Journal of
HEBREW SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 25 | SPECIAL ISSUE

MAXIMILIAN HÄBERLEIN

Imaginations of Persian Power and Kingship in 1 Esdras

Ancient Jewish Memories of Achaemenid Persia 2

Edited by Kristin Joachimsen & Jason S. Mokhtarian

Articles in JHS are being indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, RAMBI, and BiBIL. Their abstracts appear in Religious and Theological Abstracts. The journal is archived by Library and Archives Canada and is accessible for consultation and research at the Electronic Collection site maintained by Library and Archives Canada.
ISSN 1203–1542 http://www.jhsonline.org and http://purl.org/jhs

Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
DOI: 10.5508/jhs29771

IMAGINATIONS OF PERSIAN POWER AND KINGSHIP IN 1 ESDRAS

MAXIMILIAN HÄBERLEIN
UNIVERSITY OF WÜRZBURG

1. INTRODUCTION: IMAGINATIVE MEMORIES OF ACHAEMENID PERSIA AND 1 ESDRAS

> [1] Βασιλεύοντος Κύρου Περσῶν ἔτους πρώτου εἰς συντέλειαν ῥήματος κυρίου ἐν στόματι Ιερεμιου [2] ἤγειρεν κύριος τὸ πνεῦμα Κύρου βασιλέως Περσῶν, καὶ ἐκήρυξεν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἅμα διὰ γραπτῶν λέγων
>
> [3] Τάδε λέγει ὁ βασιλεὺς Περσῶν Κῦρος Ἐμὲ ἀνέδειξεν βασιλέα τῆς οἰκουμένης ὁ κύριος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, κύριος ὁ ὕψιστος, [4] καὶ ἐσήμανέν μοι οἰκοδομῆσαι αὐτῷ οἶκον ἐν Ἰερουσαλὴμ τῇ ἐν τῇ Ιουδαίᾳ.
>
> [1] In the first year that Cyrus was reigning the Persians, with a view to fulfillment of a word of the Lord by Ieremias' mouth, [2] the Lord stirred the spirit of Cyrus, king of the Persians, and he proclaimed in his whole kingdom and at the same time in written form,
>
> [3] "This is what Cyrus, the king of the Persians, says: The Lord of Israel, Lord the Most High, has appointed me king of the world, [4] and he indicated to me that I should build him a house in Ierousalem in Judea."[1] (1 Esd 2:1–4)

The verses quoted mark a major breaking point in the narrative of 1 Esdras and set the tone for the remainder of the book. 1 Esd 1 sketches out an account of rapid decline, from the high point of the reign of King Josiah all the way down to Judah's downfall, the destruction of the Temple and the expulsion of the populace. Whereas from the beginning of its second chapter onwards, the book narrates a story of gradual restoration, culminating in the rededication of the rebuilt Temple (1 Esd 7:5–9) and the reading of the Torah by Esdras (1 Esd 9:37b–55).[2] The vast

[1] Translations are taken from NETS: R. G. Wooden, "1 Esdras," in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, 2nd ed., ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 392–404, unless noted otherwise.

[2] Dieter Böhler, *1 Esdras*, IEKAT (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2015), 14–16, structures the book into four acts: Josiah and the downfall of Judah (1 Esd 1), Sanabassaros/Sheshbazzar under Cyrus (1 Esd 2), Zorobabel/Zerubbabel under Darius (1 Esd 3–7), Esdras/Ezra under

majority of the book, i.e. 1 Esd 2–9, thus takes place under the reign of three Persian kings: Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes; in addition, between Cyrus and Darius a second Artaxerxes is mentioned (1 Esd 2:15–25).[3] Besides the fact that large parts of the book are set under Persian rule, 1 Esdras paints a particular imaginative picture of the way the kings rule: As 1 Esd 2:2 shows, Cyrus communicates his orders both through public proclamation and written edicts (καὶ ἐκήρυξεν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἅμα διὰ γραπτῶν). Both the narrator and the edict of Cyrus himself refer to his being motivated through the God of Israel. Nevertheless, under his presumptive successor Artaxerxes, construction of the Temple comes to a halt "until the second year of the reign of Darius, the King of the Persians" (1 Esd 2:25; cf. 2:15–25). This discrepancy between orders and their enactment constitutes a major source of conflict in the narrative of 1 Esdras.

Issues of chronology abound in 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah; in fact, the sequence of events led even scholars defending the priority of 1 Esdras over Ezra-Nehemiah to question its historical reliability.[4] This interest in reading (and often, discarding) 1 Esdras as a source for historical reconstruction of the early Persian period is common in scholarship—which is not surprising, given that this trend has been recognized in writings such as Ezra-Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah as well.[5] For these texts, Kristin Joachimsen has recently argued for a shift in approach: Rather than using references to Persian rulers and officials for reconstructing the historical circumstances of the early Persian period, she analyzes "various representations of Darius and other Persian authorities" in the texts in order to establish "what these representations do for the story rather than what may be behind them."[6] For 1 Esdras, such an approach seems profitable as well: While parts of the book correspond to the narrative in Ezra-Nehemiah, the large plus in 1 Esd 3–4 contains both images of a Persian court and reflections on how kings should (or should not) exert their rule. How these are to be related to the rest of the book is the subject of the present study.

Artaxerxes (1 Esd 8–9).

[3] On the chronology of the Persian rulers in 1 Esdras, see ibid., 67–68. Böhler notes that neither 1 Edras, nor Ezra-Nehemiah, nor, for that matter, Daniel order the Persian rulers in accord with historical reconstructions.

[4] Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, *Studien zum dritten Esra*, FRLANT 104 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 50–52, for instance argues that 1 Esdras *originally* contained the same series of events as Ezra 1–6, which was then rearranged by the interpolator of the Guardsmen Story. See here Kristin De Troyer, "Zerubbabel and Ezra: A Revived and Revised Solomon and Josiah? A Survey of Current 1 Esdras Research," *CurBR* 1 (2002): 30–60, 35–36.

[5] Kristin Joachimsen, "Yehudite Imaginations of King Darius and His Officials: Views from the Province Beyond the River," *Religions* 13.262 (2022): 2.

[6] Ibid.

In keeping with several recent studies shifting their focus to reading 1 Esdras as a literary work in its own right,[7] the way the Persian king and court are depicted will be analyzed—not as a window into the Persian period, but into later Jewish imaginations of that timeframe. For 1 Esdras, such an approach seems all the more fitting: While the relationship between the text and the books Ezra-Nehemiah in the MT still is subject to debate, currently many scholars opt to read 1 Esdras as a revised and rewritten version of Ezra-Nehemiah.[8] This view will be adopted for the present study, while acknowledging that the theory of priority of 1 Esdras (or an earlier version thereof) is also maintained by several authors.[9]

---

[7] Cf. inter alia Timothy J. Sandoval, "The Strength of Women and Truth: The Tale of the Three Bodyguards and Ezra's Prayer in First Esdras," *JJS* 58 (2007): 211–27; Dieter Böhler, "'Groß ist die Wahrheit und übermächtig!' (1 Esd 4:41): Serubbabels Rede über die Wahrheit als philosophische Argumentation und zugleich genuin jüdisches Thema," *ThPh* 89 (2014): 29–42; Kristin De Troyer, "'A Man Leaves His Own Father . . .': On Relationships in 1 Esdras," *BN* 164 (2015): 35–50. See also the recent commentaries on the book, which both pay attention to literary perspectives: Böhler, *1 Esdras*, and Michael F. Bird, *1 Esdras: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Vaticanus*, Septuagint Commentary Series (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[8] See: Zipora Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, SCS 47 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1999), 106–9; Talshir, "Ezra-Nehemiah and First Esdras: Diagnosis of a Relationship Between Two Recensions," *Bib* 81 (2000): 566–73; De Troyer, "Zerubbabel and Ezra"; Lisbeth S. Fried, "Why the Story of the Three Youths in 1 Esdras?," in *Was 1 Esdras First? An Investigation into the Priority and Nature of First Esdras*, ed. Lisbeth S. Fried (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 83–92; Bob Becking, "The Story of the Three Youths and the Composition of 1 Esdras," in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?*, 61–71; Sandoval, "Strength of Women and Truth."

[9] E.g. Lester L. Grabbe, "1 Esdras (Greek Ezra)," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Apocrypha*, ed. Gerbern S. Oegema (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 107–22; Dieter Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt in Esdras a und Esra-Nehemia: Zwei Konzeptionen der Wiederherstellung Israels*, OBO 158 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); Adrian Schenker, "The Relationship Between Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras," in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?*, 45–58. Earlier scholars often saw the book as only a fragment of a larger work, e.g. the so-called Chronicler or "Chronistisches Geschichtswerk." Thus Pohlmann, *Studien zum dritten Esra*, 149:

> 3 E [3 Ezra = 1 Esdras, MH] ist ein Fragment einer sehr alten griechischen Übersetzung, die ursprünglich die gleiche Anordnung der Geschichte über die Wiedererrichtung des Tempels erhielt, wie sie im kanonischen Esrabuch in den Kapiteln 1-6 überliefert ist . . . Die Esraerzählung in der Anordnung, wie sie uns im 3 E bezeugt wird (incl. Neh 8,13-18), ist die ursprüngliche Fassung der vom Chronisten konzipierten Entstehungsgeschichte der nachexilischen Jerusalemer Kultgemeinde nach der Wiedererrichtung des Tempels.

On the history of research of the fragment hypothesis from Michaelis to Torrey, Hölscher, and Mowinckel, see Pohlmann, *Studien zum dritten Esra*, 19–26. Among other things, the rather abrupt ending of the book (1 Esd 9:55) has been cited as evidence that not all of 1 Esdras has survived—an argument which has been questioned by Arie van der Kooij, "On the Ending of 1 Esdras," in *VII Congress of the International*

In most studies of 1 Esdras, "The Story of the Three Bodyguards" (1 Esd 3:1–4:63; also known as the "Story of the Three Youths" or "Guardsmen"), set between two attempts to reestablish the Temple,[10] plays a central role: After King Darius holds a large meal for all his courtiers and noblemen, three bodyguards of the king hold a competition in which they try to argue what is most powerful. "Wine," claims the first guard; "the king," argues the second. The third guard, who is later identified as Zerubbabel (Greek: Zorobabel), creates an uneven playing field by not only holding one speech, but rather two. First, he argues for the superiority of women, and then for that of truth. That this story plays a preeminent role in understanding 1 Esdras is clear when we consider it makes up the largest plus *viz-à-viz* Ezra-Nehemiah. While the literary origins and developments of 1 Esdras 3–4 are still debated, I view "The Story of the Three Bodyguards" as specifically adapted to, if not originally composed for the context of 1 Esdras, which I understand as a rewritten version of Ezra-Nehemiah (first in Aramaic, but then translated into Greek).[11] The story may well have existed outside of 1 Esdras, but in its present form, it has been adapted for the book.[12] For 1 Esdras, we are most likely dealing with a translated work for which we only have access to parts of the source language text, i.e. the passages parallel to Ezra-Nehemiah. For the purpose of this study, this means that a literary reading must take its departure from the Greek text as it could have been understood by its early readers within their own cultural encyclopedia.[13] At the same time, features of 1 Esdras that may be rooted in its translational character are noted.[14]

While the literary function of "The Story of the Bodyguards" has seen some treatment, in many cases the speeches on wine and the king are somewhat neglected, as they appear to be trumped by Zerubbabel's final speeches on women and truth. I suggest that these speeches, too, have something to say about the way Persian rule, specifically royal exertion of power, is viewed in 1 Esdras. In this paper I will thus attempt to read 1

Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, ed. Claude E. Cox, SCS 31 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1991), 37–49; Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 226, and others.

[10] Becking, "The Story of the Three Youths," 62.

[11] See, with differences in detail, Talshir, *From Origin to Translation*, 113–15; De Troyer, "Zerubbabel and Ezra," 50–55; Fried, "Why the Story of the Three Youths in 1 Esdras?" 92.

[12] Talshir, *From Origin to Translation*, 106–09, argues that 1 Esdras was composed around the Guardsmen story and never existed without it (see also Talshir, "Ezra-Nehemiah and First Esdras," 566). The contrary opinion—that the tale constitutes a later insertion into the text of 1 Esdras—is held inter alia by Pohlmann, *Studien zum dritten Esra*, 35, and forcefully argued for by Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, 69–73.

[13] See J. Ross Wagner, *Reading the Sealed Book: Old Greek Isaiah and the Problem of Septuagint Hermeneutics*, FAT 88 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 44, who shows that for translated texts, the cultural encyclopedia shared by readers and translators has to be viewed separately from that of the source text.

[14] An extensive treatment of translation technique can be found in Talshir, *From Origin to Translation*, 181–268.

Esdras as a coherent narrative and 1 Esd 3:1–4:63 in relationship with the rest of the book. My specific focus will be on the way Persian power and kingship is imagined in conjunction with "The Story of the Three Bodyguards" and the remainder of the book.

2. THE COURT OF DARIUS: A PERSIAN COURT?

The Story of the Three Bodyguards is set at the court of Darius. In 1 Esd 3:1–2, we receive the first in-depth look at the royal court in the book, which consists of courtiers of different ranks:

> [1] Καὶ βασιλεὺς Δαρεῖος ἐποίησεν δοχὴν μεγάλην πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπ᾽ αὐτὸν καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς οἰκογενέσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς μεγιστᾶσιν τῆς Μηδίας καὶ τῆς Περσίδος [2] καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς σατράπαις καὶ στρατηγοῖς καὶ τοπάρχαις τοῖς ὑπ᾽ αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς μέχρι τῆς Αἰθιοπίας ἐν ταῖς ἑκατὸν εἴκοσι ἑπτὰ σατραπείαις.
>
> [1] And King Darius gave a great banquet for all who were under him and for all his homebred and for all the nobles of Media and of Persia [2] and for all the satraps and generals and district governors that were under him in the hundred twenty-seven satrapies from India to Ethiopia.

The magnitude of the feast depicted permits the narrator to introduce all kinds of office-holders from the totality of Darius' vast empire. Court depictions are not always easy to place into a specific period. Zipora Talshir, Bob Becking and Paul Harvey have argued that the supposedly Persian court shows decidedly Hellenistic elements.[15] For Becking, these include the bodyguards themselves—who he argues are close to "royal pages" known from Hellenistic courts—the rhetorical competition, and the symposium-like setting.[16] The very presence of σωματοφύλακες "bodyguards" (1 Esd 3:4), or any form of close attendants to the king, does not necessarily allow for dating the scene in a specific period. As Maria Brosius notes for the Achaemenid court, "the king's court was defined by a group of attendants and officials whose duties kept them permanently in the immediate vicinity of the king."[17] This can be established both through mostly Greek sources (Ctesias, Herodotus and Xenophon being the most important), but also through the depiction of court scenes in the doorways of the Persepolis palace.[18] The

[15] Talshir, *From Origins to Translation*, 255–64; Becking, "The Story of the Three Youths," 67–69; Paul B. Harvey, "Darius' Court and the Guardsmen's Debate," in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?* 179–90.

[16] Becking, "The Story of the Three Youths," 67.

[17] Maria Brosius, "New Out of Old? Court and Court Ceremonies in Achaemenid Persia," in *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*, ed. Antony Spawforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17–57, here 26. Cf. also Muhammad A. Dandamayev, "Courts and Courtiers: I. In the Median and Achaemenid Periods," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 6 (1993), 356–59.

[18] Brosius, "New Out of Old?," 26. Cf. her further remarks on the

dearth of Persian sources coupled with the way Greek texts stereotype Eastern kings is one issue in the reconstruction of a particularly Achaemenid court. This has implications on our interpretation of Judean texts about Persian kings, as well, as Jennie Barbour writes:

> Identifying stereotyped items within this Greek delineation of the Persian king can provide indicators that some of the Persian kings we meet in Jewish writings belong to a topos rather than to naïve real-world reflection; by their participation in the same clichés, they draw on a common pool of popular ideas more than on the unmediated reality of the Persian court at first hand.[19]

So, while the translation of 1 Esdras may contain some updates to titles common in the Hellenistic period, its readers—even if, and perhaps especially if, they were familiar with Greek depictions of the Persian court—would have had no problem identifying it as an Achaemenid court. However, the depiction of Persian rule and court life does not end with the bodyguards; another avenue pursued is the administrative titles used. 1 Esd 3:1–2 contains a list of all the office-holders Darius invites to his feast. Under the header "all who were under him" (πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπ᾽ αὐτὸν), three sub-groups are gathered:[20]

First, Darius extends an invitation "to all of his household slaves" (own translation; πᾶσιν τοῖς οἰκογενέσιν αὐτοῦ). The term οἰκογενής (NETS: "homebred") in Classical and Hellenistic Greek commonly designates slaves (and, sometimes, animals) born in the household (cf. Platon, *Men.* 82b; Polybius 38.15.3; Diod. 1.70.2); the use of the term is well-attested in the LXX corpus (Gen 14:14; 15:2.3; 17:12.13.23.27; Lev 22:11; Eccl 2:7; Jer 2:14). Most commentators attribute this to a stereotypical rendering of Aramaic בר ביתה "son of the house," i.e. "prince."[21] This may well be the case. But the Greek text in itself can be made sense of as well: Although Rundgren comments that the mentioning of household slaves is curious—why would they

problem of the mostly Greek sources, which often are ideologically skewed; Brosius, "New Out of Old?," 17–18, Brosius, "Greek Sources on Achaemenid Iran," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran*, ed. D. T. Potts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 658–68; see also Josef Wiesehöfer, "Ctesias, the Achaemenid Court, and the History of the Greek Novel," in *The Romance Between Greece and the East*, ed. Tim Whitmarsh and Stuart Thomson (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 127–41.

[19] Jennie Barbour, "The Eastern King in the Hebrew Bible," in Whitmarsh and Thomson, *The Romance Between Greece and the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 183–95, here 184.

[20] Cf. Bird, *1 Esdras*, 149.

[21] See the discussion in Frithiof Rundgren, "Zur Bedeutung von οἰκογενής in 3. Esra 3,1," *Eranos* 55 (1957): 145–52, here 148–52; cf. Zipora Talshir, *I Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, SCS 50 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2001), 132, referring to Charles C. Torrey, *Ezra Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910), 50; Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 75 n. 1a: "Hofbeamter."

have to be invited, since they would always live at the court, and why would they be named before the noblemen?—the presence of large numbers of enslaved people at the court is a common trope in Greek literary texts.[22] Let. Aris. 294 also mentions a large number of household slaves at the court of the Ptolemaic king. For readers acquainted with Greek depictions of royal courts, the presence of domestic slaves would not have been startling.

Second, he sends for "all the nobles of Media and Persia" (πᾶσιν τοῖς μεγιστᾶσιν τῆς Μηδίας καὶ τῆς Περσίδος). The term μεγιστᾶν indeed occurs for the first time in Hellenistic period texts, first and foremost in the LXX. However, in 1 Esdras, it appears as a term for courtiers not only at the Persian court (cf. 3:9.14; 4:3; 8:26.55),[23] but also at that of King Jehoiakim (1 Esd 1:36), as well as the noblemen of Israel after exile (1 Esd 8:67).

Finally, an invitation to "all the satraps and generals and district governors that were under him from India to Ethiopia" (καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς σατράπαις καὶ στρατηγοῖς καὶ τοπάρχαις τοῖς ὑπ' αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς μέχρι τῆς Αἰθιοπίας ἐν ταῖς ἑκατὸν εἴκοσι ἑπτὰ σατραπείαις). This list is close to the one in Dan 3:2 LXX where the court of King Nabouchodonosor is referenced:[24] σατράπας, στρατηγούς, τοπάρχας καὶ ὑπάτους, διοικητὰς καὶ τοὺς ἐπ' ἐξουσιῶν κατὰ χώραν. The number of 127 satrapies is also attested in Esth 1:1 and Dan 6:2 LXX.[25] Harvey has tried to relate the title list to Ptolemaic court vocabulary.[26] However, the wide diffusion of these titles in other Judean court tales such as Daniel and Esther supports Talshir's claim that "he [the presumed translator of an Aramaic Vorlage] supplies random titles that he knows from the contemporary official vocabulary."[27]

Although the translator responsible for the Greek text of 1 Esdras obviously uses Greek titles, the number and rank differentiation between different courtiers, the presence of household slaves, and the use of μεγιστᾶν places the Persian court in 1 Esdras firmly within the context of other Judean imaginations of Achaemenid rule: Courtiers of different ranks and, presumably, ethnic groups are represented. It is therefore unproblematic to view the court in 1 Esdras as a Persian court, even for the

---

[22] Rundgren, "Zur Bedeutung," 146–47. See Barbour, "The Eastern King," 191, referring to Xenophon, Herodotus, and Curtius Rufus, along with Qoh 2:7, a text that may be stylized on literary depictions of Persian kings. This trope is long-lived: In the early 3rd c. CE *Vita Apollonii* of Philostratus (3.31.13), an Indian king boasts that he owns "twenty thousand [slaves], and not one of them purchased, for they all were born in the household" (δισμύριοι, ἔφη, καὶ οὐδὲ ἐώνημαί γε αὐτῶν οὐδένα, ἀλλ' εἰσὶν οἰκογενεῖς πάντες). On slavery in Fars/Persis, the Persian heartland, see David M. Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in Their Eastern Mediterranean Context, c. 800-146 BC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 254–57.

[23] As Talshir, *Text Critical Commentary*, 132, notes, μεγιστάν outside the bodyguards' story mostly translates שר "prince" in 1 Esdras.

[24] Ibid., 132–33.

[25] Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 77.

[26] Harvey, "Darius' Court," 181–84.

[27] Talshir, *Text Critical Commentary*, 132.

readers of the Greek text.[28] Yet, the fact that this general structure is also conceivable at a Hellenistic court—contemporaneous to the translator—leaves open some imaginative possibilities for the text's early audience. While the story is firmly set in the Achaemenid period, the consistency in the depiction of courts in Greek-language sources allows for readers to relate the events at the time of Darius and Zerubbabel to their own era.

In the following dispute, only the three bodyguards speak, and the conflicts between other courtiers so prominent in Esther or Daniel are not represented. However, the discourse carries implications about how the Persian government is imagined in retrospect, especially when read together with the other parts of the book. This is what I want to look at in the following.

3. THE POWER OF WINE AND THE POWER OF THE KING: LEXICAL AND THEMATIC LINKS BETWEEN 1 ESDRAS 3:16–4:12 AND 1 ESDRAS 1–2; 5–9

How "The Story of the Bodyguards" interacts with the remainder of the book is not yet understood in all of its nuances; this may be due in part to the perspective which sees it as an originally independent tale adapted to its current context.[29] Most focus has here been placed on Zerubbabel's role. Timothy Sandoval, while not denying the widely-held view that the tale functions to enhance the profile of Zerubbabel (especially compared to Ezra-Nehemiah), has argued based on lexical and thematic links between the speech of Zerubbabel on the power of women (1 Esd 4:13–32) and the account of the intermarriage crisis (1 Esd 8:65–9:4) that Zerubbabel's speeches "introduce and prefigure arguments, motifs and vocabulary that are integral to Ezra's prayer later in the book."[30] For the speeches by the other two bodyguards, we can similarly observe links to the remainder of the book;[31] however, these are less relevant to the parts focusing on Ezra and more to the exertion of kingly rule.

3.1 The Speech on Wine (1 Esd 3:16–23)

The first interlocutor begins his speech by stating that wine is the strongest of all since it "leads the mind astray" (πλανᾷ τὴν διάνοιαν) of all that drink it (3:18), leading to "one mind" of king

[28] See also Hans-Peter Mathys, "Der Achämenidenhof im Alten Testament," in *Der Achämenidenhof–The Achaemenid Court: Akten des 2. Internationalen Kolloquiums zum Thema "Vorderasien im Spannungsfeld klassischer und altorientalischer Überlieferungen", Landgut Castelen bei Basel, 23.-25. Mai 2007*, ed. Bruno Jacobs and Robert Rollinger, Classica et Orientalia 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 231–306, here 282–83, who supposes an Achaemenid coloring of the proposed prizes in 1 Esd 3:4–9.

[29] For possible literary models, see the discussions by Bird, *1 Esdras*, 151–52; Böhler, "'Groß ist die Wahrheit und übermächtig!' (1 Esd 4:41)," 39–42; Harvey, "Darius' Court," 184–90.

[30] Sandoval, "Strength of Women and Truth," 226, for the development of the argument see especially 214–22.

[31] Noted by Becking, "The Story of the Three Youths," 70.

and orphan, enslaved and free, poor and rich. It even makes people forget who is king and who is satrap (οὐ μέμνηται βασιλέα οὐδὲ σατράπην, 3:21). Indeed, one can observe a shift from the focus on how wine affects one's mind (διάνοια, 3:18.19.20) to how it affects memory (οὐ μέμνηται, four times in 3:20–23).[32] These are two sides of the same coin. This function of wine as the great equalizer is not thought of as positive, however, since it leads people to forget to be friendly with their "friends and brothers," leading to violence. Obviously, this is good sapiential advice: Don't drink too much, lest you might completely lose your mind and take up a sword against your brother or friend.[33] But not to be forgotten in this context are the political implications of the first speaker. As Bird comments, "man who is a political animal sees the distinctions of status and power rendered pointless in the midst of drinking wine."[34] Yet, within 1 Esdras, the word φίλος is used only in one other context: In King Artaxerxes' decree regarding the aliyah to Jerusalem and financial support for the reestablishing of the cult. In two cases, Artaxerxes refers to himself together with "friends" (8:11.13), and this is repeated by Ezra in his prayer of thanksgiving (8:26):

> 8:11: ὅσοι οὖν ἐνθυμοῦνται, συνεξορμάτωσαν, καθάπερ δέδοκται **ἐμοί τε καὶ τοῖς ἑπτὰ φίλοις συμβουλευταῖς**,
>
> 8:13: καὶ ἀπενεγκεῖν δῶρα τῷ κυρίῳ τοῦ Ισραηλ, ἃ ηὐξάμην **ἐγώ τε καὶ οἱ φίλοι**
>
> 8:26: καὶ ἐμὲ ἐτίμησεν ἔναντι **τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῶν συμβουλευόντων καὶ πάντων τῶν φίλων καὶ μεγιστάνων αὐτοῦ.**

As is well-known, the Artaxerxes decree is also transmitted in Ezra 7:12–26 in Aramaic. While likely not an authentic document, it nevertheless imitates Persian official language.[35] However, the Aramaic Vorlage makes no mention of the title of "friends" of the king, and neither does the Hebrew source text of 1 Esd 8:26 (Ezra 7:28):

כָּל־קֳבֵל דִּי מִן־קֳדָם **מַלְכָּא** **וְשִׁבְעַת יְעָטֹהִי** שְׁלִיחַ	For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors… (Ezra 7:14 // 1 Esd 8:11)
וּלְהֵיבָלָה כְּסַף וּדְהַב דִּי־ **מַלְכָּא וְיָעָטוֹהִי** הִתְנַדַּבוּ	and also to convey the silver and gold that **the king and his counselors** have freely offered (Ezra 7:15 // 1 Esd 8:13)
וְעָלַי הִטָּה־חֶסֶד לִפְנֵי **הַמֶּלֶךְ** **וְיוֹעָצָיו** וּלְכָל־שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגִּבֹּרִים	[Blessed be the Lord…] who extended to me steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the

[32] Bird, *1 Esdras*, 158.
[33] Ibid., 157.
[34] Ibid., 159.
[35] Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 178.

king's mighty officers. (Ezra 7:28 // 1 Esd 8:26)

This translational choice can be seen as an encyclopaedic updating on behalf of the translator of 1 Esdras.[36] The term φίλος as "friend of the king" is particularly common in the Hellenistic period (cf. 1 Macc 11:57; 15:37; Let. Aris. 45.125.209.268.318).[37] The use of φίλος in 1 Esdras 8 and its decidedly political use suggests that the wine speech can be read in the same vein: Wine may lead the king to be unruly with his close advisors, which is all the more troubling if he does not remember why he took up the sword against them the next day. While heavy drinking among Persian kings is a trope in Greek sources,[38] in the Hellenistic period, one episode that particularly would have come to mind is Alexander III of Macedon getting into a heated argument with his long-time companion and satrap of Bactria, Cleitus the Black.[39] Under the influence of wine, Cleitus, disappointed in being given a peripheral mission to fight nomads in Central Asia, begins to insult Alexander and others present. The king, highly intoxicated as well, gets into a heated argument with Cleitus and in the end kills him with a spear. Sobered up, Alexander grieves for Cleitus and even must be stopped from committing suicide.

The banquet Darius organizes in 1 Esdras 3 is, of course, way less bloody. As the narrator remarks, "they ate and drank and when they were satisfied they went away, but Darius the king went to his bedroom and went to sleep but woke up again" (καὶ ἐφάγοσαν καὶ ἐπίοσαν καὶ ἐμπλησθέντες ἀνέλυσαν, ὁ δὲ Δαρεῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀνέλυσεν εἰς τὸν κοιτῶνα καὶ ἐκοιμήθη καὶ ἔξυπνος ἐγένετο, 1 Esd 3:3). Nevertheless, the speech of the first bodyguard offers a warning to be moderate in these excesses. Artaxerxes appears to be in union with his friends and advisors, and thus is able to make sound gubernatorial decisions (as the decree shows). When it comes to brothers, the most common use in 1 Esdras is as a designation for members of priestly groups (1:5.6.14.15), but King Ioakim (Jehoiakim) seizes his brother and the noblemen in a coup supported by the Egyptian king (1:35.36). This section, which parallels the Chronicles account, shows the dangers of upending the established order, as Ioakim's choices are deemed evil in the eyes of God, and thus he is captured by Nebukadnezzar (v.37–38). Read in the context of the

[36] Ibid., 174.

[37] The Hebrew title רעה המלך, attested in 1 Kgs 4:5 (LXX: ἑταῖρος τοῦ βασιλέως "companion of the king"); 1 Chr 27:33 (LXX: πρῶτος φίλος τοῦ βασιλέως "first friend of the king"; cf. also רעה דוד "friend of David" 2 Sam 15:37; 16:16), appears to have been held only by one person; on its use and background, see Martin J. Mulder, *1 Kings*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 166, and Herbert Donner, "Der 'Freund des Königs'," *ZAW* 73 (1961): 269–77.

[38] Barbour, "The Eastern King," 191. Cf. inter alia Herodotus 3.34.

[39] The episode is related in several Roman-period sources: Arrian, *Anab.* 4.8.1–4.9.9; Curtius Rufus 8.1.19–8.2.12; Plutarch, *Alex.* 50.1–52.6.

book, the speech on wine also emphasizes the need for a good relationship between a king and his family and advisors. This was not heeded by the last kings of Judah, and while Darius appears to do a better job at this, the wine speech right after a banquet reminds the king of the perils of *dianoia* led astray when it comes to these relationships.

3.2 The Speech on the King (1 Esdras 4:1–12)

Even more relevant to the conceptualization of kingship is, as the name implies, the speech on why the king is the strongest of all (1 Esdras 4:1–12). Once again, the third speech by Zerubbabel which trumps the previous ones does not do so by refuting them, but by bringing additional arguments forth. The second guardsman claims that while men are able to control all of the land and sea, in the end, they all submit to their king (ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ὑπερισχύει καὶ κυριεύει αὐτῶν καὶ δεσπόζει αὐτῶν, καὶ πᾶν, ὃ ἐὰν εἴπῃ αὐτοῖς, ἐνακούουσιν, 4:3). The following speech implies that the king governs everything, all that men do eventually benefits the king, all his commands are heeded. Yes, even as the king sleeps (as Darius just did), men will keep watch over him.[40] The second guardsman more or less smooth-talks the king with these thinly-veiled references to his own role. But is this depiction of kingly rule critical or affirmative? Bird argues that the

> speech lauds the power of the king, but only by magnifying the most violent and depleting effects of kingship on others. He orders murder, pillage, and destruction. His subjects are pawns before him. His people are worthless and opinionless ... This king is the very thing that the deuteronomistic historian warned about (e.g., 1 Sam 8:7–18): the malevolent vestiges of royal power inflicted upon the populace.[41]

Indeed, this king can be seen as a tyrant if the speech is taken at face value. Yet, if we compare the speech with the surrounding narrative of 1 Esdras, the picture becomes more complicated. Part of the problem in 1 Esdras (as well as the parallel narrative in the canonical books) is that the king's subjects do not always do what they are told to do, and that local authorities have competing interests. For instance, King Cyrus explicitly orders that the temple of God shall be rebuilt (οἰκοδομείτω τὸν οἶκον τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, 2:5). This decree appears to be in the process of implementation, as evidenced by the letter sent by the officials in Samaria which warn the new king, Artaxerxes, against the completion of the city's walls (1 Esd 2:16–20, summed up again in 5:69–70).[42] In slanderous fashion, they tell the king of Jerusalem's previous rebellions. Should the city walls be completed, the Judeans will no longer pay taxes (φορολογίαν οὐ μὴ ὑπομείνωσιν δοῦναι, 1 Esd 2:18)—as the second guards-

[40] Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 87.

[41] Bird, *1 Esdras*, 164.

[42] Kristin De Troyer, *Die Septuaginta und die Endgestalt des Alten Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 142.

men will later remark, a hallmark of kingly power. Artaxerxes checks the archives and finds this to be true, Jerusalem did indeed resist kingly power in the past and even exacted tribute from surrounding provinces (φορολογοῦντες Κοίλην Συρίαν καὶ Φοινίκην, 2:23). The remarks by the officials and the record in the archives appear to undermine the second bodyguard's claim that men pay taxes to the king (4:6), making him the most powerful. In fact, the discrepancy between the supposed ideal outlined by the second bodyguard and the events narrated surrounding the restoration of the Temple is even more pronounced: As the bodyguard claims, the king's power is such that "one compels the other to bring levies to the king" (ἕτερος τὸν ἕτερον ἀναγκάζοντες ἀναφέρουσι τοὺς φόρους τῷ βασιλεῖ, 4:6). Contrarily to this model of effective governance, attempts to disobey the king's order do not stop even after Zerubbabel arrives in Jerusalem (cf. 5:63–70). Later, when Darius searches the archives he finds the order that the temple shall be completed which Cyrus issued (1 Esd 6:22–25). He finds that Cyrus issued the temple to be built (οἰκοδομῆσαι)—remember that the guardsman says "if he says build, they build," a statement now obviously falsified. Darius then reissues the order to rebuild the temple (6:26–33). And here, he makes sure the project will be completed by ordering tributes be paid to Zerubbabel (ἀπὸ τῆς φορολογίας Κοίλης Συρίας καὶ Φοινίκης ἐπιμελῶς σύνταξιν δίδοσθαι, 6:28), and anyone who resists shall be executed. Again, the references to tributes/taxes (φορολογία/φόροι) and killing as royal powers find their echoes in the speech of the second guardsman.

However, the implementation of the king's words is not only hindered by sabotage of subordinates; sometimes, it appears to be an issue of focus. After winning the contest, Zerubbabel reminds Darius of a vow he himself took upon ascending to the throne to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (4:43: μνήσθητι τὴν εὐχήν, ἣν ηὔξω οἰκοδομῆσαι τὴν Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, ᾗ τὸ βασίλειόν σου παρέλαβες . . . 45 καὶ σὺ εὔξω οἰκοδομῆσαι τὸν ναόν). This vow, which also contains the return of the vessels already reported in 2:11, is peculiar to 1 Esdras.[43] Not only does Zerubbabel here remind the king of an unfulfilled vow; rhetorically, his argument is prefigured not only in the inclusion of building in the second speech (4:8), but also in the repetition of the term "remember" (μνήσθητι, 4:43)—if the king wants to prove that he is stronger than wine (which causes people to "not remember"), he has to remember his own words and deeds (cf. 3:20–23).

Of course, the discourse on the powers of the king is not only undermined by the events that take place surrounding it—the king does not always just command, and unexpected things happen; often, local authorities or other court officials will undermine decrees. That government is always more complicated

[43] Bird, *1 Esdras*, 181; Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 98–99; Sebastian Grätz, "The Image of the King(s) in 1 Esdras," in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?* 167–77, here 174.

in reality than in theory is one aspect that is hardly surprising, but its explicit acknowledgment in 1 Esdras is nevertheless noteworthy. Interestingly enough, the limits of royal power are already addressed in the following speech. For one, Zerubbabel points to the power of women in general over men (4:22–27) in terms similar to the speech on the king (cf. 4:5),[44] but argues that they give all the fruits of their labor to women; in particular, he notes the king's own concubine may supersede him:

> [28]And now do you not believe me? "Is not the king great in his authority? Do not all lands fear to touch him? [29] I have watched him and Apame, the daughter of the illustrious Bartacos, the king's concubine, sitting at the king's right hand [30]and taking the diadem from the king's head and put it on herself. And she would slap the king with her left hand. [31]And at this the king would gaze at her with mouth agape. And if she smiles at him, he laughs; but if she is cross with him, he flatters her so that she may be reconciled to him. [32]O Gentlemen, how are women not strong, since thus they act?" (1 Esd 4:28–32 NETS)

Kristin De Troyer has pointed out that Apame's power over the king echoes that of Bathseba over Solomon (sitting to his right: 1 Kings 2:19; crowning him: Song 3:11).[45] In criticizing the Persian king Darius, there is also a critique of the Judean kings. Thus, in the end, just like David and Solomon, the Persian kings are undermined by their problematic relationships to their subjects, their women, and, as the speech on wine indicates, possibly to their courtiers. Zerubbabel therefore argues that "to her [truth] belongs the strength and the kingship and the authority and the majesty of all the ages. Blessed be the God of truth!" (καὶ αὐτῇ ἡ ἰσχὺς καὶ τὸ βασίλειον καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία καὶ ἡ μεγαλειότης τῶν πάντων αἰώνων. εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀληθείας, 1 Esd 4:40). This connection between true kingship and the God of truth—a phrase only occurring here in 1 Esdras[46]—puts royal power into perspective by subordinating it to God and leaves a way open for better implementation, if the king uses truth as a guideline.

4. THE CONTEST OF THE THREE BODYGUARDS AS A DISCOURSE ON ROYAL POWER

The contest of the three guardsmen has sometimes been compared to another debate situated at the Persian court and referred to by the Greek historian Herodotus (3.80–82).[47] After the death

---

[44] Talshir, *I Esdras*, 197.

[45] De Troyer, "'A man leaves his own father …'," 44–45.

[46] Barbara Schmitz, "Wahrheit: Eine Spurensuche von ἀλήθεια in der LXX: Am Beispiel der 'ūrīm und tummīm, der Tobit- und der Pagenerzählung," in *Im Angesicht der Anderen: Gespräche zwischen christlicher Theologie und jüdischem Denken*, ed. Florian Bruckmann and René Dausner (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2013), 225–38, here 237.

[47] Harvey, "Darius' Court," 184–89, argues that the motif of debate before the king in Herodotus had been adapted for school contexts

of Cambyses, three noblemen argue for the best form of government: Otanes says the monarchy should be abolished in favor of democracy, Megabyzus then argues for an oligarchical system. Finally, Darius argues in favor of keeping the monarchy, not necessarily because it is the ideal system, but because in the end, one man will ultimately gain all power.[48] While there has been some debate as to whether this could have a historical kernel in it, in the end, it seems fairly obvious that Herodotus situates 5th c. BCE Greek debates on government at the Persian court.[49] Both debates feature Darius, and in both, the question of what is best stands at the center. While it cannot be proven whether the Story of the Bodyguards imitates Herodotus discourse, in 1 Esdras, as an Hellenistic-period rewriting of Ezra-Nehemiah, the bodyguards' debate similarly functions as a Judean discourse on the pitfalls of royal power, and how to deal with it: The all-superseding speech on truth by Zerubbabel emphasizes what should be the real concern of the king: Supporting truth, which is linked to justice (4:40),[50] and, ultimately, leads to God.[51] As Harvey notes, "Hellenistic court politics and society inform the narrative of the foundation of Yehud and the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem."[52]

Against the background of Herodotus' constitutional debate as a "historiographic precedent"[53] the function of the final speech can then be read twofold: One, as an endorsement of Zerubbabel, as the winner of the debate, who—like Darius in Herodotus' account—is then thrust into a leadership position, and perhaps Davidic rule.[54] This could be an anti-Hasmonean reading of 1 Esdras, promoting Zerubbabel's Davidian pedigree in a time when non-Davidians were in power, as several have argued.[55] Its claim rests on Zerubbabel being of Davidic lineage

---

and, through this avenue, found its way into 1 Esdras. See now also Arie van der Kooij, "The Praise of Truth by Zerubbabel and the Issue of Leadership in 1 Esdras," *BN* 200 (2024): 9–22, here, 14–16.

[48] Klaus Bringmann, "Die Verfassungsdebatte bei Herodot 3,80–82 und Dareios' Aufstieg zur Königsherrschaft," *Hermes* 104 (1976): 266–79, here 276, summarizes that "Darius' most important argument for a monarchy lies in the claim of its inevitability" ("Dareios' wichtigstes Argument zugunsten einer Monarchie ist also die Behauptung ihrer Unvermeidlichkeit").

[49] See ibid., 268–69; José Miguel Alonso-Núñez, "Die Verfassungsdebatte bei Herodot," in *Politische Theorie und Praxis im Altertum*, ed. Wolfgang Schuller (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 19–29, here 26–29.

[50] Böhler, "'Groß ist die Wahrheit und übermächtig!' (1 Esd 4,41)," 40.

[51] Schmitz, "Wahrheit," 238.

[52] Harvey, "Darius' Court," 190.

[53] Ibid., 189.

[54] E.g., Tamara C. Eskenazi, "The Chronicler and the Composition of 1 Esdras," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 39–61, here 44–49, argues for a strong presence of Davidic ideology in 1 Esdras.

[55] See Paul Carbonaro, "Les trois pages de Darius: Du premier livre d'Esdras (3,1–5,6) aux 'Antiquités Juives' (XI,33–67)," *RB* 119 (2012): 20–44, here 33–34; Böhler, "'Groß ist die Wahrheit und übermächtig!'

(cf. 1 Esd 5:5). Yet, while Zerubbabel's role is certainly enhanced when compared to Ezra-Nehemiah, he still disappears from the narrative after the order that tributes for the sacrifices are to be given to him (1 Esd 6:28). The role of Zerubbabel in the restoration is thus expanded, but the dynastic aspect is mentioned more *en passant* and is not a main driving force in the narrative.[56]

Second, it is possible to read Zerubbabel's speech as a response to the challenges of foreign rule, here imagined to be Persian—challenges which arise from the discrepancy between royal power in the speeches and the narrative: Hold up the truth, and in the end, the slanderous attacks that delayed the temple construction will not be successful. Also, as the three bodyguards show, prudent political action will be successful even under foreign rule, or at least it was as long as the Persians held it—in a way, they manage to play the system.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The speeches of the three bodyguards are deconstructed by the administrative woes the restoration project faces, and one purpose of this story may be to explicitly highlight this gap between ideal and reality. In the end, the Persian king is mighty but nevertheless relies on good judgment and cooperation by his courtiers and administrators. Lexical and thematic links between the first and second speech on the power of wine and the king, and the account of the problems the kings' decrees run into when put into practice, not only set up Zerubbabel's speech for success, but also demonstrate the embeddedness of "The Story of the Three Bodyguards" in the composition of 1 Esdras.[57] The

(1 Esd 4,41)," 40–42; Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 160–63; De Troyer, " 'A man leaves his own father . . . '," 48–49.

[56] For further observations, see now van der Kooij, "Praise of Truth," 17–18. Gary Knoppers, "Whodunit? The Unlikely Disappearance of Zerubbabel," in *Prophets, Priests, and Promises: Essays on the Deuteronomistic History, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah*, ed. Christl M. Maier and H.G.M. Williamson, VTSup 186 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 353–91, here 388–89, has demonstrated that Zerubbabel's fate and deeds in Ezra-Nehemiah are only related insofar as the main storyline is concerned, and beyond that, we cannot infer much about his further role (or what may have happened to him). Thus, his sudden disappearance can be explained by the narrative interests of Ezra-Nehemiah. *Mutatis mutandis*, this can be applied to 1 Esdras as well: While Zerubbabel plays a larger role, Davidic restoration appears not to be a concern in 1 Esdras. Van der Kooij, "The Praise of Truth," 19–20, argues that truth in 1 Esdras is closely associated with the high priesthood (cf. 1 Esd 5:40) and the book serves to legitimize this institution, not the Davidides.

[57] Sandoval, "Strength of Women and Truth," 226, argues based on lexical and thematic links between 1 Esdras 3–4 and the Ezra's prayer that the book may have been composed in Greek. This does not necessarily follow, since when speaking of composition, it should be noted that e.g. Molly M. Zahn, *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 157–58, has demonstrated that rewritten texts and translations share many common features, which lead her to incorporate (some) translations among "genres of rewriting."

way 1 Esdras utilizes the literary figure of Zerubbabel, for one, and imagines the debate of the bodyguards as a whole thus aims to show how wisdom and commitment to truth enabled Judeans to fulfill their goals of restoring the temple under Persian rule.[58] By setting up the king as all-powerful, criticism of the non-implementation of Cyrus' order can be formulated, leading to Darius' efforts to make sure his renewed orders are implemented.[59]

In a Hellenistic setting, the readers of (the Greek translation of) 1 Esdras could have also seen the ambiguities in the court depiction, which has a certain timelessness to it, as a possibility to imagine political room to maneuver in the present times. This is especially the case when considering that courtiers with titles like μεγιστᾶνες "greats" or φίλοι "friends (of the king)" where both known from contemporary courts and literary depictions of Persian (Esther, Daniel) and Hellenistic courts (e.g. Letter of Aristeas). Beyond this, literature discussing conceptions of kingship forms an important strand in Jewish (again, the Letter of Aristeas is an important example) and non-Jewish Greek literature.[60] Here, 1 Esdras provides a unique literary contribution, with a theocentric point: Zerubbabel's victorious speech on truth reinforces the idea that true kingship belongs to truth and the God of truth (4:40). The success of Zerubbabel, who not only wins the contest, but plays an important role in the reconstruction of the Temple, show that a commitment to wisdom and to the God of Israel provide a way forward amidst conflicting interests at the court of the foreign king.

[58] Cf. Becking, "The Story of the Three Youths," 66.

[59] Grätz, "The Image of the King(s) in 1 Esdras," 172, argues that the image of Darius as a generous donor in 1 Esdras is enhanced compared to Ezra-Nehemiah.

[60] On this genre, see Barbara Schmitz, "Concepts of Kingship in Aristeas, Xenophon's Cyropaedia and Isocrates' Speeches," in *Die Septuaginta–Geschichte, Wirkung, Relevanz: 6. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D)*, Wuppertal 21–24. Juli 2016, ed. Martin Meiser et al., WUNT 405 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 714–29.