

Remembering Three Nehemiahs in Late Second Temple Times: Patterns and Trajectories in Memory Shaping

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REMEMBERING THREE NEHEMIAHS IN LATE SECOND TEMPLE TIMES: PATTERNS AND TRAJECTORIES IN MEMORY SHAPING

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this contribution is to explore the workings of a particular set of memory shaping patterns that were at work in the construction of Nehemiah as an evolving site of memory during the late Second Temple period.¹ It should be stressed that

¹ The term “site of memory” goes back to the work of Pierre Nora, who wrote: “If the expression *lieu de mémoire* must have an official definition, it should be this: a *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community,” (Pierre Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” in idem, *Realms of Memory Volume 1: Conflicts and Divisions* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1996], 1–20 [vii]; the essay appears also, with a slightly different English translation as Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 [1989], 7–24). Nora, however, advanced a relatively restrictive understanding of the term (see op. cit., 14–19) that relates to his time and location, and is not best suited to the study of ancient societies, including ancient Israel. We use the concept of “site of memory” in the sense of any socially constructed space, place, event, character—historical or not, text, or similar whether it is manifested “materially,” “materially” in a symbolic way, or only in the mind of members of a social group—whose presence in the relevant cultural milieu evokes or was meant to evoke core images or aspects of images of the past held by the particular social group that lives in that particular cultural milieu. According to this pragmatic use of the term, it appears that all memory groups have these said sites of memory—and thus all social groups are, by necessity also, memory groups. For more on this concept of site of memory and on the general approach to Social Memory underlying this article, see for example Ehud Ben Zvi, *Social Memory among the Literati of Yehud* (BZAW, 509; Berlin: de Gruyter, forthcoming 2019); idem, “Chronicles and Social Memory,” *ST* 71

our aim is not to sketch out some plausible reconstruction of the historical Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah, his potential actions, or the background against which he might have taken them.² The reason for this choice of topic is grounded in the fact that the former has been overwhelmingly underexplored in comparison with the latter. This, despite the fact that, as one of the two authors of this contribution argued elsewhere, whereas the historical Nehemiah might have been a minor “flash,” at best, from the perspective of the history of the Persian period in Yehud,³ the Nehemiah/s of memory was/were certainly not a minor “flash,” and played far more important roles well after the death of the putative historical Nehemiah, and for a long time.⁴

Today’s historical Nehemiahs are grounded on textual reconstructions of the so-called Nehemiah Memoir, a text of disputed extent that likely went through a very substantial redactional history, and which is often associated with e.g., Neh 1:1–2:20; 4:1–7:5 (or 4:1–6:19 or 4:1–7:3) and 12:31–43; 13:6–31 (or

(2017), 69–90; Diana V. Edelman, “Introduction,” in Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (eds.) *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian & Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xi–xxiv; Ehud Ben Zvi, “Remembering the Prophets through the Reading and Rereading of a Collection of Prophetic Books in Yehud: Methodological Considerations and Explorations,” Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin (eds.), *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah* (FAT, 85; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2012), 17–44 and relevant works cited in them.

² On the latter, see for example Gary N. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans. The Origins and History of their Early Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 139–68; Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Vol. 1: Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah* (LSTS 47; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 294–310 and cited bibliography in these works.

³ We decided to use the term “Yehud” for Persian times, and “Judea” for Hellenistic times. We also decided to follow the spelling “Judas” (rather than “Judah”) in reference to “Judas Maccabee” to avoid all possible confusions.

⁴ See Ehud Ben Zvi, “Re-negotiating a Putative Utopia and the Stories of the Rejection of the Foreign Wives in Ezra-Nehemiah,” in Steven J. Schweitzer and Frauke Uhlenbruch (eds.), *Worlds that Could Not Be. Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah* (LHBOTS, 620; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark; 2016), 105–28 (112–14).

13:4–31),⁵ and may have also included sections that are no longer extant.⁶

Of course, all the reconstructions of the proposed original Nehemiah Memoir and of its multiple stages of successive redactions that have been put forward in redactional-critical studies have as their starting point the book of Ezra-Nehemiah (hereafter, E-N), that is the text to which we do have access.⁷

E-N is also the starting point of the present study of the memory (or memories) of Nehemiah. For the current purposes, it is particularly important to keep in mind that the Nehemiah of memory which the target historical community of readers of E-N evoked, vicariously experienced, and construed as they read E-N,⁸ was based on the set of images encoded, shaped and evoked by the actual book they were reading, not on the figure of the original Nehemiah Memoir or any intermediary version, however scholars may reconstruct those.

⁵ See for example Sean Burt, *The Courtier and the Governor: Transformation of Genre in the Nehemiah Memoir* (JASup 17; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014); the summary of research in Mark J. Boda, “Redaction in the Book of Nehemiah,” in Mark J. Boda and Paul L. Reddit (eds.), *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric, and Reader* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 17; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2008), 25–54 (25–26). Juha Pakkala maintains that the core of one of the three main sources of (a forerunner of the present book of) Ezra-Nehemiah consisted of a text that resembled Neh 1:1–7:4 and that Neh 13 is later and dependent on Ezra 9–10; see Juha Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe: The Development of Ezra 7–10 and Nehemia 8* (BZAW, 347; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004); idem, “The Disunity of Ezra-Nehemiah,” in Mark J. Boda and Paul L. Reddit (eds.), *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric, and Reader* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 17; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2008), 200–15. Jacob L. Wright in idem, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah Memoir and its Earliest Readers* (BZAW, 348; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004) proposes that the earliest portions of Nehemiah’s building account included 1:1a, 11b; 2:1–6 (without “I prayed to the God of Heaven” in v. 4b; “the consort was sitting beside him” and “I gave him a time” in v. 6), 11, 15 (without “I came through the Valley Gate and returned”), 16a, 17, 18b; 3:38 (without “it was completed until the half of it”); 6:15. A second stratum included Neh 2:9b, 12–14, 16b, 18a; 3:1–32; a third, 2:10, 19–20; 3:33–34, 35, 36–37; 4:1–3, 4–9, 10–17; 5:16–18; 6:5–9, 16, and a fourth, Neh 2:7, 9a; 5:14–15; 6:2–4 (p. 340). These four strata shaped the account of the wall. Neh 1–13 arrived at its present shape, according to Wright in seven main stages.

⁶ See, e.g., Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 47.

⁷ Even if this book is extant in slightly different textual versions. On textual matters associated with E-N, see David Marcus, *Ezra and Nehemiah* (BHQ, 20 Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006). LXX 1 Esdras is, of course, a different book and its Nehemiah is very much unlike the Nehemiah of E-N. See below.

⁸ The date of Ezra-Nehemiah and thus of such a community of readers is debated. Proposals range from the early Hellenistic times to the Hasmonean period.

Whatever textual history (predecessors of) E-N might have had, from a social memory perspective, there is no doubt that E-N as a book interrelates the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah. By doing so, E-N shapes a world in which these two characters, as sites of memory, tend to be construed as complementary. To be sure, complementarity does not necessarily mean equality in status. Arguably, the most striking feature of the Nehemiah of memory encoded in E-N is that although he is clearly a pious hero, he is also repeatedly marked and construed as a hero of inferior quality than his counterpart and main human hero of E-N, namely Ezra. Thus, for instance, Ezra trusts YHWH and rejects a Persian military escort (Ezra 8:22), whereas Nehemiah accepts it (Neh 2:9); Ezra is directly and emphatically associated with תורה and becomes the epitome of high תורה-literacy, whereas Nehemiah is not;⁹ Ezra works with the community “as a whole” and allows it to make decisions of their own, whereas Nehemiah claims to be the sole power to decide matters in Yehud—and he enforces what he decides with the backing of military/imperial force;¹⁰ Ezra generates collaboration within the community, but Nehemiah tends to be surrounded by adversaries; Ezra is self-effacing, Nehemiah is exactly the opposite;¹¹ and Ezra is given a long and prestigious priestly genealogy, but Nehemiah is given a minimally short genealogy that actually may serve to stress that he lacks an honor-shaping genealogy.¹²

⁹ This goes beyond direct, explicit association with תורה. Some aspects in Nehemiah’s portrayal seem even to hint at a lack in his תורה-literacy, even, if as widely assumed, later editors blunted this potential view of Nehemiah to some extent. See Burt, *Courtier and the Governor*, 159; cf. Don Polaski, “Nehemiah: Subject of the Empire, Subject of Writing,” in Isaac Kalimi (ed.), *New Perspectives on Ezra-Nehemiah. History and Historiography, Text, Literature and Interpretation* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 27–59 (54–58).

¹⁰ Neh 5:11–13 might be considered a counter-example. Tensions between the portrayal of a character in a specific, singular story and his general portrayal are not surprising in the context of “biblical” literature or in literature in general, but even in Neh 5:11–13, readers can notice the “commanding” presence of the powerful governor (see vv. 12b–13). Nehemiah is no Ezra, even in this case.

¹¹ See further the explicit call, זְכֹרֶה לִי (remember me) in Neh 5:19; 13:14, 22, 31, and the superscript (or title) to Nehemiah in Neh 1:1 דברי נחמיה “the Matters of Nehemiah.” Contrast with Ezra 1:1 (cf. Ezra 7:1). These self-referring insertions—which are all but self-effacing—have a strong impact on how the intended readership of E-N as a single work is asked to construct the character of Nehemiah.

¹² See for example Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, *In an Age of Prose: A Literary Approach to Ezra-Nehemiah* (SBLMS 26; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 144–54; Burt, *Courtier and Governor*, 155–6; Christiane Karrer-Grube, “Ezra and Nehemiah: The Return of the Others,” in Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (eds.), *Feminist Biblical Interpretation. A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 192–206 (193). Cf. Gordon E. Davies, *Ezra & Nehemiah* (Brit Olam, Collegeville, MN: 1999), 89–90.

The text here establishes a hierarchy of greatness and piousness,¹³ as Nehemiah as a site of memory, at least in part, is placed at the service of Ezra. The textually encoded effort in configuring Nehemiah in this way strongly suggests—from a memory system perspective—a mnemonic struggle about the hierarchical positioning of these two sites of memory, which in turn reflects a community grappling over the hierarchy of the array of social roles that these sites of memory embody. As we shall see, matters of hierarchical position of complementary social roles plays a significant part in the shaping of memories of other figures such as Judas, Jonathan, and Simon Maccabees, and Simon the high priest in Sirach, whose constructions as sites of memory share significant, generative and connective attributes with the Nehemiah of E-N.¹⁴

¹³ Note the emphasis on “the text,” that is, the book of Ezra-Nehemiah and the world it evokes. It is not difficult to imagine readers outside this world who might consider Nehemiah as the superior figure of the two, because he was portrayed as more authoritarian, and the one powerful enough to either quickly enforce compliance or to forcefully overcome enemies; he is the one who “gets things done.” Such a preference, however, is at odds with the multiple hierarchical markers in the texts mentioned above. Moreover, one may add to them the following: (a) whereas Ezra’s trek to the land is evocative of the Exodus from Egypt, Nehemiah’s “return” to Jerusalem is not only not evocative of the Exodus, but is time-limited from the start (see Neh 2:6; cf. Neh 13:6—as an aside it is interesting that when Josephus wrote about the death of Ezra, he could not but imagine him as dying in Jerusalem; see *Ant.* 11.158; but he leaves open the question of where did Nehemiah die, did he eventually return to the Persian king and die outside the land? See *Ant.* 11.183); (b) observance of significant aspects of Nehemiah’s policies is depicted as dependent on his actual presence as the Governor (Neh 13:6–7); and (c) the figure of Ezra was construed, in E-N as a book, as a necessary presence in the world evoked by דברי נחמיה (see explicitly Neh 7:73b–8:18 and see also Neh 9:6 in the LXX that attests, at the very least, to an early reading of Neh 8–10, in which Ezra figures prominently until the end of Neh 10:40. One may also add that E-N refrains from construing the dyad Ezra-Nehemiah mainly along the well-known memory patterns governing the ways in which the dyad Samuel-David was remembered, despite that in both cases we have a priest/“prophet” on the one hand and political ruler/builder of Jerusalem on the other. This observation is particularly relevant since had E-N followed that path, it would have ended up construing Ezra as a pious individual necessary for, and leading to Nehemiah and the latter as a more central site of memory than Ezra (cf. Samuel and David in the socially shared world of memory of the literati).

¹⁴ On Jonathan, see below, n. 67. According to Katell Berthelot, Judas and Jonathan in their respective lives embody distinct personal virtues, which are combined in the person of Simon. They also share a common distinction for military feats, which positively reverberate on Simon. See Katell Berthelot, “Literary Strategies Meant to Confer Legitimacy: About Jonathan and Simon in 1 Maccabees,” paper presented at “The Period of the Middle Maccabees: From the death of Judas through the Reign of John Hyrcanus (ca. 160–104 BCE),” 9th Nangeroni Conference, The Enoch Seminar, June 10–15, 2018, Villa

In sum, by evoking, or rather, actively shaping, a particular image of the past the book of E-N advances a distinct way of resolving this struggle. Namely, these two personages of memory are construed into two close counterparts, complementary and pious, while at the same time a hierarchy of greatness is hammered down time and again, whereby Ezra the priest is systematically evaluated higher than Nehemiah the governor. It is precisely this goal of memory-shaping, and settling of a mnemonic struggle that helps us understand the odd genre and structure of E-N. There is no book within the core repertoire of the community that consisted of two clearly marked sub-books, each evoking the memory of a separate leader who is substantially different from the other,¹⁵ but at the same time with each sub-book structured in a way reminiscent of the other¹⁶ and at times interlocking, as it were, with its counterpart.¹⁷ The atypical structure and genre of E-N is indeed well calibrated to suit its social, mnemonic task; in fact, one may say that the book in its extant form “embodies” its own message, that is, communicates it also through its atypical structure. Moreover, since oddities tend to be “attention-getters,” the work’s structure draws additional attention to its message. In sum, the qualitative oddity of E-N is thus explainable in terms of its didactic, memory-shaping goals.

The previous observations carry an important implication. Given the usual high costs associated with the creation and acceptance of an “odd” book—that is, one which is explicitly and clearly at odds with accepted norms, tastes, and expectations of the group—it stands to reason that, for some groups at least, this mnemonic struggle and its resolution in the way advanced above was indeed important and worth all the involved social and cognitive costs.¹⁸

Cagnola, Gazzada, Italy, and personal communication (June 2018).

¹⁵ A similar relation between Judas, Jonathan, and Simon is explored in 1 Macc, but there the difference is built into a genealogy.

¹⁶ See, the “parallel” structure proposed in e.g., Lester L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 116–9, esp. 117–8.

¹⁷ There is also little doubt that at some point the forerunners of the present sub-books, Ezra and Nehemiah, were edited together, with one sub-book informing the editorial work on the other and vice versa. On Ezra-Nehemiah as a literary unit, see the by-now “classical” Eskenazi, *Age of Prose*; see also, e.g., Christiane Karrer-Grube, “Scrutinizing the Conceptual Unity of Ezra and Nehemiah,” in Mark J. Boda and Paul L. Reddit (eds.), *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric, and Reader* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 17; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2008), 136–59.

¹⁸ On the importance of (Bourdieuian) considerations of taste, distaste, habitus and the like to the study of the production of books and memories in ancient Israel, see Ehud Ben Zvi, “Potential Intersections between Research Frames Informed by Social-Memory and ‘Bourdieuian’ Approaches/Concepts: The Study of Socio-Historical Features of the Literati of the Early Second Temple Period,” in idem, *Social Memory among the Literati of Yehud* (BZAW, 509; Berlin: de Gruyter, forthcoming 2018).

It is worth noting also that the close interwovenness and careful albeit clearly tilted “balance” between Ezra and Nehemiah advanced in and by E-N is very rare in antiquity; in fact, such a balance between these two figures is solely attested in E-N.¹⁹ Not only did memories of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Hellenistic period evolve independently, but also texts which in their own ways recalled and shaped memories of each one of them as independent characters rarely drew much or any attention to the other. For instance, in Sirach and 2 Maccabees, Nehemiah is praised and his memory recalled, while Ezra goes unmentioned. Conversely, in LXX 1 Esdras, much attention is devoted to Ezra, while Nehemiah is only marginally mentioned, and his memory is perhaps “actively” bracketed among the intended readers of the book.²⁰ 4 Ezra is, of course, about Ezra, and in the *Assumption of Moses*, the unidentified “intercessor” in 4:1—who was probably more likely to be associated with Ezra than Nehemiah²¹—is a single individual. If the reference there evoked

¹⁹ Unlike the case in antiquity in which this balance was unique to E-N, the mnemonic balance advanced in and by means of E-N, at least to some extent, characterizes many modern histories of Israel in the Persian period. However, it is important to keep in mind that the underlying reason is that these histories follow, at least in the main, the narrative advanced in E-N. By doing so, these present-day historians construe memories of the past that reflect those encoded in E-N, but these memories are at odds with the main mnemonic tendencies that played out in Hellenistic times in Judah.

²⁰ For references to Nehemiah in 1 Esdras see 1 Esd 5:8 (// Ezra 2:2) and 1 Esd 5:40 (cf. Ezra 2:63). Nehemiah does not appear in 1 Esd 9:49 in contrast with Neh 8:9. It is worth noting also that in 1 Esdras there is an echo of the image of the cupbearer of the Persian king, but in the form of a guardsman eventually exalted by the king. And most importantly, the close servant to the king in this book is not Nehemiah, but Zerubbabel. That said, the main issue is that the story of Nehemiah is not told in 1 Esdras, and thus the readers of the book are not asked to recall the character of memory Nehemiah known to them from other sources. In fact, one might consider 1 Esdras as a book that induces forgetfulness about Nehemiah. See Jacob L. Wright, “Remembering Nehemiah: 1 Esdras and the *Damnatio memoriae* Nehemiae,” in Lisbeth S. Fried (ed.), *Was 1 Esdras First? An Investigation into the Priority and Nature of 1 Esdras* (SLBAIL 7, Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 145–63 and on processes of induced forgetfulness in recent memory research, see for instance Charles B. Stone and William Hirst, “(Induced) Forgetting to Form a Collective Memory,” *Memory Studies* 7 (2014), 314–27.

²¹ See Johannes Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses. A Critical Edition with Commentary* (SVTP 10; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 174–6. The relevant text, within its context reads: “¹Then someone will enter who is above them, and he will spread his arms and bend his knees, and pray for them saying: ²Lord, King of All in the throne on high, who rulest the world, who wanted this people to be your elect people. Then you wanted to be called their God, according to the covenant which you made with their fathers. ³But (now) they have gone as captives into a foreign land, with their wives and children, and to the gate of the gentiles, where there is great sadness. ⁴Behold, and have mercy on them heavenly Lord! ⁵Then God will remember them, on account of the covenant which he had made with their fathers, and he will manifest

the memory of Ezra, then it left no room for an identification of this individual with Nehemiah and vice versa. Josephus refers to both Ezra and Nehemiah, but keeps them separate. Significantly, he follows 1 Esdras for his account of Ezra—not E-N—and possibly a source other than E-N for his account of Nehemiah.²² The mnemonic balance for these characters, all isolated from the other, neatly breaks in favor of Ezra in Josephus. Although Josephus' Ezra is not as elevated as his later rabbinic portrait/s, Josephus gave more prominence to Ezra than to Nehemiah.²³

All in all, it appears that despite the attempt of E-N to deeply intertwine these two sites of memory (Ezra and Nehemiah), for the most part, each site evolved during the Hellenistic period (and thereafter) in its own way, even if they at times seemed to compete, directly or indirectly, with each other. Most likely the same was the case before the composition of E-N as well.

In what follows, we will focus on the three Nehemiahs of memory respectively evoked in and encountered by readers of three texts, E-N, Sirach, and 2 Maccabees, as being the main sources that shaped and communicated memories of the Nehemiah of old in the late Second Temple Period.²⁴ Within this context, we will focus in particular on the generative pattern that scripted expectations about how good kings should behave, and which played an important role in the way memories of Nehemiah in these texts were constructed.

Significantly, whereas this pattern of the good king thoroughly informs memories of Nehemiah, it plays almost no role in those of Ezra. Rather, Ezra's mnemonic trajectory within Judean circles is influenced by the expectations associated with a teacher of תורה, legislator, scribe, prophet, and priest. In contrast, one can notice that the memory of Nehemiah and the memories of several figures associated with the Hasmonean

his mercy in these days too. ⁶And he will give it into the heart of the king to have mercy on them and to let them return to their land and region. ⁷Then some parts of the tribes will go up, and they will come to the place that was appointed to be theirs, and they rampart the place anew" (*Assumption of Moses* 4:1–7 as translated in Tromp, op. cit., 11–13).

²² See for example Lester L. Grabbe, "Josephus and the Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration," *JBL* 106 (1987), 231–46.

²³ On Josephus' accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah, see e.g., Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplements, 58; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 473–98 (pp. 473–88 deal with Josephus' Ezra, and pp. 489–98 with his Nehemiah); see also Grabbe, "Josephus," and cited bibliography; cf. Davina Grojnowski, "Flavius Josephus, Nehemiah, and a Study in Self-Presentation," *JSS* 46 (2015), 345–65. For the story of Ezra in Josephus see *Ant.* 11.1–158, and for that of Nehemiah, *Ant.* 11.159–83.

²⁴ Our discussion will be informed also by considerations grounded in 1 Maccabees. This is because, in particular, the construction of Simon in this text may have been in part related to constructions of the Nehemiah of memory.

dynasty, first and foremost those of Judas and Simon as encoded in 1 and 2 Maccabees, show similarities through images of gathering books on the one hand, and of rebuilding, fortifying, and purifying Jerusalem on the other.

2. KINGLY PATTERNS OF MEMORY SHAPING: NEHEMIAHS OF MEMORY IN THE LATE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

2.1. BACKGROUND

Before exploring how these Nehemiahs of memory were shaped by means of patterns of kingly memory and the eventual link between “Nehemiah” as a site of memory and various Hasmonean leaders, a few background considerations are in order.

The question of “what is a king” was usually addressed in the ancient Near East by shaping images (and hence memories) of specific kings.²⁵ Scribes devised typified catalogues of actions, which spelled out either the definition of the righteous king, or—as a reversed mirror—the typified definition of his wicked counterpart via sets of related deeds attributed to them.²⁶ Images (and memories) of good ancient Near East kings tended to include certain realms of actions. For instance, a good king tended to be associated with, *inter alia*, (a) military leadership and success—and at times personal heroism; (b) ensuring that the proper cult rituals be conducted at the temples and maintaining their purity; (c) building activities (including but not restricted to building or rebuilding temples); and (d) maintaining the “proper order” to ensure that the powerful do not misuse their power to oppress the powerless.

²⁵ On this ancient approach for exploring kingship, including the latter’s attributes and qualitative limitations, see Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (eds.) *Leadership, Social Memory and Judean Discourse in the Fifth–Second Centuries BCE* (Worlds of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean; London: Equinox, 2016).

²⁶ See for instance the list of misdeeds ascribed to the Babylonian king Nabû-šuma-iškun, which was inspired by the ritual of the king that took place during the New Year festival of Babylon according to Stephen W. Cole, “The Crimes and Sacrileges of Nabû-šuma-iškun,” *ZA* 84 (1994), 220–52, or the list of misdeeds of Nabonidus. Likewise, the accounts of Antiochus IV’s religious persecution in the book of Daniel and in 1 and 2 Macc are to a large extent composed of set elements typifying the wicked king. See Steven Weitzman, “Plotting Antiochus’s Persecution,” *JBL* 123 (2004), 219–34; Sylvie Honigman, *Tales of High Priests and Taxes: The Books of the Maccabees and the Judean Rebellion against Antiochus IV* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2014). These ancient Near East trends continued well into Hellenistic times.

In addition, the legitimate (and legitimizing) pursuit of these activities was recorded according to set narrative patterns.²⁷ For instance, positive narratives of the king building (or rebuilding) the temple were shaped through a set pattern composed of six basic components that recur time and again, be that in the royal inscriptions of Babylonian and Assyrian kings, or in the biblical texts relating to the building of Solomon's temple and its rebuilding in Persian times.²⁸ The basic pattern may be outlined as follows:

i. Decision to build, and divine approval. This step may spell out the circumstances that led to the project of building the temple. Moreover, when the text concerns a refoundation, the account of the restoration often includes the account of the people's *reconciliation* with their patron deity, because the destruction of a temple was perceived as the consequence of the deity's wrath.

ii. Preparations for the building, meaning both the gathering of building materials, the drafting of workers, and the restoration of social justice.

iii. Description of the construction process and of the buildings and furnishings.

iv. Dedication rites and festivities.

v. Blessing of the king by the deity, or prayer of the king to request this blessing, or both.

vi. Divine promises, or revelation, or both; blessings and curses on future generations.²⁹

Given that these mnemonic narratives about proper temple building both shape and activate the conceptual realm defining kingship, other central royal activities such as the building of the royal palace were informed by the same narrative pattern.³⁰ Moreover, other, ideologically less central monumental building activities undertaken by kings were conceptually associated with the realm of temple building, and consequently could be informed by the same narrative pattern and, in this way, were used to shape the memory of the king. This extension of the

²⁷ See note 18 above about the importance of fulfilling expectations, tastes and being congruent with the general habitus of the group, along with the heavy costs for deviations from these.

²⁸ See Victor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings* (JSOTSupS 115; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

²⁹ The recurrence of a limited number of elements comprising stories of temple-building throughout the ancient Near East is precisely what proves how these elements together formed a set narrative pattern, which anyone with the appropriate enculturation would easily recognize. For such readers, this pattern communicated the legitimacy of both the king and his temple, and by extension, that no king who was legitimate, i.e., empowered to be king by the proper authority, could have behaved differently, and that no legitimate temple could have been built in ways that contradicted the expected pattern.

³⁰ See for example Sylvie Lackenbacher, *Le Palais sans rival. Le récit de construction en Assyrie* (Paris: Découverte, 1990).

narrative pattern of the king building the temple to other monumental items could be conceptually justified because the items concerned were described as serving the temple in a direct or indirect way. Thus, streets and canals in Babylon were used for processions, and city walls were necessary to ensure the protection of the temple (or temples).³¹

All these narrative, mnemonic patterns served to conceptualize the notion of a/the “legitimate king.” The kings of memory, whether contemporaneous or in the far past, were depicted as behaving in that way. Conversely, and more important for the present purposes, anyone who behaved, or was represented as behaving in that way was implicitly construed as fulfilling roles and expectations associated with a (legitimate) king. In other words, he was remembered as a kingly figure, even if he was not formally a king.

Of course, as is the case with all socially shared memories, there were also constraints. Kings could not be construed and remembered within a particular group as doing things that strongly contradicted the “facts agreed upon by the said group” about the past, or in other words deeds which within the world of knowledge of the relevant group would have been considered “impossible.” That is to say, the price of contradicting that world was simply too high for such a narrative to socially succeed in the relevant group. Incidentally, the question of whether or not the “facts agreed upon by the relevant group” are consistent with our historical data (or with history as modern scholars are able to reconstruct it) is irrelevant. The same social processes apply whether or not, say, Gilgamesh genuinely built the wall of Uruk, Sennacherib installed gardens in Nineveh, Essarhadon rebuilt Babylon and its temples, Assurbanipal had a library, Solomon built his temple, or Ahaz made his “foreign” altar (as an example of embodying the wicked counterpart), or Nehemiah’s wall, fire or library ever existed. Similarly, in historical terms, we may doubt that these kings were as one-sidedly good or bad as the stories told about them would have us believe (and remember).

Historical constraints on remembering communities also play other and particularly creative roles. For instance, whereas Nehemiah could be remembered as a kingly figure, he certainly could not have been remembered as a king of Yehud/Israel.³²

³¹ As argued by Caroline Waerzeggers, “The Pious King: Royal Patronage of Temples,” in Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 725–51, esp. 727. On the variety of royal building works see further, for instance, Douglas J. Green, “I Undertook Great Works.” *The Ideology of Domestic Achievements in West Semitic Royal Inscriptions* (FAT 2, 41; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), passim.

³² Of course, the same applies to other and more important figures in the memory-scape of ancient Israel who were remembered as fulfilling royal roles but were not and could not have been construed as “kings.” The most important of these is Moses (but see also Joshua). See for example Ian D. Wilson, *Kingship and Memory in Ancient Judah*

The outcome is, of course, an adaptation but also at the same time a subversion of the basic conceptual image of kingship, within the discourse of the remembering community.

2.2 KINGLY FEATURES IN THE NEHEMIAH SHAPED AND RECALLED BY READING E-N

2.2.1 Basic Data

The Nehemiah of memory evoked through readings of E-N carried out several kingly deeds, the most prominent of which being, of course, the building of Jerusalem's walls (e.g., Neh 1:3; 2:7, 11–18; 3:1–4:18; 6:1–19; 7:1; and 12:27–43). Significantly, the previous “builder of Jerusalem's walls” in Judean memory was Solomon (in 1 Kgs 3:1; 9:15), but Nehemiah is also clearly associated with further kingly activities:

- (a) rebuilding Jerusalem (including, but not restricted to re-populating it; see, e.g., Neh 2:3–5, 8; 7:4; and 11:1–24);
- (b) purifying the temple (see, e.g., Neh 13:4–8; and 29–30);
- (c) dealing with social oppression and advancing a “social reform,” including the cancellation of debts (see Neh 5);
- (d) performing the role of heroic restorer of proper order at multiple levels. This topos actually interweaves two images: that of the *sole* person³³ who takes the initiative to restore order, thanks to his efforts achieves the position of “ruler” in his homeland, and finally uses it to effectively restore order (cf., e.g., Idrimi); and that of the builder of the city standing at the center of the world³⁴ (as the result of Nehemiah's efforts Jerusalem is rebuilt

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 68–71; Thomas Römer, “Moses, the Royal Lawgiver,” in Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (eds.), *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian & Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 81–94; John Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion* (WUNT, 173; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 79–89; and bibliography cited in these works.

³³ One may note the rhetorical role of the description of his secret nocturnal ride in Neh 2:12–15. No member of the local elite was with him or aware of his, from a narrative and memory perspective, crucial ride (Neh 2:16). There is only one initiator and leader of the restoration and nothing will have changed without him (and the support he received from his deity—as in the case of all kings in the ANE, and of his human hegemonic king, as is the case of all local leaders in an imperial system).

³⁴ On these motifs, see Mario Liverani, “Memorandum on the Approach to Historiographic Texts,” *Or* 42 (1973), 178–94 (186–8). To a significant extent, the Nehemiah of E-N also plays out a variant of the role of the “righteous sufferer”. Of course, Nehemiah does not achieve his position as ruler of Yehud by conquering it by force, but by convincing the Persian king to send him to rebuild Jerusalem. But this variant is obviously expected, given the status of Yehud and its local leaders during the Persian period.

and the temple is run in a proper way);

(d) performing the role of the heroic king who stands as “one against the many”³⁵ (see, for instance, Nehemiah’s struggles first against Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem; and later, against internal opposition in Yehud);

(e) playing a leading role in the covenant that the people had taken upon themselves (Neh 10:1–40; cf. Josiah in 2 Chr 34:31–33);

and (f) ensuring the proper service of the temple by establishing priests and Levites in their ordained positions according to the law (see, e.g., Neh 13:10–11, 30; cf., for instance, the actions of Hezekiah according to 2 Chr 31:2).³⁶

2.2.2 Additional Data: Playing around with Temple-Building Imagery

Moreover, the implied author of E-N scattered a few oblique references that would have encouraged the readers of the book to “play around” with seeming echoes of a temple-builder Nehemiah (i.e., one who re-built the temple or sections of it). Whereas this image stood in strong tension with the world generally portrayed in E-N,³⁷ it connoted a sense of building the temple (or

³⁵ This is a well-known ancient Near-Eastern motif. See, e.g., Mario Liverani, “Kitru, Katāru,” *Mesopotamia* 17 (1982), 43–66.

³⁶ Questions about the “historicity” in the narrow sense of these deeds have been raised. See, e.g., and from different perspectives, Israel Finkelstein, “Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah,” *JOT* 32 (2008), 501–20; idem, “Nehemiah’s Adversaries: A Hasmonean Reality?” *Transeu* 47 (2015), 47–55; Philippe Guillaume, “Nehemiah 5: No Economic Crisis,” *JHS* 10, article 8 (2010), available online at http://www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article_136.pdf and published under the same title in Ehud Ben Zvi (ed.), *Perspectives in Hebrew Scriptures VII: Comprising the Contents of Journal of Hebrew Scriptures, vol. 10* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 217–37; Sebastian Grätz, “The Adversaries in Ezra/Nehemiah - Fictitious or Real? A Case Study in Creating Identity in Late Persian and Hellenistic Times,” in Rainer Albertz and Jakob Wöhrle (eds.), *Between Cooperation and Hostility. Multiple Identities in Ancient Judaism and the Interaction with Foreign Powers* (Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements, 11; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 73–87; Diana V. Edelman, “Seeing Double: Tobiah the Ammonite as an Encrypted Character,” *RB* 113 (2008), 570–84, eadem, “Were Zerubbabel and Nehemiah the Same Person?” in Duncan Burns and John W. Rogerson (eds.), *Far From Minimal. Celebrating the Work and Influence of Phillip R. Davies* (LHBOTS, 484, London; New York, T&T Clark; 2012), 112–31; Ben Zvi, “Putative Utopia.” But whether the events portrayed in the narrative world of E-N and remembered by their readers as they activated their image of Nehemiah did actually take place in the historical world in the narrow sense of the term, either as reported or in any other form or not at all has no bearing on the issues discussed here.

³⁷ This is so because in that E-N world, *inter alia*, (a) the temple already existed, (b) Ezra is associated with a temple, (c) the Nehemiah stories place him in an existing temple with existing priesthood, and

parts of it), and in this way evoked mnemonic patterns associated with kings. It is in this context that one may mention the cumulative effect of:

- (a) the choice of words in Neh 3:34, and especially the occurrence in this context of *וְהִיבְנֵהוּ*;
- (b) the connotative impact of reading and rereading Ezra 2:68–70, and hence the evocation of the original context of this passage, when reading Neh 7:70–72;
- (c) the blurring of symbolic lines between the walls of the temple and the walls of the city (see Neh 7:2; 13:22);
- and (d) the explicit reference to the rebuilding of the citadel of the temple (Neh 2:8).

Moreover, within E-N the reports dealing with several of these deeds were intertwined in such a way as to shape the depiction of the building of the wall as a whole according to the common pattern of royal monumental building.

The next subsection offers an analysis of E-N's account of building the wall, with the aim to show that it is informed by the six-step structure identified by Hurowitz.³⁸ As noted above, this narrative pattern was primarily used to shape royal accounts of a kingly figure building the temple of his patron-deity, and it had a legitimizing function.

2.2.3 The Six-Step Narrative Structure and Nehemiah's Building of the Wall as Portrayed in E-N

In E-N, the description of Nehemiah's building of the wall breaks down as follows:³⁹

i. On the decision to build, and divine approval.

Neh 1 relates the circumstances in which Nehemiah took the decision to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city wall. Since he lives in "Susa, the capital" (Neh 1:1), he is informed by men arriving from Yehud that the wall and the gates lie in ruins (Neh 1:2–3). Nehemiah first turns to his God in a prayer of *reconciliation*, in which the city to be rebuilt is explicitly identified as the place chosen by YHWH to establish His name: that is, as the place of YHWH's temple (Neh 1:9). Next Nehemiah requests King Artaxerxes to send him on a mission to Yehud (Neh 2:1–9). Once there, he inspects the wall (2:11–16), and his call to the

(d) the need to rebuild/restore shows nowhere in Nehemiah's complaints about the situation before and after his arrival in Jerusalem, not only when talking to others but also in his own thoughts, as he himself reports them—it goes without saying that within the discourse of these communities, temple-building far outstrips in importance wall-building or even the repopulation of Jerusalem.

³⁸ See Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House*, and Honigman, *Tales of High Priests*, 95–103.

³⁹ The numbering and titles given here follows that of V. Hurowitz, as summarized in section 2.1 above.

people to rebuild it is met with an enthusiastic response, despite the opposition of the neighbors (Neh 2:17–20).

ii. On preparations for the building.

Before departing from Susa, Nehemiah requests a letter from the king instructing the keeper of the king's forest to give him "timber to make beams for the gates of the temple fortress, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy" (Neh. 2:8). Nehemiah 3 consists of a list of workers levied through *corvée*.

The workers in Neh 3 are posted to the different wall sections and gates to be rebuilt according to their status (priests, Israelites, and Levites) and according to their families and dwelling places, rather than according only to their professional skills. Thus the building works are the occasion for re-founding the social organization of the community. Moreover, the construction of the city wall reifies the separation between the community of those who are bound by YHWH's covenant and the foreigners, who are not (10:28–31; 13:1–3).

Finally, Neh 5:1–19 deals with the restoration of *social justice* by Nehemiah, acting as governor.

iii. On the description of the construction process.

This section is represented by the account of the intrigues plotted by the hostile neighbors (Neh 4: 1–17; 6: 1–14). Their defeat is a sign that the work has been accomplished "with the help of YHWH" (Neh 6:16), as would suit a temple. Finally, the wall is completed, and the date of the event duly recorded (Neh 6:15).

iv. On dedication rites and festivities.

Topics regularly included at this stage of the narrative template are the installation of the temple personnel, and the imposition of social justice. Nehemiah's first step upon the completion of the wall (Neh 6: 15) is to appoint "the gate-keepers, the singers, and the Levites" (Neh 7:1), as though the temple itself were being re-founded and the temple personnel required appointing anew. At a later stage, lots are cast in order to bring one Israelite out of ten to live in the holy city of Jerusalem (Neh 11:1). The catalogue of these Israelites is duly listed (Neh 11:3–24) and is followed by a catalogue of priests and Levites (Neh 12:1–26) to ensure the presence of samples of the three components indispensable for the society to be complete. Thus, the re-foundation of the wall is also a re-foundation of society, and of the temple as an institution, if not as an edifice.

The ceremony of dedication of the city wall that concludes the section (Neh 12:27–43) is similar to that of a temple dedication, and includes "rejoicing, thanksgiving, and singing," the Levites playing the music of "cymbals, harps, and lyres" (Neh 12:27), the priests' trumpets (Neh 12:41), and sacrifices (Neh 12:43).

Within the world portrayed in E-N, the completion of the wall (Neh 6:15) allowed Ezra the priest and learned scribe, to read *ספר תורת משה* (Neh 8:1–12). Moreover, the fact that the

celebration of the Festival of Booths (Neh 8:13–18) is portrayed as a founding celebration was intended to activate the memory within the community of readers of the Passover celebration that was associated with the rededication of the altar and the temple in the days of Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 5:1–2; 6:15–22)⁴⁰—with Ezra and Nehemiah fulfilling the roles of Jeshua,

⁴⁰ Both the festivals of Booths and Passover evoked the image of large assemblies of Israel. Moreover, within the socially shared memory-scape of the relevant literati there existed key memories of crucial past celebrations of these two festivals that were associated not only with bringing Israel together but also with establishing or renewing the Temple, (re)establishing Israel as a proper cultic community, and thus directly or indirectly with תורה, even when, and even more so despite the fact that, at times, the date of the remembered (re)establishing act did not overlap precisely with that of the relevant festivals. Moreover, not only that these festivals were explicitly brought to bear, but memories of these events worked together to shape a system that construed and reflected particular characterizations of these key events in a way that informed each other. Thus, within their memory-scape, the temple was built in Solomon's days 480 years after the Exodus (2 Kgs 6:1)—Passover and the Exodus were associated within the world of the literate; but its inauguration was associated with the festival of Booths (1 Chr 5:1–7:10; 1 Kgs 8). Passover (not the festival of Booths), however, was associated with crucial events embodying renewal of תורה, temple and Israel associated with the figure of Josiah (2 Chr 34:3–35:19; cf. 2 Kgs 22:3–35), and of the renewal of the service of the temple, “Israel” and implicitly of תורה associated with Hezekiah (2 Chr 29:3–31:21).

It is thus very significant that according to 2 Macc 10:6 (cf. 1 Macc 4:56), the re-inauguration of the temple was explicitly celebrated “for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the festival of Booths,” and thus relating their actions to those of Solomon's, and so is explicitly the case with the re-inauguration of the altar in Ezra 3:1–4; but significantly, that of the Temple was linked to Passover (Ezra 6:15–22), thus evoking images of the deeds of Hezekiah and Josiah. The complementary recalling of Passover and Booths in Ezra 3:1–4 and 6:15–22), however, lacked a reference to the act of reading the תורה and (re)establishing a covenant to constitute Israel as the proper cultic community that played such an important role in Josiah's Passover. This lack is fulfilled in E-N by shifting the role of Passover in Josiah's case, to that of Booths in Neh 8:1–18, only that unlike the case in 2 Chr 34:30, it is not the political leader (in this case, the governor Nehemiah), but Ezra, the highly educated priest who reads it and likely plays a central role in the covenant as well (see Neh 9:6). For the reasons for this shift of expected roles in E-N, see above and note 9. It is worth noting that there are quite explicit, textually inscribed markers suggesting the readers, as they read and remember this celebration of Booths, to recall the celebrations of Passover by Hezekiah and Josiah (see Neh 8:17 and cf. 2 Kgs 23:22; 2 Chr 30:26, 35:18); the three are part of an interrelated system. The shift from Passover to Booths, for the reading of the תורה, may be related to an understanding of Joshua's reading of the תורה to the people (Josh 8:35) as having taken place at that time (cf. Neh 8:17).

These issues require a full discussion elsewhere, but what precedes suffices to make that case that there was a generative grammar of memories that governed the production of memories about these types of events and that each recalled the other, within a set of rules informing

the priest, and Zerubbabel, respectively, while at the same time (particularly Nehemiah in the corresponding narrative in Ezra) significantly taking upon themselves the roles of the prophets. Additional activated memories reached back further in time to similarly worded references: in 2 Kgs 23:2 (to the time of the Judges); 2 Chr 30:26 (to the time of Solomon); and 2 Chr 35:22 (to the time of Samuel, the priest).

v. On the blessing of the king by the deity, or prayer of the king to request this blessing, or both.

The corresponding section in E-N is the prayer uttered by Ezra (9: 6–37).

vi. Divine promises, or revelation, or both; blessings and curses on future generations.

This item in E-N takes the form of a renewal of the covenant (Neh 10).⁴¹

In sum, the fact that structural elements borrowed from the set narrative patterns of royal monumental building inform the narrative of E-N suggests that an underlying generative grammar of memories attributing to a figure of the Nehemiah of old substantial kingly features was at work even in E-N. This emphasis on Nehemiah's kingly features may also explain why his portrayal downplays features of piety, as compared to that of Ezra. Nehemiah is pious to the extent that a king should be, that is, less pious than a priest/תורה teacher.

2.2.4 Summary and Emerging Questions

The preceding considerations leave no doubt that the Nehemiah of memory in E-N was imagined as fulfilling certain roles usually associated with royal figures; or, to put it differently, social memory patterns associated with kings played a substantial role in the shaping of memories of Nehemiah. This is true even though Nehemiah was clearly not a king and certainly not a Davidide.

the ways they interacted with one another. (Incidentally, it is worth noting that the mentioned patterns of memory involved only two of the three main festivals; this is, however, not the place to elaborate on this matter or its potential implications.)

⁴¹ See, esp. “the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to adhere to the divine תורה/the תורה of the God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding join with their kin, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in the divine תורה/the תורה of the God, which was given by Moses the servant of the God, and to observe and do all the commandments of YHWH, our lord and his ordinances and his statutes” (Neh 10:29–30). To be sure, from the perspective of the implied authorship of E-N and the target readership, a new divine revelation could not have taken place, because Israel already had received “the divine תורה/ the תורה of the God,” the issue for them was not to receive it, but to follow it.

To a large extent, we may explain this development in terms of the principle of royal delegation, whereby the “real” king provides his representative with some royal-like attributes so that the latter may carry out the work of the “real” king.⁴² In this way, divine kings imbue earthly kings with royal attributes, and the latter in turn imbue their governors with royal attributes. It is worth recording that both satraps governing large territories and local governors like Nehemiah administering far narrower ones had their own courts and behaved in regal manners, evoking representations of royalty—within limits, of course.⁴³

That said, this observation falls short of explaining a significant number of features making up this mnemonic Nehemiah. In particular, no other Persian governor of Yehud is remembered as much as Nehemiah. In fact, with the exception of Zerubbabel, no other governor of Yehud was considered worth remembering at all among the literati of either the Persian or Hellenistic periods. Moreover, given that Zerubbabel is directly and explicitly associated with rebuilding the temple, and considering the ideologically central place of the latter, we might have expected memories of Zerubbabel to hold a much more significant social mindshare than those of Nehemiah. Yet the figure of Nehemiah—and certainly the memory of his actions in Yehud—enjoyed more mindshare than his. The eventual creation of a book as complex (and atypical) as E-N and its long redactional history only demonstrates this point.⁴⁴

Moreover, whereas the imperial king (Darius) and the local governor (Zerubbabel) mnemonically associated with the building of the Persian period temple in Jerusalem are both—albeit in dissimilar ways and to a very different extent—Davidized (expectedly so, since they re-establish what was established by David and Solomon),⁴⁵ no such thing happens with Nehemiah

⁴² In addition, of course, there was no king in Yehud at the time referred to in E-N.

⁴³ On the replication of the court system at the satrapal level in the Achaemenid empire, see for example the sources cited in Amélie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire. A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 615–9. References to a royal garden in Song of Songs and in Qoheleth shaped a memory of Solomon as a garden “builder” comparable to the kings of Assyria and Persia of memory—as one would anticipate, but might also have had been influenced by the actual garden of the Persian governor in Ramat Rachel. See Diana V. Edelman, “City Gardens and Parks in Biblical Social Memory,” in Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (eds.) *Memory and the City in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 115–55 (127–8) and bibliography.

⁴⁴ This is resolved in rabbinic literature by means of the identification of Nehemiah with Zerubbabel, and this identification may have emerged even earlier. See Edelman, “Zerubbabel and Nehemiah the Same Person?”

⁴⁵ Temple building/establishing was a royal prerogative. The person whom the deity chose in order to build their temple was by the same token the deity’s chosen king.

and the king (Artaxerxes) he is associated with. Yet, it is this explicitly non-Davidic Nehemiah who received more social mind-share.

Moreover, just as he is not a Davidide, the Nehemiah of memory of E-N is certainly neither a priest, or a priestly figure. This is worth stressing because since the Persian period, memories of priests embodying or fulfilling at least some royal traits or roles had existed among the literati. For instance, we may think of (according to the chronological order of their either actual or purported lifetime) Jehoiada in 2 Chr 23 (see esp. v. 16; see also 2 Chr 24:15–16); and Simon, the son of Onias in Sir 50, whose memorable deeds recall some of Nehemiah's. Likewise we may think of Ezra's reading of the ספר תורת משה, recalling Josiah's reading in 2 Kgs 23:2,⁴⁶ with the (non-existent) king being replaced by the priest. However, given that Nehemiah was not a priest, we cannot explain the kingly features making up the memory of the Nehemiah mentioned above in this way.

In sum, although the Nehemiah of memory conjured by E-N employs patterns of memory shaping associated either with kings or (in the context of the Second Temple period) priests, it seems that a strong underlying grammar of dis-preference successfully debarred any patent Davidic or priestly flavor from being associated with him in E-N.

In the same vein, it is also worth stressing that some important aspects of the generative grammar shaping memories of kings of old are altogether absent in the construction of the Nehemiah of memory encoded in and evoked by reading E-N. For instance, he has neither a successor, let alone a dynasty, or a house or genealogy. Moreover, despite some references to the troops under his command, he is certainly not construed in the mold of the conqueror/warrior hero, even if theoretically this could have been a potential area for mnemonic development.⁴⁷ Furthermore, from the beginning, his rule in Yehud is time-constrained, unlike those of kings. He is sent to the province to fulfill a particular mission and to some extent resembles a prophet, that is, ad hoc messengers of YHWH who, contrary to kings and priests, are appointed for particular purposes and not for life.

⁴⁶ Deut 31:10 seems to suggest that the priest should read the text, but since antiquity to today there have been interpretations of this text as allowing the king, when there is one, to fulfill this role. See Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (JPS Commentary, Philadelphia: JPS, 1996), 292, and cited bibliography.

⁴⁷ His main achievement is to prepare for a devastating attack that never came (Neh 4). Contrast this not only with the archetypal warrior of ancient Israel, David, but also with the characterization of Judas, Jonathan, and Simon Maccabees, as well as John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus. See below. Although Nehemiah has some forces, Nehemiah the warrior/successful general is not a prominent aspect of Nehemiah the site of memory. Furthermore, and most importantly, military success does not play any part in his legitimation. Neither could it be imagined within the context of the world he populated: he was a courtier, not a core general of Artaxerxes.

This suggested parallel with prophets may not be coincidental. Indeed, the social memory pattern associated with kings does not exhaust the shaping of memories of Nehemiah in E-N, and the way Nehemiah was remembered definitely resembles the ways in which prophetic figures were (cf. Neh 1:1 and Jer 1:1; and Amos 1:1).⁴⁸ Yet, if we consider the Nehemiah of memory within the generative grammars of YHWH's messengers, or prophets, it is worth noting that the figure shaped as the great prophet is Ezra, who is simultaneously teacher of תורה, legislator, scribe, and priest. In other words, Ezra is a second Moses who, not incidentally, is also a second Aaron of sorts, given that he is a priest. In this way, in the circles of the literati of Persian and Hellenistic times, Ezra becomes a site of memory which, to an extent, embodies both foundational brothers.⁴⁹ Nehemiah is nowhere to be found in this mnemonic category—and this brings us back to the influence of E-N in terms of shaping long-term mnemonic trajectories for both.

Clearly, E-N strongly encourages its ancient readers to allocate most of their social mindshare to one salient royal deed that Nehemiah carried out, namely the building of Jerusalem's walls (cf. Sirach, but see also below). The other character of old explicitly characterized as the builder of the city's walls within the memory of the group was Solomon (see 1 Kgs 3:1; 9:15). Crucially, however, when the community evokes and thereby vicariously experiences the "life of Solomon," the memory of Solomon's action of building Jerusalem's walls is not what draws the most social mindshare—far from it. That being the case, why would the re-building of the Jerusalem walls demand such an overwhelming social mindshare when it comes to Nehemiah, despite the fact that he was also associated with other important actions in Yehud? That is to say, the motif of the builder of Jerusalem's wall was far more important in the construction of the memory of Nehemiah than it was in Solomon's, and this was

⁴⁸ Note also how Nehemiah and Ezra subsume the roles of the prophets in the story of Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

⁴⁹ Ezra is construed as a high priest in 1 Esdras (see 1 Esd 9:39, 40, 49); and in, e.g., m. Parah 3.5 and even later in e.g., Qoh. Rab. 1.8 ("if Aaron had been living, Ezra in his time would have been superior to him," Soncino translation). In rabbinic literature, Ezra's memory is also associated with that of Hillel, the prototypical rabbinic sage (see, e.g., b. Sukkah 20a; t. Sotah 13.3 [Lieberman]; b. Sanh. 11a; b. Sotah 48b; y. Sotah 9.13; Song Rab. 8.13) and notice the honorific term "disciple of Ezra" (Heb. תלמידו של עזרא). Whereas the phrase "disciple of Nehemiah" appears nowhere in rabbinic literature. On the various constructions of the Ezra of memory inside and outside late antiquity and the substantial mnemonic struggles over it, see Lisbeth S. Fried, *Ezra and the Law in History and Tradition* (Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament; Columbia, SC: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2014), 118–47. The very intensity of the mnemonic struggle is a strong indicator of the prominence of Ezra as a site of memory at the time, and across various religious groups. Nothing similar evolved concerning Nehemiah.

not because “there was nothing else” to remember about Nehemiah. Moreover, in E-N not only is the story of the rebuilding of the walls given much more narrative space than in any other text relating to Nehemiah, but it is also emphatically informed by mnemonic patterns that served to produce the memories of core royal building activities, and especially temple building (see above). In the case of Nehemiah, the memory of his building of the wall becomes somewhat interrelated with those of his restoration of proper cultic activities and, functionally at least, of a proper temple. In contrast, in the case of Solomon, building the wall is an independent project of markedly secondary importance to that of building temple (and of his palace) and is not related to the establishment of proper cultic activities.

In sum, the building of Jerusalem’s walls could evoke such substantially different memories, because Solomon and Nehemiah were remembered instantiations of the same “object” only at a very superficial level. The wall of Solomon and that of Nehemiah played very different communicative and memory-shaping roles. As a site of memory, Nehemiah’s wall marked a boundary between insiders and outsiders. It separated between the Shabbat-observing and non-Shabbat-observing realms (Neh 13:15–21), and in more general, symbolic terms, between (“proper”) Israel (i.e., the community of wall-builders, reconstituted and purified by Nehemiah’s actions) and the rest—in particular, Samaritans and their “friends.” Obviously, Solomon’s wall had no such role and was never imagined as constituting a boundary between Israel and non-Israel. It was but one item in a more comprehensive story about building activities, including fortifications.

The overwhelming emphasis on Nehemiah as wall-builder in E-N served to construe him as an important site of memory recalling, embodying, and signifying boundary-shaping, and hence (as in all cases of boundary-shaping) the exclusion of those who might potentially have been considered “insiders.” This slant is consistent with the general message of E-N.⁵⁰

As we shall see below, memories of Nehemiah shaped and reflected in Sirach and 2 Maccabees both develop and reconfigure various aspects of the memory of Nehemiah evoked by E-N. They address some of the implications that the latter may raise, and closely interact explicitly or implicitly with them, both in terms of what they left “said” and “unsaid” about him.

⁵⁰ Although Ezra and Nehemiah were primarily sites of memory associated with boundary making, it is still very much worth noting that the world of memory of E-N is complex. Remembering the “utopia” evoked by reading E-N went hand in hand with remembering that it ran, unsurprisingly, into problems of feasibility and with remembering that its utopian character—which relied on conveying un-fuzziness—was actually fuzzy at multiple levels and in need of much negotiation. See Ben Zvi, “Putative Utopia”.

3. READING ROYAL TRAITS IN THE NEHEMIAH OF MEMORY EVOKED BY SIRACH

“The memory of Nehemiah also is lasting; he raised our fallen walls, and set up gates and bars, and rebuilt our ruined houses” (Sir 49:13; NRSV).⁵¹

Obviously, the focus in this verse is on the walls, but the concluding clause adds an explicit reference to the rebuilding of the city within the walls. This picture is consistent with the stress on these activities associated with the Nehemiah of memory of E-N and as in the latter, actions usually associated with kings stand at the core of the way in which Nehemiah is remembered in Sirach.

It is particularly worth stressing that Nehemiah is not imagined as building Jerusalem’s walls, ruins, and ruined houses, but *our* walls, our houses, and the like. That is, the central memory of Nehemiah as the one who walled out and rebuilt the community—which is reflected in E-N (see above)—is also at the center of Sirach’s Nehemiah.⁵² At the same time, it may well be that the remembering of Nehemiah as a rebuilder of “us” rather than of a Jerusalem construed as necessary for the maintenance of the entire cosmos, facilitated a relatively minor tone for the construction of the memory of Nehemiah in this passage.⁵³

Whatever the case, in the world of memory shaped in Sirach, the building of the temple is explicitly associated not with Nehemiah but with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the son of Jehozadak (Sirach 49:11–12). Moreover, these two verses immediately precede Sirach 49:13 quoted above, implying that the image they carry serves as companion memory site to Nehemiah.⁵⁴ In this

⁵¹ Benjamin G. Wright’s translation of this verse in NETS reads “And the memorial of Nehemiah is lasting, he who raised our walls, which had fallen, and set up gates and bars and raised up our buildings.” In this particular case it is basically similar to that of the NRSV. The Hebrew text in MS B, XIXr, however, reads:

נחמיה יאדר זכרו המקים את חרבתינו
וירפא את הריסותינו ויצב דלתים ובריה

The text may be translated as “Nehemiah – may his memory be adorned with splendor! – [[]] he who put our ruined nation back on its feet, (MS B 19r:3) and healed the wreckage of our lives, and set our doors and the bars of our windows back in their proper place” as Benjamin H. Parker and Martin G. Abegg did. See <http://www.bensira.org> for texts and translations. These differences, however, do not bear substantial consequences for the present discussion.

⁵² On Sirach and the Samaritans, see Sir 50:25–26.

⁵³ For the cosmic role of Jerusalem, see Sirach 24, and the association between תורה/Wisdom and Zion/Jerusalem. This approach, of course, construes a conceptual תורה/Wisdom that is unshareable with Samaritans (see above), despite the historical existence of a shared, “Judean-Samaritan” text of the Pentateuch (on the latter, see, e.g., Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible* [VTSup 169, Leiden: Brill, 2015], passim).

⁵⁴ This reading assumes, of course, that Ben Sira thought and com-

way, within the world of Sirach the temple precedes the city. Significantly, this means that within this world, the temple existed in a ruined city, which not only was not surrounded by walls, but whose houses were (in) ruins (Sir 49: 11–13).⁵⁵

Although this view is consistent with the temporal timeline put forward by the texts that likely shaped the “historical” knowledge reflected in Sirach (and in general consistent with the main story in E-N), it is at odds with the notion that the building of the city and its walls was either coterminous with or a necessary condition for proper worship (see, explicitly, Ps 51:20–21). In this context, it is worth reminding the seemingly curious sound of the minority voice which, albeit understated (almost suppressed), is present in the memories of Nehemiah encoded in E-N, and which obliquely seems to ask the remembering community of readers to toy—even if only fleetingly—with images of Nehemiah as builder of the temple or the altar—or at the very least, as one who played a leading role in the completion of their establishment.⁵⁶ Even if understated, this image is likely to be an integral part of a generative grammar that shaped the memory of Nehemiah. The rebuilding of Jerusalem was still conceptually associated with the re-establishment of the proper worship, without which the temple is not really functional. This explains why so much social mindscape was allocated to the story of Nehemiah, and why E-N includes sections such as Neh 13:29–31.⁵⁷

In the world of Sirach, the fact that Nehemiah was not remembered as a royal figure, is probably a positive aspect, since all the (Davidic) kings of Judah—with the exception of David, Hezekiah, and Josiah—were imagined as great sinners (Sir 49:4). In this perspective, it is particularly noteworthy that Nehemiah’s functional “successor” is a most significant figure within Sirach’s world of memory, namely Simon, the son of Onias, who is the high priest and *inter alia*, in the line of Solomon and Nehemiah, a great builder. The Nehemiah of memory in Sirach becomes a kind of liminal figure linking the (for the most part, failed) kings of old to the kingly high priest of today. In common with all liminal figures, Nehemiah does not belong to either category, and by virtue of this, he is an appropriate mnemonic character

municated that Nehemiah and Zerubbabel were two different individuals. This is the most likely reading of Sir 49:11–13, which in our opinion distinguishes rather than conflates these two characters of memory. See, on this matter, Theodore A. Bergen, “Nehemiah in 2 Maccabees 1:10–2:18,” *JSJ* 29 (1997), 249–70 (256–57).

⁵⁵ This situation is consistent with what the community may have understood to be the fulfillment of the (so-called) Cyrus decree (2 Chr 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4). Cyrus orders the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, but does not say much (or anything at all) about an effort to rebuild the city as such.

⁵⁶ See discussion above.

⁵⁷ On Nehemiah’s fortification of the temple itself, see also Neh 2:8.

to serve as a liminal bridge, shaping an in-between conceptual area.

A final comment is in order at this point. Whereas the Ezra of memory looms large on the Nehemiah of memory in E-N, the line from Nehemiah to Simon in Sirach does not include any reference to Ezra. Far from asking its readers to interweave these two figures, as in E-N, Sirach seems to lead them to at least temporarily bracket the memory of Ezra.⁵⁸

4. KINGLY FEATURES IN THE NEHEMIAH SHAPED AND RECALLED BY READING 2 MACCABEES

4.1 NEHEMIAH AS A SECOND (AND SECONDARY) MOSES, DAVID, SOLOMON, AND HIS ASSOCIATION WITH JEREMIAH

Like its counterparts in E-N and Sirach, the Nehemiah of 2 Macc 1:18–2:15 evokes mnemonic patterns associated with kingly figures. And as in these texts, the Nehemiah of memory of 2 Macc is remembered as a kingly non-king; and in particular—as stated in his summary characterization opening this literary unit (see 2 Macc 1:18)—he is recalled as the one “who (re)built the temple and the altar.”⁵⁹ Incidentally, this characterization addresses the social-memory oddity of a temple that was (re)built before the city (see above).

As the narrative about him advances, Nehemiah is portrayed first as the person who commanded the priests to initiate the process to rekindle the fire in the temple’s altar, and thus, indirectly, to rekindle it (2 Macc 1:21–22). Most significantly, the foundational sacrifice of Nehemiah is remembered as being consumed by divine fire, in line with the memories of the foundational sacrifices performed by Moses (see Lev 9:24), David (1 Chr 21:26), and Solomon (2 Chr 7:1–3).⁶⁰ The divinely ordained fire present at the various inaugurations legitimizes the corresponding altars, that is, the altar of the tabernacle, the one set by David at Ornan’s threshing floor, the one of the monarchic temple, and the Nehemianic altar/temple. In this way, the memory of Nehemiah becomes part of a link of foundational figures—Moses, David, and Solomon—associated with central legitimate

⁵⁸ See Charles B. Stone and William Hirst, “(Induced) Forgetting,” and related literature.

⁵⁹ All the quotations from 2 Maccabees here and below follow Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012), unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁰ Moses is undoubtedly the most prominent case of a kingly non-king in the mnemonic landscape of ancient Israel. On kingly aspects in the ways in which Moses was remembered, see bibliography in note 29, above. As is well known, Moses becomes a neatly royal figure in some later Second Temple texts, such as Philo, *De Vita Mosis* 1:334, and later on in some rabbinic texts (see, for instance, Exod Rab. 40.2; 48.4; Num Rab. 15:13; Midrash Tehillim, Ps 1; b. Zebach. 102a). On Philo, see Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NTSupS, 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 107–16.

altars.⁶¹ However, the Nehemianic fire is mediated through a material “naphta” meant to symbolize the continuity between the altars/temples of the Monarchic and Second Temple periods (2 Macc 1:19–21; 31–36; 2:1–3), thereby shaping a bridge over the chasm of exile between the monarchic-period pious priests and Jeremiah, on the one hand, and Nehemiah, on the other; this bridge is, of course, grounded in YHWH. In this way, Nehemiah represents a continuation figure with Moses and David/Solomon, but at the same time, he is secondary to them. The difference between the First and Second Temples is further openly emphasized by the continued absence of central ritual sites of memory such as the “tent” and the “ark” (see, explicitly, 2 Mac 2:4–8).

Despite these reservations, the divinely-originated fire associated with the memory of Nehemiah normalizes, as it were, an existing anomaly in all other memories of the establishment of the Second Temple, namely that unlike the tabernacle and the Davidic/Solomonic temple/altar, it was devoid of a foundational, divinely originated fire. At the very least, this matter might have seemed odd, and might moreover have raised questions about its legitimacy.

One may argue, therefore, that in 2 Maccabees, to some extent, Nehemiah is construed as a secondary, and complementary figure to the book’s Jeremiah; elsewhere and especially in the Book of Jeremiah this prophet is construed, *inter alia*, as a second and secondary Moses, and in 2 Maccabees as one whose role is to serve as an explicit bridge between Moses and Solomon and their times, on the one hand, and Nehemiah and his era, on the other, that is, between foundational and re-foundational (2 Mac 2:1–12). By this token, this Nehemiah of memory in 2 Maccabees stands in a socially shared, mnemonic trajectory of builders and re-builders of the proper central place of worship that begins with Moses, continues with the (secondary and complementary) David and Solomon (see, e.g., 2 Chr 23:18), moves on to Jeremiah, the latter’s figure in turn preparing the path for Nehemiah to become a complementary figure to David, Solomon, and ultimately Moses; while at the same time replacing the Chronicler’s Cyrus as the site of memory for the rebuilding of the temple after the Exile.

The construction of Nehemiah as a second Solomon in terms of temple building/inaugurating is reinforced by the request from the readership to remember Nehemiah as the one who celebrated the Sukkot festival (2 Macc 1:18; 2:12; cf. 1 Kgs 8:65–66; 2 Chr 7:8–10; and contrast with the report in E-N, at

⁶¹ It is worth mentioning that this sequence of divinely originated fires relies on the world of memory shaped by Chronicles. In Samuel-Kings, neither Solomon nor David are associated with fire from heavens (see 2 Sam 24:25; 1 Kgs 8:54). In the world of Kings, the motif of fire from heavens is associated with Elijah and in this case, the point is not to legitimize the temple/tabernacle altar (see 1 Kgs 8:36). Cf. 2 Macc 2:9–12.

Neh 8:13–18, in which the celebration of Sukkot is associated with the main character, Ezra, not Nehemiah).

In addition, the “fire” that Nehemiah uses to rekindle the altar had been hidden away by priests when the Judeans departed into exile, and this fire was all that survived, given that the tent and the ark that Jeremiah had secreted were not to be found before God gathered the dispersed people. Jeremiah had also ordered those being led to the land of Persia to take some of the fire, and (as a means?) not to forget the ordinances of the Lord (2 Macc 2:1–8). In all these aspects, the Nehemiah of memory in 2 Maccabees is linked not only with the Jeremiah of memory (see, explicitly, 2 Mac 1:20–2:8) and the prophetic tradition (see, e.g., Neh 1:1, and above), but also with contemporary priests. Nehemiah the prophetic non-prophet links the prophets/priests of the late monarchic period with the priests of the Second Temple period, while at the same time, being neither (see above).

4.2. GATHERING BOOKS

A final and important aspect to consider is Nehemiah being remembered as the founder of a library and gatherer of “the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings” (2 Macc 2:13, NRSV). The text goes on immediately to note that “in the same way Judas also collected all the books that had been lost on account of the war that had come upon us” (2 Macc 2:14, NRSV), a point that will be elaborated in the next section.

Here again Nehemiah behaves as a kingly non-king.⁶² In the ancient Near East there existed a tradition about kings gathering libraries. Assurbanipal’s library in Nineveh, which dates to the seventh century BCE, is the best-known example, but archaeological excavations elsewhere have confirmed that book gatherings were a common practice.⁶³

Beside its practical aspects, collecting books was invested with a positive ideological connotation. The possession of books was the material evidence that kings had knowledge and wisdom. The documents that were deemed worth collecting for preservation mixed literary and scientific productions with daily-life texts, such as the proceedings of trials and administrative orders.⁶⁴ The latter, as it was argued, were evidence of the king’s

⁶² And as we shall see below, in one respect, also as a “priestly” non-priest.

⁶³ For a general survey, see Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). For a comprehensive survey of the archaeological data in the ancient Near East, see Olof Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East 1500–300 BC* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1998), and more recently, and particularly in relation to Qumran, Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassen (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and the Concept of a Library* (STDJ, 116; Leiden: Brill, 2016).

⁶⁴ The notion that the modern distinction between libraries and archives, which underpins most modern studies on these topics, is in-

justice, and of the Pharaoh's Maat in Egypt, and this iconic use of the documents motivated the preservation of books and written documents not only in palaces, but also in temples associated with the king's service.⁶⁵

Which libraries could have served as models, or a source of inspiration for gathering books in Judea in Hellenistic times? The Persian kings did not gather a central library, because of their representation of their empire as multilingual. Instead, they gathered laws in each country (see in Egypt). In contrast, the royal library of Alexandria was certainly an inspiring model. This is all the more true since, in contrast with the Greek memorial tradition transmitted by Greek authors like Strabo, and which presented the Alexandrian library as a purely Greek cultural monument, some modern scholars have argued that the Alexandrian library was a Greek adaptation of the ancient Near Eastern—or more accurately, ancient Egyptian—temple and royal library.⁶⁶

adequate to the ancient world is now shared by numerous scholars engaged in this field. For the Greek world, see Luciano Canfora, "Libri e biblioteche," in Giuseppe Cambiano et al. (eds.) *Lo spazio letterario della Grecia antica. II. La ricezione e l'attualizzazione del testo*, ed. (Rome: Salerno, 1995), 11–93; and Thomas Hendrickson, "The Invention of the Greek Library," *TAPhA* 144.2 (2014), 371–413. See also Gaëlle Coqueugniot, *Archives et bibliothèques dans le monde grec. Édifices et organisation, Ve siècle avant notre ère – IIe siècle de notre ère* (BAR International Series, 2536; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013). For Egypt, see for example Katharina Zinn, "Libraries and Archives: The Organisation of Collective Wisdom in Ancient Egypt," in Maria Cannata and Christina Adams (eds.), *Current Research in Egyptology 2006. Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Symposium which took place at the University of Oxford, April 2006* (Oxford: Oxbow Books; Oakville, CT: David Brown Book Co., 2007), 169–76. For the ancient Near East, see previous note. Sidnie Crawford maintains that "almost all libraries in the ancient Near East also had an archival function . . . the semantic distinction made by modern librarians [between library and archive] would have been meaningless to the owners of these collections" (113). She is still willing to make a distinction between an archive and library, but concludes that "the Qumran collection has all the hallmarks of being an archive . . . [t]his archive also functioned as a library for the members of the community who lived at Qumran" (130) and "the label 'library with archive' seems best suited to the nature of the collection" (131). See Sidnie White Crawford, "The Qumran Collection as a Scribal Library," in Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassen (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and the Concept of a Library* (STDJ, 116; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 109–31.

⁶⁵ See Katharina Zinn's definition ("Libraries and Archives," 172): "A library is an institution designed for the storage of any written text of general significance, in order to save and impart relevant knowledge by way of filing, keeping, preserving, and arranging it, with the aim of handing down the cultural memory of a community or society, and of ensuring the continued availability of its knowledge and skills."

⁶⁶ This view was first popularized by Luciano Canfora in his *The Vanished Library: A Wonder of the Ancient World* (trans. Martin Ryle; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). While this book was heavily criticized, other scholars pursued Canfora's line of inquiry. See, in

The latter point is particularly significant, since book collections were gathered not only by kings in the ancient Near East but also by priests and temples. In fact, if the early Jerusalemite library of authoritative books, either as a concept or as a structure or both, had to be associated with the Jerusalemite temple and with priests and not with kings, it is not surprising that according to Jub 45:16, Jacob “gave all his books and the books of his fathers to his son Levi so that he could preserve them and renew them for his sons until today.”⁶⁷ Again, Nehemiah is remembered as a liminal figure, being kingly but not king, fulfilling a role that priests were not able to fulfill, so that they may continue to fulfill it in the future. In other words, Nehemiah is the non-priestly link that creates continuity between priests of old and those of “now.” This precise point is conveyed, albeit in a different form, by the stories about the priests of old and Jeremiah in 2 Macc 1:18–2:15 discussed in the previous section, and this convergence suggests a strong underlying grammar shaping various aspects of Nehemiah’s memory in mutually supporting ways.

Leaving aside the “letters of kings about votive offerings” (2 Macc 2:13, NRSV), which may in some way be alluding to the Hasmoneans, Nehemiah’s collecting of “the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David” (2 Macc 2:13, NRSV) suggests something akin to the historical and the prophetic books of the eventual HB, alongside some form of Psalms.⁶⁸ Conspicuously, this list lacks any reference to the Pentateuch/the books of the תורה of Moses. Why would there be a

particular, Steven Blake Shubert, “The Oriental Origins of the Alexandrian Library,” *Libri* 43.2 (1993), 142–72; D. T. Potts, “Before Alexandria: Libraries in the Ancient Near East,” in Roy MacLeod (ed.), *The Library of Alexandria. Centre of Learning in the Ancient World* (London; New York, Tauris, 2010), 19–33; Kim Ryholt, “Libraries in Ancient Egypt,” in Jason König, Katerina Oikonomopoulou, and Greg World (eds.), *Ancient Libraries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 23–37; and Sylvie Honigman, “The Library and the Septuagint: Between Representations and Reality,” in Christophe Rico and Anca Dan (eds.), *The Library of Alexandria: A Cultural Crossroads of the Ancient World* (Jerusalem: Polis Institute Press, 2017), 45–79. No certainty, however, is possible, given the poor state of our evidence about the Alexandrian library. For a healthy restatement of this sad truth, see Roger S. Bagnall, “Alexandria: Library of Dreams,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 146 (2002), 348–62, available at <https://archive.nyu.edu/jspui/bitstream/2451/28263/2/D172Alexandria%20Library%20of%20Dreams.pdf>. For the view that the Alexandrian library was purely Greek, see, in particular, Peter M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (3 vols., Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1972).

⁶⁷ See also Corrado Martone, “The Qumran ‘Library’ and Other Ancient Libraries: Elements for a Comparison,” in Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassen (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and the Concept of a Library* (STDJ, 116; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 55–77 (65–66; cf. 62–63).

⁶⁸ Whatever this verse might contribute to the debate about processes of canonization and canon structures, if any such a contribution exists to begin with, is not relevant to the argument advanced here and,

social preference for remembering Nehemiah as a great leader who explicitly gathered these books, and only these? Bergren and others have suggested that the answer is to be found in memories of Ezra. This character would have been associated so close with תורה/Pentateuch that there would have been insufficient mnemonic space to associate Nehemiah with תורה/Pentateuch as well.⁶⁹

This explanation, however, brings with it substantial drawbacks. First, it brings Ezra into 2 Maccabees. As we saw above, except for E-N, we have no evidence of memories of Ezra and Nehemiah being evoked together in a single book. In other words, the assorted generative grammar included either one or the other, but not both in the same memory world construction. In this context, there is no reason to believe that the letter prefacing 2 Macc was an exception. Moreover, within the context of a world centered on תורה, this would require an author who choose to recall the readers' memories of Ezra and set him above Nehemiah in this key passage, while at the same time failing to mention anywhere in the book. A second snag with this explanation is that it substantially reduces the boundaries of the corpus associated with Ezra. Was the Ezra encoded by the books shaping Ezra-memories knowledgeable of the Pentateuch only? Had Ezra no knowledge of the prophetic or the historical books?⁷⁰ And if so how, then, could Ezra "properly" understand—and teach—the import of the Pentateuchal books without recourse to the other books?

This last reservation leads us to a different account for the mnemonic association of Nehemiah with the historical and prophetic books and with Psalms in 2 Macc 2:13. Whereas the Pentateuch was open to interpretations in a way that allowed it to be shared by both the Judeans and the Samaritans, the books specifically singled out in 2 Macc 2:13 make the meaning of the shared Judean-Samaritan Pentateuch impossible to share. These books shaped a wall around the proper meaning of the Pentateuch as understood in Jerusalem. Just as Nehemiah's wall stood as a site of memory marking a boundary between insiders and outsiders, these books stood as a boundary delineating the proper interpretation of the תורה, thereby marking off the proper Israel as understood by the Jerusalem community. In all likelihood, Nehemiah was associated with these books because he already stood as a site of memory for boundary-making, and hence for establishing and ensuring the proper community. He is the builder not only of the material wall, but also of the textual one, and both walls are representations of his main attribute as

in any case, requires a separate discussion that cannot be carried out in this context.

⁶⁹ See Theodore A. Bergren, "Nehemiah in 2 Maccabees 1:10–2:18," *JSJ* 28 (1997), 249–70, at 266–67.

⁷⁰ E-N does not seem to support this position and later Ezras of memory such as the one in 4 Ezra (see 4 Ezra 14:45–47) or the one populating rabbinic literature strongly stand against this narrow characterization.

a site of memory, namely the boundary maker separating Yehud/Judea and Samaria. In both cases, Nehemiah is construed as a kingly figure who is not a king, but opens the way for future kingly priests, who in 2 Maccabees are the Hasmoneans and in Sirach, Simon.

5. REMEMBERING THE NEHEMIAH OF 2 MACCABEES AND REMEMBERING JUDAS (AND SIMON MACCABEE) AND VICE VERSA

The Nehemiah of memory encoded in 2 Macc is also and very significantly interrelated with the Hasmonean heroes of 1 and 2 Macc, albeit in a complex way.

Prior to tracing these connections, a summary of the compositional structure of the two books will be helpful.⁷¹ In these books, the legitimizing template of royal monumental building is duplicated.⁷² In 1 Macc it informs the sections respectively covering Judas Maccabee's and Simon's lives (1 Macc 3:1–9:22; and 13:1–16:22, respectively).⁷³ Whereas Judas rebuilds the temple, Simon engages both in fortification works—of the walls of the temple and the city, and of the fortresses of Judea—and in transforming the Akra into his palace after purifying the site (1 Macc 13:50; cf. 13:47–48, his cleansing of Gazara upon the fortress' conquest). Whereas in 2 Macc two stories of Judas rebuilding the temple are juxtaposed (2 Macc 4:7–13:26; and 14:1–15:37). Like the atypical compositional structure of E-N, this atypical compositional form in 1 and 2 Macc embodies its own message, namely, that the Hasmonean dynasty—whose foundation myth these works put forward—combined two distinct

⁷¹ This summary is based on Honigman, *Tales of High Priests*, 65–146, 409–11.

⁷² See above, section 2.1.

⁷³ Strikingly, the section on Jonathan's life (1 Macc 9:23–12:53) is not informed by this narrative template. Once again, this difference in literary composition seems to mimetically replicate content. Whereas the source of legitimacy in Judas' and Simon's lives is the rebuilding and final purification of the temple, being topics traditionally associated with the narrative pattern of royal monumental building, the account of Jonathan's life advertises his connection with Seleucid kings (and pretenders) as the source of Jonathan's legitimate power, and given that this topic was both untraditional and implicitly acknowledged Jonathan's position of political subjection, it would have been inappropriate to couch the story of his life according to the traditional narrative pattern. On Jonathan's life, see also note 10, above. See further Boris Chrubasik, *Kings and Usurpers in the Seleucid Empire: The Men who would be King* (Oxford Classical Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); "Sanctuaries, Priest-Dynasts and the Seleucid Empire," in Sylvie Honigman, Oded Lipschits, and Christophe Nihan (eds.), *Judea in the Long Third Century BCE: The Transition between the Persian and Hellenistic Periods*, forthcoming. The present note also owes a lot to personal communications from Boris Chrubasik (June 2017; June 2018).

roles that used to be separated, that of high priest and that of governor or king.⁷⁴

The two accounts informed by the narrative template in these works relate to each other. In 2 Macc the link is provided by the figure of Judas, whereas in 1 Macc, it is the fortress of the Akra that serves as the leading thread. Judas' rebuilding of the temple was left incomplete, because the Akra that dominated it, and which was a continued source of impurity, posed a constant threat to its activity. Therefore, by destroying and purifying the Akra to build his palace in its place, Simon completed Judas' rebuilding of the temple. At the same time, the prominence of the theme of Simon rebuilding the city walls alongside his palace comes to the fore in a complementary, symbolically loaded episode that functions by way of contrast (1 Macc 9: 54–57). Set against Simon's building activities, it is alleged that Alcimus the wicked high priest intended to "tear down the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary" (9:54, NRSV), and this scheme is equated with "tearing down the work of the prophets." The author of 1 Macc goes on to claim that Alcimus immediately met the death of one guilty of blasphemy (9:55–56).⁷⁵ At the same time, while the author depicts Alcimus' scheme as the work of an anti-prophet, it may be argued, especially in the context of 1 Macc (cf. Simon's portrayal), that Alcimus is more precisely depicted as an anti-Nehemiah. As we saw above (sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4), Nehemiah was also partially remembered through patterns associated with memories of prophets.

The pairing of two founding figures in both 1 and 2 Macc undoubtedly replicates the intertwining of the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah in E-N. However, the reference to the two sites of memory Ezra and Nehemiah in the Maccabees books is both more complex and subtle than their mere juxtaposition. Both in 1 and 2 Macc the first section informed by the narrative pattern of monumental building recounts the story of the Hanukkah festival (Judas Maccabee's rededication of the temple that had been desecrated by Antiochus IV; 1 Macc 3:1–9:22; and 2 Macc 4:7–

⁷⁴ The earliest text to thematize this twofold function is Sirach's portrayal of Simon in ch. 50. Whereas vv. 1–4 depict Simon as a builder of the temple and urban monuments, the description of his ceremonial vestment as glorious, vv. 5–11 emphasize his angelic status, angels being a common metaphor for priests. See Sylvie Honigman, "Between the Temple and Royal Administrations: The Social Location of Literate Judean Elites in Early Hellenistic Times," in Sylvie Honigman, Oded Lipschits, and Christophe Nihan (eds.), *Judea in the Long Third Century BCE: The Transition between the Persian and Hellenistic Periods*, forthcoming. On Ben Sira 50, see the slightly different approach in Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P and Theological Anthropology in the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira," in Craig A. Evans (ed.), *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture. Volume 1: Ancient Versions and Traditions (SSEJC 9 – LSTS 50)*; London, T & T Clark, 2004), 69–113.

⁷⁵ Alcimus "tears down" the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary, not the city wall, but symbolically and conceptually the two are related, see sections 2.2.2. and 2.2.3. above.

13:26). While this story came to serve as the founding myth of the Hasmonean dynasty—with the Hanukkah festival serving as the site of memory for this dynastic myth—in both 1 and 2 Macc, the second story (1 Macc 13:1–16:22; 2 Macc 14:1–15:37) was used to legitimate the notion of a single power-holder combining the functions of high priest and king or rather, kingly non-king. In 1 Macc, Simon is high priest, conqueror, and the builder of Jerusalem, as spelled out by the people's decree in his honor (1 Macc 14:27–49). In 2 Macc, Judas is acknowledged as the legitimate high priest and legitimate king by Onias III and Jeremiah, in a vision that he has on the eve of his decisive battle against Nicanor, the king's general and blasphemer against the temple (2 Macc 15:12–16).

In sum, in the same way as the duplication of the narrative template of monumental building in both 1 and 2 Macc figuratively enacts the notion of two forms of powers (priestly and royal-like) being associated, the figure featured in the second story in each work respectively (Simon in 1 Macc; and Judas in 2 Macc's Nicanor story) combines the two forms of powers in a single person. In both aspects, the references to E-N are obvious. At the compositional level, the combination of two figures through the duplication of the narrative template in the Maccabees books (Judas and Simon in 1 Macc; Judas I and Judas II in 2 Macc) references the dual structure of E-N. Content-wise, Simon and Judas II are two versions of the same matrix, associating a type of the Ezra of memory, priest (and prophet), with a type of the Nehemiah of memory, a kingly non-king (and a prophet), in a stable, complementary relationship via their embodiment in a single character of memory. In addition, the founding ceremony of the Hanukkah festival that features in the first stories of 1 and 2 Macc alike is celebrated according to the template of the Sukkot festival, and reactivates the memories of the precedent founding ceremonies, through those of Jeshua and Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah to that of King Solomon.⁷⁶

6. CONCLUSION

The present study has explored three Nehemiahs of memory—or, more precisely, three clusters of Nehemiahs of memory, namely those shaping, being shaped, and most importantly, evoked and vicariously encountered through readings of E-N, Sirach, and 2 Maccabees. In fact, this study went a bit beyond the cited texts, in particular (though not only) by bringing 1 Maccabees into consideration as well.

Only in E-N are the two figures of Ezra and Nehemiah explicitly construed as complementary, albeit afforded a clear hierarchy. In all other texts, just one of the two is discussed, while the other figure is at best marginal. Because Nehemiah stood alone in the constructions of the past evoked in these texts, he was able to take on features connoting priestly roles, like those of Sirach's Simon the High Priest. Had Simon been attached to

⁷⁶ See section 2.2.3 above.

Ezra, this pairing would have strongly limited his ability to develop or serve as a mnemonic matrix beyond a kingly non-king figure.

The development in Sirach of a memory of Nehemiah as an independent, kingly non-king character in such a way that he includes some priestly features suits well a period in which the high priest fulfills some of the functions of the governor, for example, the early Seleucid period (cf. Antiochus III's decree for Jerusalem).⁷⁷

The importance of Nehemiah as a site of memory for the worlds of memory evoked by 1 and 2 Macc is multifaceted. First and foremost, Nehemiah serves as a non-priest linking the priests (and Levites) of old, and their temple and Jerusalem to the new priests-kings of the Hasmonean state, and their temple and Jerusalem. But no less importantly, Nehemiah was a precious mnemonic asset for the Hasmoneans as a boundary-builder. In 1 Macc, Nehemiah serves as the prototype of Simon's life not only through the theme of the strengthening of Jerusalem's fortifications, but also through that of "purifying" the community. Likewise, Nehemiah's role as the gatherer of books in 2 Macc 2, explicitly recalls that of Judas, who gathered up the texts that had gone missing during the war (against king Antiochus). These are the very books that separated the Judeans from the Samaritans (2 Macc 2:13–15).

Nehemiah also serves as proper antecedent for the military leaders whose memories were encoded and communicated by 1 and 2 Macc not only because both fulfilled royal roles, but also, and most importantly, because the "heroism" of these leaders vastly surpasses Nehemiah's. Basically, Nehemiah is a prototype to be surpassed, and this is essential for the construction of the past in 1 and 2 Macc, because the very focus of these works is not on the glorious past or ideal future, but on a constructed glorious present or near-present, due to their function as works meant to legitimize a new dynasty.

In addition, Nehemiah was remembered as a quasi-king with the features of a priest, although no royal dynasty was established by him, and he remained a non-priest. In their dual role as both kings and priests, the Hasmoneans embodied a new, better version of Nehemiah, and moreover they established a dynasty. To some extent, one might say that the fact that Nehemiah lacked successors facilitated the process of the Hasmoneans appropriating his memory, because it allowed them to construe themselves symbolically and structurally (not biologically, of course) as his descendants, while being at the same time superior to him.

Finally, memories serve the needs of social agents who live in particular historical circumstances. The memory agents who

⁷⁷ See Sylvie Honigman et al., "The Southern Levant in Antiochos III's Time: Between Continuity and Immediate or Delayed Changes," in Christophe Feyer and Laetitia Graslin-Thomé (eds.), *Antiochos III et l'Orient* (Études anciennes, 67; Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy and De Boccard, 2017), 161–207, esp. 168–79.

preferred a strong, textually inscribed pairing of a (substantially separate) memory of Nehemiah with that of a (substantially separate) memory of Ezra—and who were successful in developing a target group willing to pay the social and cognitive costs of producing such an odd book as E-N—must have been operating in a social-cultural setting in which this pairing of memories was strongly preferred, at least, by some substantial group within the larger community. In this line of thought, it is worth noting that the entire Hasmonean period may be characterized as one in which a Judean leader manifestly fulfilled (or claimed to fulfill) the combined roles of high priest, king, and prophet. Moreover, this set of conditions holds particularly true for John Hyrcanus' days (Josephus, *War* 1.68–69; *Ant* 13.300). As the first Hasmonean to assume the title of king alongside that of high priest, one may argue that John Hyrcanus and those supporting him would have been “grateful” to have their “innovation” legitimized in all possible ways, first and foremost through the memorializing of a (real or invented) past.