd 5:46 does not preserve the original reading or refer to a real city gate. The reference to the gate in 1 Esd 5:46 is clearly connected to the gates in 1 Esd 9:38, 41:[32]

5:46	εἰς τὸ εὐρύχωρον τοῦ πρώτου πυλῶνος τοῦ πρὸς τῇ ἀνατολῇ >	אל הרחוב אשר לפני שער למזרח
9:38	ἐπὶ τὸ εὐρύχωρον τοῦ πρὸς ἀνατολὰς τοῦ ἱεροῦ πυλῶνος >	אל הרחוב אשר למזרח שער בית האלהים
9:41	ἐν τῷ πρὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ πυλῶνος εὐρυχώρῳ >	ברחוב אשר לפני שער בית האלהים

First Esdras 9:38 and 41 refer to a temple gate, while 1 Esd 5:46 must refer to another gate, since the building of the temple had not yet begun. Perhaps a gate of the city wall was meant, but this is not specified, and apparently it was not important to the author. The extensive terminological connection with the gate in 1 Esd 9:38 and 41 suggests that the gate in 1 Esd 5:46 is an entirely artificial creation. The reference to the temple had to be left out because of narrative chronology, but the rest of the terminology was adopted from 1 Esd 9:38 and 41. That the gate does not even have a proper name, except that it is to the east, also suggests that it is an artificial creation for the current passage.

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28   Note that the verb is not mentioned here, but it is implied from the preceding text. The work of the temple servants ends opposite the Water Gate, and in the following verse 27 the Tekoites are reported to have repaired the next section. There is no reference to the Water Gate being (re)built or repaired.

29   According to Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 28, 1 Esd 5:46 was influenced by 1 Esd 9:38.

30   Talshir, *I Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, 294.

31   Second Chronicles 31:14 refers to the gatekeeper to the eastside, השוער למזרחה. Although some English translations such as the NRSV translate this as the East Gate, this interpretation is unlikely, for it refers to the gatekeepers, and there is no reference to a gate called the East Gate. Note also the directional ה. See also Talshir, *I Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, 294.

32   Reconstruction of the Hebrew *Vorlage* after Talshir, *A Text Critical Commentary*, 292–93, 484–87.

It should further be noted that, if we use Böhler's argumentation, 1 Esd 5:46 cannot refer to the city gate either, since the wall was still in the making in a later passage (1 Esd 6:8–21). If one cannot refer to ruined or abandoned city gates before they are repaired in Ezra-Nehemiah, one should not be able to refer to them in 1 Esdras either. Böhler's theory and argumentation is thus self-contradictory. If the gate is neither a city gate nor a temple gate, what is it? It is probable that the question was not important to the author of 1 Esd 5:46, for the gate mainly serves narrative purposes.

Consequently, the author of 1 Esdras probably removed a reference to the Water Gate to avoid any association with the accomplishments of Nehemiah and to eradicate the memory of Nehemiah's wall. This created a vague reference to a gate to the east that is otherwise unknown. It is an artificial creation that is dependent on Neh 3:26; 8:1, 3; and 1 Esd 9:38, 41.

Ezra 4:12 and 1 Esd 2:17

Böhler argues that the plus τάς τε ἀγορὰς αὐτῆς ("its marketplaces"; assumed Hebrew *Vorlage* ושוקיה) in 1 Esd 2:17 is an original reading that was later omitted in Ezra 4:12. The variant would be a further sign of a comprehensive revision in Ezra-Nehemiah to remove references to a rebuilt and inhabited Jerusalem before Nehemiah. Although not specifically mentioned here, marketplaces would also have had gates/doors (דלתים), which implies a largely rebuilt city.[33]

Böhler's argumentation is unconvincing because the same verse refers to the nearly completed city walls: "they are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations." If the building of the city walls before Nehemiah was the main problem, why would a reference to marketplaces be omitted and not a reference to the city wall itself? Böhler's argumentation is also misleading, since he draws attention to unmentioned but implied or speculated gates/doors of a marketplace and their implication for the condition of the city, but he does not address the city walls mentioned in the same verse.[34] That the MT refers to nearly completed city walls in this verse and in Ezra 4:16 shows that there was no comprehensive revision of Ezra to accommodate it to the Nehemiah story.

It is noteworthy that Böhler's theory again uses a controversial and uncertain case. The problems of this verse, especially as connected with the Masoretic notes, have been acknowledged since early research, and there have been numerous attempts to reconstruct what has happened. The *ketiv* ושורי אשכללו and *qere* ושוריא שכללו forms already imply textual corruption. Most scholars reject the *ketiv* and follow the *qere*,[35] but it may only be a later attempt to correct the *ketiv*. The perfect seems inappropriate here, as verse 16, which also refers to the building of the walls, uses the imperfect ישתכללון (cf. also impf. יחיטו in v. 12). As Hugh G. M. Williamson has noted, *qere* "is no better since vv 13 and 16 use the same vocabulary to show that the walls were not yet completed."[36] Lisbeth S. Fried discusses different solutions, and, understanding the verb as a causative, she translates "they have ordered the walls to be com-

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[33] Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 106–8, 171–72. After considering the possibility of an accidental omission in the MT, he notes (172): "Andererseits setzt die Fertigstellung der Marktstraßen Jerusalems mit ihren Toren und den Gebäuden und Mauern, die das impliziert, eine weitgehend wiedererbaute Stadt voraus, und zwar vor Serubbabels Heimkehr."

[34] Böhler's (*Die heilige Stadt*, 108) acrobatic explanations about the contradiction show that the reference to the walls in this verse as well as in the MT is a problem for his conception about the relationship between Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras.

[35] E.g., Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra*, 52. See also other early suggestions in his discussion of the case.

[36] Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 55.

pleted."[37] Wilhelm Rudolph assumes an accidental omission of ושריו before ושורי, and he also emends לשכללה to אשכללו.[38]

Although it may not be possible to reconstruct the original with any certainty, it is none-theless notable that the assumed Hebrew *Vorlage* ושוקיה of τάς τε ἀγορὰς αὐτῆς is graphically similar to ושוריה (note that, instead of ושוק, the LXX reads here καὶ τὰ τείχη αὐτῆς > ושוריה; similarly in v. 16), and one could assume the confusion of one letter (ר for ק) and later harmon-ization: ושוריה > ושוקיה > ושוריה ושוקיה. In any case, the plus in 1 Esd 2:17 is likely connected to the textual corruption that occurred already before the textual traditions of Ezra and 1 Es-dras diverged.[39] That the original text did mention marketplaces is suggested by Ezra 4:16, which refers to the building of the walls but does not mention marketplaces: די הן ריתא דך תתבנא ושוריה ישתכללון לקבל דנה חלק בעבר נהרא לא איתי לך ("that, if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then have no possession in the province Beyond the River").

One cannot completely exclude the possibility that the reference to the marketplaces was accidentally omitted in the MT/LXX, but it is more probable that the reading in 1 Esd 2:17 was occasioned and is associated with the textual corruption in this sentence. One should not use a conjectural understanding of a text commonly acknowledged as corrupt and difficult as evidence for a conceptional revision in the MT. The references to the walls being rebuilt in the same passage, in Ezra 4:12, 16, undermine any assumption that the text was revised to censor references to a settled city.

Ezra 5:8 and 1 Esd 6:8

First Esdras 6:8 contains a large plus missing in the parallel Ezra 5:8: καὶ ἐλθόντες εἰς Ἰερουσαλὴμ τὴν πόλιν κατελάβομεν τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐν Ἰερουσαλὴμ τῇ πόλει ("and [when we] entered the city of Jerusalem, we found the elders of the Judeans of the captivity building in the city of Jerusalem"). According to Böhler, the two references to Jeru-salem caused the section to be omitted in Ezra 5:8, for Jerusalem cannot be called a city before Nehemiah restores it.[40] This suggestion is unconvincing because Jerusalem is said to be a city several times in Ezra (4:12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21), and these references also relate to its rebuilding. For example, Ezra 4:12 reads: "They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city" (קריתא מרדתא ובאישתא בנין). Moreover, a reference to the city of Jerusalem does not necessarily mean that it was inhabited. For example, the Nehemiah story refers to a ruined Jerusalem as a city. According to Neh 2:3, 5 the city lies waste, but it can still be called a city (עיר).

If Böhler's theory were correct, the many references to the city being almost finished in Ezra 4:12–21 should be omitted as well or perhaps even more so than general references to Jerusalem as a city, but no attempt to censor these references can be found. Some scholars as-sume a textual corruption and restore the text after 1 Esdras.[41] One could assume an omission by a homoioteleuton if the plus ended with the words ירושלם קריתא (cf. ליהוד מדינתא), but this is not a strong argument. Although no obvious reason for the omission can be found, Rudolph

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37 Lisbeth S. Fried, *Ezra: A Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 210–11, reads a "caus-ative of the verb 'to complete' in the past."

38 Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 38. Similarly also Gunneweg, *Esra*, 84. The BHS apparatus follows this emendation.

39 See Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra*, 52.

40 Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 80–82, 154–58.

41 Thus Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra*, 58; Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 50; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 70; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, OTL (London: SCM, 1988), 118; Talshir, *I Es-dras: From Origin to Translation*, 169.

notes that there must have been a reference to Jerusalem in the report to the Persian king.[42] However, Dirk Schwiderski has shown that all the letters in Ezra are fictional and unauthentic,[43] and therefore one must be careful with arguments based on what authentic Persian letters should include. A fictional letter written for this context could easily leave out a reference to Jerusalem, since it is clear from the context that Jerusalem was meant.

Most scholars note that verse 9 refers to "those elders" (לשביא אלך), who are not mentioned in the preceding letter without the plus in 1 Esd 6:8, where they are mentioned (τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῶν Ἰουδαίων). The elders of the Jews are mentioned in the narrative before the letter in verse 5 (שבי יהודיא), so verse 9 could refer to them, and if the letter was written for this context, the author could easily forget the intended context of the letter and adopt the elders from the narrative. It may be no coincidence that the narrative and the Persian inspectors in the letter refer to "the elders of the Jews." The letter, which is supposedly from an entirely different context and genre, seems to share conceptions and terminology of the narrative. Therefore, the assumption of something missing in Ezra 5:8 is based only on the assumption that the letter is a separate and authentic document.

The MT text is unproblematic and concise: ידיע להוא למלכא די אזלנא ליהוד מדינתא לבית אלהא רבא והוא מתבנא והוא מתבנא אבן ("May it be known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built of hewn stone."); it does not give a reason to assume that something was missing. In comparison, the reading in 1 Esd 6:8 is repetitive and dispensable. Its omission does not disturb the text in any way. It is thus likely that 1 Esd 6:8 contains a secondary plus that seeks to make explicit what is already implied in the text, but it adds no information not already given in the chapter.[44]

Regardless of how one evaluates the variant, the main problem with Böhler's theory is that, if references to Jerusalem as a city were the problem, why was an entire section omitted? No apparent motive can be found, and therefore if we assume that the plus in 1 Esd 6:8 is original, the MT reading is probably due to an accidental rather than an intentional omission. However, an intentional addition in 1 Esd 6:8 is more probable.

Ezra 6:18 and 1 Esd 7:9

According to Böhler, the reference to gatekeepers standing at each gateway in 1 Esd 7:9 (καὶ οἱ θυρωροὶ ἐφ' ἑκάστου πυλῶνος) is the original reading, while the missing reference in the parallel Ezra 6:18 is the result of an intentional omission. The reason for the omission would have been the gates, which in Ezra-Nehemiah should be in ruins before Nehemiah's activity.[45] Several considerations weaken Böhler's arguments here. First, the reference to the gatekeepers in 1 Esd 7:9 standing at the gates is awkwardly located at the end of the verse after it has already been stated that the priests and Levites were standing in their vestments by tribes as instructed in the book of Moses. The sentence is like an addendum at the end and is poorly connected with the preceding text. This suggests that it does not derive from the same author.[46] Loring W.

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[42]   Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 50.

[43]   Dirk Schwiderski, *Handbuch des nordwestsemitischen Briefformulars: Ein Beitrag zur Echtheitsfrage der aramäischen Briefe des Esrabuches*, BZAW 295 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 381–82.

[44]   Similarly, Gunneweg, *Esra*, 99, who assumes that 1 Esd 6:8 is a secondary attempt to close a gap in the narrative.

[45]   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 102–4, 168–71.

[46]   As noted by Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 62: "Die beträchtlich nachhinkenden Worte stammen aus 3 Esd 1 15 = 2 Chr 31 15."

Batten also notes a problem here, but he assumes that the text has "broken off."[47] It is notable that the same sentence or expression as in 1 Esd 7:9 is found in 1 Esd 1:15, which has a parallel in 2 Chr 35:15: καὶ οἱ θυρωροὶ ἐφ' ἑκάστου πυλῶνος < והשערים לשער ושער. The sentence was probably taken from Chronicles to increase the connection with the First Temple.

Second, the context implies that temple gates may have been meant here. The passage deals with the completion of the temple and its dedication. The community is making sacrifices in the dedication ceremony, where the priests and Levites are standing (ἔστησαν) in their vestments (ἐστολισμένοι). The ceremony takes place in the temple and its immediate surroundings, and therefore 1 Esd 7:9 would most naturally refer to the gates of the temple area or of the temple. It is a less likely conception that the gatekeepers would be spread around the city standing at each gate for the dedication ceremony of the temple. It is likely that 1 Esd 1:15, which describes a Passover ceremony in the temple, also refers to the gatekeepers who stood at the temple gates and not at the city gates.[48] If a change in scene from the temple to the entire city and the gates of the city wall were intended, one would expect this to be stated. There is no reason for omitting the temple gates in Ezra-Nehemiah, since a completed temple is bound to have gates. Nehemiah is not said to have rebuilt the gates to the temple, and thus there would be no contradiction to motivate an omission.[49]

Third, the sentence in 1 Esdras, which does not have a verb and may go back to a nominal clause in the Hebrew *Vorlage*, expresses a physical presence at the gates. They were at the gates or standing there. The physical presence of the priests and Levites is also implied by the reference to their clothes: καὶ ἔστησαν οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ οἱ Λευῖται ἐστολισμένοι. This differs markedly from the MT reading, which lacks a parallel to the word for clothes. Moreover, the MT uses the verb קום in *hiphil* with the community or the Israelites (cf. vv. 6–8) as the subject. The priests and Levites are the subject of ἔστησαν in 1 Esd 7:9. This indicates a larger difference between the two versions than just the presence of the gatekeepers. The MT *hiphil* can only refer to the installation of the priests and Levites by the community and not to a physical setting or making them stand in the ceremony. That there is a reference to what is written in the Torah supports this interpretation: the installation of the priests and Levites is done according to the law, which contains regulations about the instatement of the priests and Levites (e.g., Exod

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[47]   Batten, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 151. Charles C. Torrey, *Ezra Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910), 225, assumed that the whole passage Ezra 6:15–18 is an addition by the Chronicler, but the tensions within the passage are evident; at least vv. 15 and 18 have a different origin from the rest of the passage; see the discussion in Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 69–73.

[48]   The Hebrew Bible uses the same word, השערים, for gatekeepers at city gates and gatekeepers with a cultic function at the temple. References to gatekeepers who do not have an evident cultic function and who are at the city gates are rare (e.g., 2 Sam 18:26, 2 Kgs 7:10–11, Neh 7:3), while the cultic function of gatekeepers is evident in Chronicles, where more than half (20 out of 37) of the word's occurrences in the Hebrew Bible are found. Outside Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, the word is used only twice (2 Sam 18:26 and 2 Kgs 7:10–11), both in reference to gatekeepers at city gates.

[49]   MT Neh 2:8 refers to the building of the gates of the temple fortress or a fortress connected to the temple (שערי הבירה אשר לבית). Although this would not connect with temple gates in 1 Esd 7:9, the MT reading in Neh 2:8 may still be a secondary change, since the usually faithful LXX lacks the reference to the temple fortress and merely refers to the gates, τὰς πύλας. A temple fortress is not mentioned elsewhere in Ezra-Nehemiah, and thus its sudden appearance here is peculiar. It may be a scribal change from a later time when a fortress had been built in connection with or close to the temple.

29; Lev 8; Num 3:5–10). It is also logical that after the temple was completed, the priests and Levites were put into their office.[50]

First Esdras 7:9 portrays the ceremony quite differently. Instead of a reference to the installation in office, the priests and Levites are standing in their ceremonial clothing, and the physical presence of the gatekeepers at the temple gates is connected to this. It appears that 1 Esd 7:9 has primarily a physical and ceremonial setting in mind and not the instatement of the offices. The changes are thus more extensive than the plus at the end of the verse, and they are interconnected. There are two alternatives: (1) the MT version is the result of an intentional change in the MT from a physical setting to the appointment of the priests and Levites, or (2) the reading in 1 Esdras is the result of an intentional change to increase the physical and ceremonial setting.

According to Böhler, the problem for the MT was that the gatekeepers could not be in office already in Ezra 6:18, since in Ezra-Nehemiah they are appointed only in Neh 7:1. This would have been another reason for omitting the gatekeepers in Ezra 6:18, as they already seem to be serving in the office. This argument fails to recognize that the same verse Neh 7:1 also refers to the appointment of Levites. Not only did the Levites serve in their office several times in the book of Ezra, but Böhler's assumption that Ezra 6:18 is the result of secondary change leads to a contradiction. Since the variants are interconnected, the idea that the priests and Levites are appointed already in Ezra 6:18 would be a secondary development. The Levites would have been appointed twice in Ezra-Nehemiah. From a compositional point of view, the double appointment of Levites is not a problem, for Ezra-Nehemiah contains several internal inconsistencies caused by later editing and lack of harmonization, but this undermines Böhler's argumentation that is largely based on extensive harmonization in Ezra-Nehemiah. His theory of an intentional harmonization of Ezra with the Nehemiah story is thus self-contradictory. It would mean that the same scribe harmonized *and* created a tension between Ezra and the Nehemiah story. Consequently, Böhler's theory that the gatekeepers were omitted in Ezra 6:18 is highly unlikely. It is more probable that the reading in 1 Esd 7:9 is the result of an intentional change to increase the physical aspect of the ceremony. It seeks to give the impression of a spectacular and solemn ceremony where the priest and Levites stand in their ceremonial vestments in the temple, while the gatekeepers stand at the gates.

Ezra 9:9 and 1 Esd 8:78

Ezra 9:9 and 1 Esd 8:78 contain a variant between a third-person masculine suffix and Zion: חרבתיו and τὴν ἔρημον Σιὼν. According to Böhler, the word Zion was replaced with a suffix referring to the temple in Ezra 9:9 because the text would otherwise look back at the rebuilt Zion, which he identifies as the city of Jerusalem. This would contradict the conception that Jerusalem was in ruins before Nehemiah rebuilt it.[51] The identification of Zion with the city is not as unambiguous as Böhler presents,[52] for it can refer to the Temple Mount, the temple area, Jerusalem, or the whole country.[53] In this respect the problem would not be as significant and clear as Böhler assumes. Zion could be understood to refer to the temple area, for example,

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[50]   As noted by Fried, *Ezra*, 285, "Temple dedications are normally followed by the installation of the temple's personnel."

[51]   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 79–80, 158–161.

[52]   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 80: "Die Wiederherstellung Zions ist mehr als nur der Wiederaufbau des Tempels." Without any further discussion, he then identifies Zion with the city.

[53]   Thus many, e.g., Simone Paganini and Annett Giercke-Ungermann, "Zion/Zionstheologie," in WiBiLex (see https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/35418/). Chronicles identifies Zion

but since the word is otherwise never mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah or 1 Esdras, it is difficult to determine what it refers to.

The identification of Zion is not the main issue here, for the ensuing sentence implies that Ezra may be looking back to the rebuilt wall: ולתת לנו גדר ביהודה ובירושלם.[54] Even if the text may not have referred to a city wall,[55] a scribe seeking to remove contradiction with Nehemiah's wall would hardly leave this in place. Despite the use of a different word, the contradiction between the city wall built by Nehemiah (חומה) and a wall (גדר) that protects Jerusalem[56] would be more problematic than a reference to an unspecified Zion that has been restored. The reference to a wall shows that there are contradictions within Ezra-Nehemiah, and this is also understandable in a heavily edited composite work. The fact that the word Zion is not mentioned elsewhere in the book suggests that it is a later attempt to introduce a theological concept that is commonly used in many other books of the Hebrew Bible.[57]

Ezra 10:1 and 1 Esd 8:88

When Ezra was weeping in front of the temple in Ezra 10:1, a great crowd from Israel (מישראל) gathered to him. In the parallel 1 Esd 8:88 the crowd is said to be from Jerusalem (ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλὴμ). According to Böhler, the MT reading is a secondary attempt to avoid the idea that Jerusalem was inhabited.[58] Some scholars follow 1 Esdras and assume an accidental mistake between ישראל and ירושלם,[59] which cannot be excluded, but it is perhaps less likely than an intentional change. Böhler's argumentation for the priority of 1 Esd 8:88 is interesting and typical of other cases as well, so it is described in more detail here.

He argues that the text cannot refer to women and children from Israel because it is not clear whether they belong to Israel. A reference to Israel would undermine the text's whole idea. Not only is it questionable whether the author of the passage followed this kind of logic (viz., Jerusalem not being called a city when in ruins), but assuming the author did, the argumentation still has severe problems. The text does not say that *all* Israel gathered to him, only a *great crowd* from Israel, and the implicit assumption is that only those who agree with Ezra and who are shocked about the sin gather to cry with Ezra. The implicit idea is that those who gather are from Israel. Similarly in Ezra 9:4, it is the faithful ones (or כל חרד בדברי אלהי ישראל) who gather to Ezra to mourn the same sin.

Moreover, the idea is to separate those who do not belong to Israel. They have become part of the Israelite community through marriage, but according to the author they should be expelled. Many passages in the Hebrew Bible refer to the expulsion of evil *from Israel* because

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  with the city in 1 Chr 11:5 and 2 Chr 5:2, but, for example, Psalms often connects it with the Temple Mount (e.g., Pss 2:6; 48:2, 11; 78:68).

[54]   The infinitives להעמיד and ולתת are paralleled, they should both refer to the past.

[55]   The fact that the text also refers to a wall in Judah suggests that a city wall was not originally meant, but it could easily be understood in this way. However, some scholars, such as Alfred Bertholet, *Esra und Nehemia* KHC 19 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1902), 40, assume that Ezra 9:9 refers to the city wall of Jerusalem. Bertholet uses this conclusion to assume that Ezra 9 should be located after Neh 2. For problems in assuming that the city wall was meant, see the discussion in Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 136.

[56]   As noted by Fried, *Ezra*, 381–82, the wall in Ezra 9:9 probably refers to a metaphorical protection.

[57]   Many scholars (e.g., Batten, *Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 339) make note of the variant, but it is rarely considered as a probable original reading. Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra*, 82, rightly assumes that it is a later interpretation.

[58]   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 92–93, 164–68.

[59]   E.g., Batten, *Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 339–40.

they should not be part of it, but they are part of Israel before the expulsion takes place (e.g., Deut 17:12; 22:22; Judg 20:13). Using this kind of logic to argue against the MT variant could find problems in many texts where someone is separated from something.

Böhler's second argument is that Ezra 10:5 implies the presence of only the leaders of the priests, Levites, and those Israelites who live in Jerusalem.[60] It is only for eventually resolving the issue that the whole community is later summoned, which takes place in Ezra 10:7, and this would speak for the priority of 1 Esd 8:88. Böhler's reading of the text is selective and highly problematic. First, Ezra 10:1 does not refer to all Israel gathering in Jerusalem, and thus there is no contradiction with Ezra 10:7. Second, MT Ezra 10:5 refers to people living in Jerusalem, which clearly shows that the MT also implies inhabitants in Jerusalem. The same is true of MT Ezra 10:7: It refers to a proclamation "throughout Judah and Jerusalem," which implies inhabitants in Jerusalem.[61] These verses undermine the whole theory. Third, the passage was heavily edited and contains conflicting views on the composition of the community: Judah, Israel, Benjamin, the people (כל העם), the community (קהל), and the Golah are variably said to be the main actors, although all refer to the same community. For example, in verse 7 the whole Golah in Judah and Jerusalem must come to Jerusalem, but in verse 9a it is the men of Judah and Benjamin who eventually arrive, and verse 9b refers to the whole people (כל העם). Despite the clearly varying terminology, Böhler tries to establish a full logic in the final text as we have in MT Ezra 10, but this is a futile enterprise before the literary history of the text is understood. However, Böhler does not attempt to understand the earlier literary history of the text[62] but instead implies that the text should be coherent on one level, while at the same time he argues based on inconsistencies. This is an exemplary case of the methodological hazards involved in basing arguments on the internal logic of a composite text, the full history of which is not recognized.

Despite the problems in Böhler's argumentation, it cannot be completely excluded that the variant is an intentional replacement in the MT. In this case, the motive would be to be more inclusive and suggest that faithful people from the whole country came to weep with Ezra. The motive suggested by Böhler is not convincing, since the passage nonetheless implies inhabitants in Jerusalem. Another alternative would be to assume an accidental mistake between Jerusalem and Israel in either version. The third alternative is most probable: Israel may have been misunderstood as a local designation, and it was therefore changed to Jerusalem in 1 Esdras.[63] A reference to Israel as a locality would be anachronistic here, but a reference to the people would be appropriate, especially when the cultic purity of Israel is discussed.

Ezra 10:6 and 1 Esd 9:1

According to Böhler, the original reference to the temple courtyard חצר בית האלהים was replaced in Ezra 10:6 by a more neutral reference, לפני בית האלהים, because the temple courtyard can be mentioned only after Nehemiah's wall has been built. The parallel in 1 Esd 9:1

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[60]   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 167: "Als Esra im folgenden den Anwesenden einen Eid zur Lösung der Mischehenfrage abnimmt, setzt die Erzählung nur die Anwesenheit der *Führer* (שרים, φυλάρχοι) der Priester, Leviten und Israeliten voraus (Esdr α 892 Esr 105), eben jener, die in Jerusalem wohnen."

[61]   The reference to "Jerusalem … assembling at Jerusalem" in this verse also shows that Böhler's argument in Ezra 2:72–3:1 is unfounded. It is not illogical that some people who live in Jerusalem must gather in Jerusalem.

[62]   See Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 105–6, 172–73.

[63]   Thus, for example, Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 92; and Gunneweg, *Esra*, 173.

(αὐλή < חצר) would preserve the original text. Böhler uses a description of Solomon's temple and references in Chronicles to support the idea that the temple had a courtyard surrounded by a wall (esp. 1 Kgs 7:12 and 2 Chr 4:9).[64]

The assumed motive for the change is hypothetical. Nehemiah's building account in Neh 1–6 does not mention temple walls or a courtyard. The temple was completed before Ezra 10:6, and thus any courts connected to it would be unproblematic after Ezra 6:15. Nehemiah 8:16 and 13:7 use the word חצר, but they refer to many courtyards (חצרות בית האלהים), which implies a different concept of the temple construction than 1 Esd 9:1 does. The word for court (αὐλή) is otherwise never used in 1 Esdras. Rather than Ezra 10:6 preserving a secondary reading here, the variant in 1 Esd 9:1 is probably the result of a secondary change that seeks to retroject a later historical situation when there was already a courtyard to an earlier time. The change also highlights physical spaces in and around the temple and gives the impression of a larger temple. Thereby the change may be indirectly connected to the elevation of Zerubbabel. The references to courtyards in Neh 8:16 and 13:7 may also be later projections from a time when the temple had already grown to have many courtyards due to later constructions. The addition of a temple fortress in MT Neh 2:8 may be a similar addition that seeks to update an older text to accord with existing realities.[65]

Neh 8:1, 3 and 1 Esd 9:38, 41

Nehemiah 8:1 and 3 refer to "the square before the Water Gate" (הרחוב אשר לפני שער המים), while the parallel in 1 Esd 9:38 and 41 refers to the open area/square before the gateway toward the east of the temple, τὸ εὐρύχωρον τοῦ πρὸς ἀνατολὰς τοῦ ἱεροῦ πυλῶνος. These variants are partly connected with the variants in Ezra 3:1, and, as we have seen, the issue may never be fully resolved. If we assume that Neh 8 is in its original place, the city wall would have been built already, and there would be no problem with referring to any gates. Moreover, the gates mentioned in 1 Esd 9:38 and 41 are temple gates. Regardless of the original position of Neh 8 within the composition, the temple had already been completed before the Ezra story, and the main motive for the revision, as suggested by Böhler, does not apply here.

One could suggest that the references to the Water Gate are late scribal attempts to establish a connection between Ezra the scribe and Nehemiah the builder. This would have happened after the Nehemiah story was added to the Ezra story. A similar attempt can be found in Neh 8:9, where a reference to Nehemiah was secondarily added.[66] On the other hand, the Water Gate does not have a particular significance in Nehemiah. The Sheep Gate, which is consecrated by the high priest in Neh 3:1, would have been a more probable candidate if the name of the gate was intentionally changed. It is difficult to find a motive for changing a reference to a gate in the temple to a gate in the city wall that has no marked significance. This could speak for the MT readings being original.

In contrast, a change from the Water Gate to a temple gate would be motivated by an attempt to highlight the fact that Ezra's reading of the law took place in front of the temple. This fits well with the increasingly priestly aspect of Ezra the scribe, who first becomes a priest and then the high priest in 1 Esd 9:39, 49. The change would underscore the connection between the law/the Torah and the temple. Moreover, in 1 Esdras the preceding scene takes place by the

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64   Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 105–6, 164–68.

65   Most commentators make no note of the variant, e.g., Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra*, 85; Batten, *Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 343; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 143.

66   See Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 149–50.

temple (1 Esd 8:88 and 9:1), and thus the reading of the law smoothly continues from the same location.

It is possible that neither Neh 8:1, 3 nor 1 Esd 9:38, 41 preserve the original readings, but it is likely that the readings in Neh 8:1, 3 are older than those in 1 Esd 9:38, 41. Full certainty can probably never be reached, but the most probable development is as follows: A now-lost original reference was first changed to the Water Gate when the Ezra story was merged with the Nehemiah story. The change sought to connect the reading of the Torah with Nehemiah's activity. When 1 Esdras was created as a separate composition, the Water Gate was changed to a temple gate to establish a connection with the reading of the Torah and the temple. A possible model for this was 2 Kgs 23:1–3 and/or 2 Chr 34:29–31, where the newly found book is read in the temple to the people of Judah and Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:2: ויעל המלך בית יהוה וכל איש יהודה וכל ישבי ירושלם אתו). That the author of 1 Esd 9:38 and 41 was trying to establish a connection with the Josiah story is also suggested by the fact that the work begins with Josiah celebrating the Passover in a passage that was taken from 2 Chr 35. As Kristin De Troyer has noted, Ezra partly adopts Josiah's role and continues his work.[67]

An alternative but somewhat less likely theory is that the Water Gate is original in Neh 8:1, 3 and that the Nehemiah story coincidentally also mentions the same gate or that a reference to the Water Gate was added to the Nehemiah story. The possibility of a coincidental reference to the Water Gate in the originally independent Ezra story and Nehemiah story is possible only if the Water Gate was a particularly important gate in the historical context where these stories were written and transmitted, but the Water Gate is never mentioned outside the book of Nehemiah, and thus this hypothesis is only a theoretical possibility.

Summary and Discussion

A review of Böhler's arguments in favor of the theory reveals fundamental problems. It is highly unlikely that references to a settled and built Jerusalem were removed from the MT. First, Böhler's theory assumes that, in all the different readings as discussed, something was omitted or replaced in the MT. The older text was highly respected, and therefore additions were much more common than omissions and replacements. The theory assumes that the editors primarily used uncommon editorial techniques to revise the older text. Second, and connected to the first point, there is no positive evidence in favor of the theory in any of the MT variants. In none of the cases would a scribe have added a reference to a ruined, unbuilt, and unsettled Jerusalem. The evidence for the theory is always found in 1 Esdras and is based on something that would be missing in the Ezra-Nehemiah parallel. It is problematic to argue for a conceptional revision in the MT based on absence in the MT and presence in 1 Esdras. Third, the theory is based on a selective use of passages. References in the MT that directly contradict the theory are neglected or ignored (Ezra 4:6, 12–21; 9:9), and in some cases the contradiction is found in the same verse where an alleged variant supports the theory (e.g., Ezra 4:12; 9:9). In view of the many contradictory references, the evidence for a comprehensive revision to remove references to a built and settled Jerusalem is weak. Fourth, key cases used in favor of the theory are controversial and heavily edited (Ezra 2:70/1 Esd 5:45; Ezra 3:1/1 Esd 5:46). Such equivocal text-critical cases are a poor basis for a theory. For example, Ezra 4:12/1 Esd 2:17 (marketplaces) is likely associated with or the result of textual corruption. In none of the cases is the primacy of 1 Esdras unambiguous, and in most of the discussed cases the MT may, in fact, preserve the original reading. Fifth, a conceptional connection between the MT variants

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[67] Cf. Kristin De Troyer, "Zerubbabel and Ezra: A Revived and Revised Solomon and Josiah? A Survey of Current 1 Esdras Research," *CurBR* 1 (2002): 54–55.

is unclear, while a connection can be seen between many of the 1 Esdras variants: They highlight Jerusalem and its physical spaces especially in and around the temple (e.g., 1 Esd 9:38, 41). The gates are important for portraying a ceremonial setting, and they also seek to connect the building of the Second Temple with the First Temple. This is especially evident in 1 Esd 7:9, which repeats a sentence from 1 Esd 1:15/2 Chr 35:15. There may also be a conceptional connection with the commonly acknowledged anti-Hasmonean stand of 1 Esdras.[68] The elevation of the temple and its glory highlight the accomplishments of the Davidic Zerubbabel.[69] This fits well with the omission of the Nehemiah story, which can be read as a legitimation of a non-Davidic leader. Omitting references to Nehemiah's accomplishments is a possible motive for some of the rewriting and textual variants in 1 Esdras, especially in those sections that can be associated with the building of the wall (1 Esd 9:38, 41).[70]

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[68]   The anti-Hasmonean position of 1 Esdras is also recognized by Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 19.

[69]   Cf. De Troyer, "Zerubbabel and Ezra," 55, who argues that Zerubbabel the builder of the Second Temple is likened to Solomon the builder of the First Temple. Later additions that highlight Zerubbabel can be found in 1 Esd 6:17, 26, and 28.

[70]   *Damnatio memoriae* is a well-known practice in the ancient world, and this is what 1 Esdras may attempt. However, the controversy over the past and the restoration of Jerusalem was acute when 1 Esdras was written in the second century BCE. Cf. Jacob L. Wright, "Remembering Nehemiah: 1 Esdras and the *Damnatio memoriae Nehemiae*," in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?*, 145–63. See also Ehud Ben Zvi and Sylvie Honigman, "Remembering Three Nehemiahs in Late Second Temple Times: Patterns and Trajectories in Memory Shaping," *JHebS* 18 (2018): 1–34, https://doi .org/10.5508/jhs.2018.v18.a10, who discuss the memory of Nehemiah in 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Ben Sira, and Ezra-Nehemiah but mention the *damnatio memoriae* of Nehemiah in 1 Esdras only briefly (7: "Nehemiah is only marginally mentioned, and his memory is perhaps 'actively' bracketed among the intended readers of the book"). The Nehemiah story was probably well known in this century, as is also implied by a reference to his accomplishments in Sir 49:13, and ultimately the attempt to eradicate his memory failed.