

Preface

The last few decades have witnessed a surge of unprecedented interest in the history and literature of the Restoration Period (also described as “the postexilic” or “Persian period”). Many studies on all aspects of this period continually attempt to shed light on this era and uncover its secrets. They have gradually unveiled the major significance of the Restoration Period for the history of Israel, for the emergence of Israelite identity and self-definition, for the development of biblical literature, and for the formation of the religion of Israel, its theology, and its institutions. They have articulated the role of the Restoration Period as a foundational stage in the development of both Judaism and Christianity.

This surge of interest in the Restoration Period prompted me to respond to the requests of colleagues and students to present my studies on this period in one accessible volume, which is now presented to them in gratitude.

My own interest in the literature and religion of the Restoration Period was kindled early, during my undergraduate studies, when I wrote a seminar paper on “Moses and David as Cult Founders in the Book of Chronicles,” a study that still awaits publication. My research proceeded with another seminar paper, on the language of Chronicles, a chapter of which was published in Hebrew in 1966/67 and eventually translated into English (1987). It was followed by my M.A. thesis on *The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah Investigated Anew*, the first part of which was published in 1968 and is presented as the first chapter of this volume. My doctoral dissertation on *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* was submitted and approved in 1973, published in Hebrew in 1977, and in English in 1989. My commentary on Chronicles, in the OTL series, appeared in 1993, and its German, somewhat abbreviated version in 2002–3. Throughout this time, I continued my research on various aspects of the Restoration Period, as reflected in this volume. Although I turned to other avenues of research, my interest in the Restoration Period never subsided and is still as keen as it has ever been.

The present volume contains 22 selected essays, the last of which was published in 2006. I chose to arrange the articles in chronological order, an arrangement that may elucidate not only the various aspects of the Restoration Period but also the progress and development of its research. New topics arose throughout the years, and the buds that can be detected in the earlier studies have blossomed and developed in the later studies.

For the purpose of authenticity and precision, the essays are preserved in their original form and wording. Several measures were undertaken, however, to unify and modernize their format. The references—both to sources and to bibliography—were unified to follow one style throughout the volume; the notes were numbered consecutively in each essay; the bibliographical notes “in press” were replaced with full details (sometimes entailing a change in the title of the cited work); references to works in Hebrew were supplemented by their English translation wherever possible; and, of course, obvious typographical mistakes and glaring errors were duly corrected.

A preface is never complete without the expression of gratitude. No words will suffice to express my thanks to my teachers, colleagues, and students, who encouraged me in my work, stimulated my research, and shared its fruits. It is to them that this volume is dedicated.

I wish to thank all of the publishers in whose publications the articles first appeared. They graciously and expediently granted me permission to republish articles in this volume.

I was fortunate to enlist the help of Ms. Shelly Zilberfarb-Eshkoli, who assisted me in preparing the articles for the present edition. Her meticulous attention to the most minute details and her unfailing consistency turned this hard work into a source of continuous satisfaction.

Finally, thanks are due to Eisenbrauns: to James Eisenbraun, to Beverly McCoy, and to the dedicated staff of the publishing house. In their proficiency, dedication, and good will, they became true partners in the creation of this volume. May this book be a “reward for your labor” (Jer 31:16).

SARA JAPHET
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Acknowledgments

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