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Teaching Elephantine to Theological Students: A Round-Table

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Elephantine is a name well-known to scholars of Israelite religion and early Judaism: an island in the Nile River, supposedly elephant-shaped, it has for millennia marked the southern border of Egypt. As such, it was also the site of a fortress in antiquity. From at least the seventh century BCE, the Egyptians staffed the fortress with a garrison, or perhaps a cleruchy, made up of expatriate soldiers. When the Persian Empire conquered Egypt in 525 BCE, they kept these same soldiers in their employ. A trove of Aramaic documents from this time period witnesses to the everyday life and community challenges of this military outpost. But the interest of these materials to research on Israelite religion and Judaism lies in this: that the military community on the island called themselves *yehudayya*—Jews or Judeans—and they worshipped the Jewish God YHW(H) in their own temple there.

These Aramaic documents generated intense academic discussion when they were first recovered in the early twentieth century. They have also received increased attention here in the early twenty-first: several largescale research projects have attracted substantial funding and promise to change the field.¹ A series of monographs—“almost one book a year”²—have in-

1. These projects are, first: “Elephantine im Kontext,” funded by the German Research Foundation/Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for €383,000 and led by Reinhard G. Kratz (Göttingen), Bernd U. Schipper (Berlin) and Bob Becking (Utrecht), which ran from 2014-2018; Mohr Siebeck will publish the results in their FAT 1 series. The second project is a grant from the European Research Council in the amount of €1.5 million for Verena Lepper (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrusammlung) and entitled “Localizing 4000 Years of Cultural History: Texts and Scripts from Elephantine Island in Egypt,” which runs from 2018-2020. Brill has initiated a new series called “Studies on Elephantine” to publish the results.

2. Karel van der Toorn, *Becoming Diaspora Jews: Behind the Story of Elephantine* (ABRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 2. Besides van der Toorn’s, recent monographs include Angela Rohmoser, *Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine: archäologische und schriftliche Zeugnisse aus dem perserzeitlichen Ägypten* (AOAT, 396; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014); Hélène Nutkovicz, *Destins de femmes à éléphantine au Vème siècle avant notre ère* (Paris:

spired renewed debate about the basic ethnic and religious profile of the Elephantine *yehudayya*. Despite these developments, the island of Elephantine and its Aramaic-speaking YHW(H)-worshippers remain relatively unknown outside the discipline of religion-history. Theological students in a variety of contexts could quite easily complete a program of study without encountering these data or considering their significance for biblical studies and theology.

The exception to this situation would consist, of course, in classes offered as part of a theological degree and taught by experts on Persian-Period Elephantine. In particular, it seemed to me that introductory Hebrew Bible classes would present unique opportunities to expose theological students to Elephantine. And yet very little if anything exists in the (copious) secondary literature about Elephantine that reflects on this pedagogical contingency. I therefore wrote to a number of the leading contributors to the study of “Elephantine Judaism” to ask, in short, how they do it: how they teach Elephantine to theological students. Given the dearth of resources dedicated to this specific inquiry, the brevity, pluralism, and open-endedness of a scholarly “round-table” seemed like a fitting venue for communicating the preliminary results. To each person who agreed to share from their teaching experience, I posed the following questions:

- 1: In one or two paragraphs, how would you articulate the significance of the Aramaic documents from Elephantine for theological students beginning their study of the Hebrew Bible?
- 2: What exercises do you (or might you) assign to theological students in introductory Bible courses that address the archives from Elephantine?

With thanks to each author who drafted a response, and to the *Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament* and its editor for hosting the final compilation, we offer this *Rundtischgespräch*. On the one hand, we hope it may aid and inspire educators who are already seeking to integrate Elephantine into their introductory Bible curricula. On the other hand, it may help to persuade other educators of the value of attempting such an integration in the first place.

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Teaching in a liberal Jewish Reform seminary, as I do, gives me the opportunity to connect students with the oldest available documents of Jewish or Judean life. In my context, the marriage contracts and sales documents are particularly important. Given the authority granted to the later rabbinic rules

l’Harmattan, 2015); Gard Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period: Studies in the Religion and Society of the Judaean Community at Elephantine* (BZAW, 488; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).

for marriage, and to the laws about the Ketubah (the rabbinic marriage contracts), it is vital for my students to know that the earliest and best documented marriage contracts show *yehudim* living under a very different set of rules, both in terms of gender rights and “interfaith” unions. Access to such early sources helps my rabbinic and education students realize a broader spectrum of options that are grounded in Jewish history. This is especially valuable in Reform Judaism where efforts to secure equitable marriage rights and other areas of equal rights for all Jews remain in the forefront, and where inclusion of the intermarried in some form is also an important subject.

The Elephantine papyri and related material are the best primary source for biblical scholars in general, alongside the Hebrew Bible, for the formative Persian/Achaemenid period. Given the extent to which the Bible is said to be shaped at that time, the light that the Elephantine papyri cast on the lived reality of the time grows in significance. What’s more, the available critical editions make the Elephantine papyri the most accessible source for students, in contrast to material such as tablets from Babylonia and Persepolis.

What exercises do you (or might you) assign to theological students in introductory Bible courses that address the archives from Elephantine?

I spend time with students reading certain documents in either the Aramaic or Hebrew (our students are familiar with Hebrew and Talmudic Aramaic, and some of them are quite proficient). We use the Porten-Yardeni translation as a backup. I concentrate on three documents: Kraeling 2/TAD B3.3 the marriage of Anani and Tapmut, the letter to Bagohi (C 30//TAD A 4.7), and the so-called Passover papyrus (C 21/TAD A4.1). The marriage of Anani and Tapmut allows students to engage in a number of surprising discoveries, such as the egalitarian divorce clause, intermarriage, slave-master relations, and the fact that in time Tapmut holds a similar position at the temple as her husband, becoming a *lhn*, servitor, at the temple of YHW. With the C30/TAD 4.7, I focus on what we learn about Jewish/Judean worship from these primary, extra-biblical sources. The Passover papyrus raises a number of problems due to the lacuna that require speculations. We do not attempt to solve the mysteries. But the very letter, and reference to ancient practices, enable students to reflect on the tradition. Another area we explore pertains to the names. The preservation of Hebrew names across generations at Elephantine gives us a chance to discuss/reflect on the implications of preserving Hebrew names as markers of identity in diaspora, then and now.

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One could think of a thousand reasons why Elephantine should matter to theology students. It all depends on the angle. A major cause of my own fascination with the Elephantine papyri and written potsherds has to do with the inside view they allow of a Jewish community in the early diaspora. These texts tell a story that is not in the Bible. In fact, they show a side of the history of the Jews that seems to be at odds with the canonical record. It came as a surprise to many scholars when they discovered that the community at Elephantine Island had boasted a temple for Yaho. Judging by the way the texts describe it, this temple was no small affair—not a wayside shrine, nor a portable tent or a synagogue of sorts. The Yaho temple at Elephantine was an imposing building in timber and stone, with a staff of priests (*khn*) and stewards (*lhn*) responsible for a full-fledged cult that ran from the presentation of libations and incense to vegetal and holocaust offerings. We are talking of the fifth century BCE. More than a century had passed since the alleged reforms of King Josiah (622 BCE, 2 Kgs 22-23). According to the Bible, those reforms had put an end to all sanctuaries but one: One God, One Temple. But at Elephantine, they had their own temple. The traditional argument to make sense of such a fact claims that Elephantine was the big exception; this was a community in the margins, at the far borders of the Persian Empire, untouched by the spirit that animated the core of the Jewish faith. As it turns out, the situation at Elephantine may have been less exceptional than some like to think. Jews from other diaspora communities in Egypt acknowledged the presence of the Yaho temple at Elephantine as though it was a regular feature of a Jewish community abroad. Nobody seems to have taken offense, or to have viewed the Elephantine Jews as brothers gone astray. In fact, the Aramaic papyri from Edfu, situated halfway between Elephantine and Thebes, refer to several priests (*khn*) there. It most likely means there was a Jewish temple in Edfu, too.³ Other sources like Josephus speak of a Jewish temple at Leontopolis. Are these all exceptions or are we looking at a pattern? Those are tough questions perhaps, but they must be addressed. Elephantine can teach students to ask the right questions and not to dodge them.

Another good reason for theology students to take a close look at the story of Elephantine has to do with the issue of Jewish identity. Simon Schama

3. See the discussion of the data by Sylvie Honigman, “Jewish Communities of Hellenistic Egypt,” in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, ed. Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz (*TSAJ*, 130; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 117-135, esp. pp. 120-123.

opens his *Story of the Jews* with a chapter on Elephantine.⁴ He describes the community as a typical Jewish diaspora group. Their experience resembled what many other Jewish minorities after them would go through. Especially the Egyptian violence against the Yaho temple encapsulated and foreshadowed the anti-Judaism that would be the constant curse of Jewish history. Upon closer examination, however, the matter is not so simple. For one thing, one could argue that Judaism was still in the making and that instead of “Jews” we should be speaking of “Judeans.” More serious, in my eyes, is the fact that a good deal of the ancestors of the Elephantine “Jews” had their historical roots in Samaria, the former Northern Kingdom of Israel. Several scholars had long suspected this. Their intuition has recently been proven right by one of the strangest papyri from ancient Egypt—Papyrus Amherst 63. This scroll is written in the Demotic script but it contains a compilation of texts in Aramaic. These texts go back to the Aramaic-speaking diaspora communities in Egypt, which came from Babylonia, Syria, and Israel. The papyrus contains ritual songs to Nabu, Nanay (venerated under the name Banit at Syene), Bethel, Yaho, Eshem-Bethel and Herem-Bethel, plus laments and historical narratives.⁵ The texts indicate that the forebears of the Elephantine Jews came from Samaria and had lived in a place marked by the Aramaic and Aramean culture for about a century before they migrated to Egypt. They were as much “Arameans” as “Jews.” In fact, the Jewish identity was not something they brought to Egypt when they came, but a legacy they developed under the impact of the diaspora experience. Owing to the contacts with other Jewish communities in Egypt, the term *yehudi* lost its particular topographical reference (“from Judah”) and came to include people from Samaria too. They were “Jews.” When the Persian authorities granted a new status to the Jews of their empire as a distinct ethnic-religious community, there was no turning back. Henceforth, the Elephantine community would be Jewish—in spite of all sorts of religious practices we would not ordinarily associate with the term “Jews.” The story of Elephantine is about becoming Jews rather than remaining Jews. It teaches theology students that the diaspora experience is as much about the creation of identity as about its preservation—if not more so.

4. Simon Schama, *The Story of the Jews: Finding the Words 1000BCE-1492CE* (London: The Bodley Head, 2013), pp. 3-27.

5. For a scholarly edition, see Karel van der Toorn, *Papyrus Amherst 63 (AOAT, 448; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2018)*.

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Since philology is the basis for studying the Hebrew Bible, the Aramaic documents of Elephantine, as authentic documents from Persian times, are important first of all for improving our knowledge of so-called Imperial Aramaic. This is a good starting point for reading and getting an understanding of the Aramaic passages of the Hebrew Bible (Ezra 4-6 and Daniel 2-7). Furthermore, the Aramaic documents from Elephantine give an authentic look inside the daily life, the administrative and religious institutions, the ethnic identity, the economics, legal, and religious practices, and the literature (Bisutun, Ahiqar) of a Judean community in the Egyptian diaspora under the rule of the Persian Empire around 400 BCE. As such, they serve as a point of comparison with the biblical sources, especially Ezra and Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah, which deal with the history of the province of Yehud under the Persians. In this comparison of the empirical evidence with the biblical sources, students of the Hebrew Bible can learn several things: first, the difference between “historical and biblical Israel,” i.e., between historical facts and biblical interpretations of historical facts, as for example with specific biblical ideas such as the chosen “people of Israel” and the Mosaic law; secondly, the methods of historical reconstruction on the basis of primary (i.e., epigraphic and archaeological) versus secondary (i.e., literary) sources and the historical-critical methods of dealing with the latter; thirdly, the difference between what one might call “biblical” and “non-biblical” Israel or Judaism, i.e., a sense for the fact that Israel and Judah or ancient Judaism, respectively, never was a unity but consisted of different groups and communities, some of them existing with the literary tradition which later became “biblical” and its legal and religious norms, some (or most) of them without any knowledge or acceptance of this tradition, but with other, “non-biblical” and more original Israelite and Judean traditions; fourthly, a sense for the question of how to evaluate, interpret, date, and estimate the specific significance of the biblical sources as literature of one (rather small) partial group of learned scribes within Israelite and Judean society from pre- to post-monarchic periods until the time when the “biblical” literature, especially the Tora of Moses, became authoritative for wider circles and finally for almost all parties of ancient Judaism (including parts of early Christianity). In that connection, a comparison between the situation at Elephantine and in Qumran is especially fruitful.

What exercises do you (or might you) assign to theological students in introductory Bible courses that address the archives from Elephantine?

I use the documents of Elephantine (together with the Al-Yahudu texts from Mesopotamia) in almost all Bible courses for students of theology. For the language and certain aspects of the documents, a special course on the papyri from Elephantine is useful. Here one can read several pieces, especially the documents concerning the reconstruction of the YHW temple at Elephantine (TAD A4.7–10), the so-called Passover letter (TAD A4.1), the Hananiah witness (TAD A4.3), and the collection list (TAD C3.15), and one example each from the selling and the marriage contracts. Within the course on the history of ancient Israel and Judah in the first millennium, I dedicate a whole section to Elephantine as one of several “archives” with primary sources, and in the section on the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the introduction of the Law under Ezra, and the mission of Nehemiah, I come back to Elephantine as an historical analogy comparing the historical and the biblical evidence. In my introduction to the Pentateuch, I use the documents of Elephantine as an example of “non-biblical” Judaism in comparison to the circles where the Masoretic, the Samaritan, the Greek, and the so-called rewritten versions of the Pentateuch (Jubilees, Genesis-Apocryphon, etc.) came into being; I concentrate mainly on the question of temple cult outside Jerusalem (with archaeological and epigraphical evidence), Passover, Sabbath, and mixed marriages. In the introduction to Hebrew Bible course, I use Bisutun and Ahiqar as examples of literature used in Second Temple Judaism at Elephantine, and I take Ahiqar and the book of Tobit as an example of the process of scripturalisation of the common literature or traditions of the Ancient Near East within the biblical tradition. Alongside with Eduard Meyer’s and Bezalel Porten’s classics⁶ and the two remarkable statements of Julius Wellhausen and Arthur Cowley,⁷ students read my *Historical and Biblical Israel*⁸ and, for some of the details, a couple of my articles.⁹ For the religious

6. Eduard Meyer, *Der Papyrusfund von Elephantine: Dokumente einer jüdischen Gemeinde aus der Perserzeit und das älteste erhaltene Buch der Weltliteratur* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912); Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

7. Julius Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, 7th. ed. (Berlin, 1914), 176-178; Arthur Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923; reprint Osnabrück: Zeller, 1967), xii-xxxii.

8. Reinhard G. Kratz, *Historisches und Biblisches Israel: drei Überblicke zum Alten Testament*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017); English version: *Historical and Biblical Israel: The History, Tradition, and Archives of Israel and Judah*, trans. Paul Michael Kurtz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), here especially the paragraph on Jewish archives (German version, pp. 181-300; English version, pp. 133-207).

9. Reinhard G. Kratz, “The Second Temple of Jeb and of Jerusalem,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschitz and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), pp. 247-264; idem, “Judean Ambassadors and the Making of Jewish Identity: The Case of Hananiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period*, ed. Oded Lipschitz, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), pp. 421-444; idem, “Mille Ahiqar:

situation on Elephantine, I read or recommend Gard Granerød's monograph.¹⁰

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Several considerations make the Aramaic texts from Elephantine important for theological students beginning their study of the Hebrew Bible. First, the Elephantine documents chasten the use of the Hebrew Bible as a complete picture of Israel's religious history. Many theological students are accustomed to treating the narrative materials of the Bible as a more or less straightforward and comprehensive guide to the history of Israelite religion. In the Bible's presentation, YHWH's instruction to Moses on Mount Sinai is the headwater and norm for all that follows in the course of Israel's relationship with YHWH. By contrast, the Elephantine documents show no awareness of Moses or his instruction. This glaring omission indicates that the Hebrew Bible renders only a *partial* image of Israelite religion, and that entirely other streams of YHW(H) worship existed.

Second and furthermore, the Elephantine documents may suggest that the Bible's account is not just *partial* but also relatively *late-coming*, at least as a religious authority: some of the Bible's chief religious ideals—centralized worship, for example—did not yet obtain widely even in the era of Ezra-Nehemiah. So, for example, the famous draft petition letter (TAD A4.7/8)

'The Words of Ahiqar' and the Literature of the Jewish Diaspora in Ancient Egypt," *Al-Abhath* 60-61 (2012-2013), pp. 39-58; idem, "Temple and Torah: Reflections on the Legal Status of the Pentateuch between Elephantine and Qumran," in *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), pp. 77-103; idem, "Zwischen Elephantine und Qumran: das Alte Testament im Rahmen des Antiken Judentums," in *Congress Volume Ljubljana*, ed. André Lemaire (*VTS*, 133; Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 129-146; idem, "Elephantine und Alexandria: nicht-biblisches und biblisches Judentum in Ägypten," in *Alexandria*, ed. Tobias Georges, Felix Albrecht, and Reinhard Feldmeier (*COMES*, 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), pp. 193-208; idem, "Arameans and Judaeans: Ethnography and Identity at Elephantine (forthcoming both in English and German). For the general debate on historicity, see also "The Relation between History and Thought: Reflections on the Subtitle of Peter Ackroyd's Exile and Restoration," in *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Lester L. Grabbe (*LSTS*, 73; London: Bloomsbury, 2009), pp. 152-165; idem, "Historia Sacra and Historical Criticism in Biblical Scholarship," in *History and Religion: Narrating A Religious Past*, ed. Bernd-Christian Otto, Susanne Rau, and Jörg Rüpke (*RVV*, 68; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), pp. 407-418.

10. Gard Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period*.

from Elephantine, written by a Judean priest named Yedoniah, shows no anxiety about requesting help from Judean leaders in the homeland for rebuilding the Judean temple on Elephantine, whose destruction the local Egyptians had instigated. Yedoniah, it seems, did not know that other worship sites for YHWH besides the Jerusalem temple were biblically *verboten*. Some scholars also infer from other textual data (especially the donation list, TAD C3.15) that Elephantine Judeans may have practiced a form of iconic YHW(H)-worship, which would contravene the Mosaic prohibition of graven images.

What exercises do you (or might you) assign to theological students in introductory Bible courses that address the archives from Elephantine?

I assign texts from Elephantine at several points in the Bible courses I teach to theological students. In the first semester of a year-long introductory Old Testament/Hebrew Bible course, I dedicate one class period to an excursus on Elephantine. This class period takes place after the Chronicles lecture, and students prepare for it by reading the draft petition letter (TAD A4.7/8) as well as Gard Granerød's blog on "Multi-Dimensional Yahwism"¹¹ and James Barr's famous article on "Story and History."¹² The class discussion addresses the points raised above, namely: the Hebrew Bible's *partiality* and the relative *lateness* of its ascendancy as a religious norm, as well as the possible implications of these facts for the *historicity* of its narrative materials.

In the second semester of a year-long introductory Old Testament/Hebrew Bible course, students revisit the petition letter for their class on the book of Haggai; reading these texts alongside one another enables students to explore the importance of temple worship and the various responses of ancient Judeans to its suspension. Perhaps the more important assignment relating to Elephantine appears in our classes on the prophets. *Anti-idol parody* represents an important and influential text corpus, including Jer 10,1-16; Isa 40,18-20; 41,6-7; 44,9-20, Pss 115,4-9; 135,15-18, and, in less developed manner, Hos 8,4-6; 13,2-3; Mic 5,12-13 [Heb. 11-12]; Hab 2,18-19. I argue, however, that these texts do not misunderstand the veneration of figurines; rather, they seek verbally to disable the statues' function, especially by targeting the statues' facial features.¹³ In support of the idea that Judean readers of these texts would likely have been familiar with statuary and respectful of its spiritual

11. Gard Granerød, "Multi-Dimensional Yahwism: The Case of the Persian Period Judean Community in Elephantine," *The Ancient Near East Today* 4 (October, 2016), online at: <http://www.asor.org/anetoday/2016/10/05/multi-dimensional-yahwism/>.

12. James Barr, "Story and History in Biblical Theology," in *The Scope and Authority of the Bible* (London: SCM, 1980), pp. 1-17.

13. Ryan P. Bonfiglio, "Art, Agency, and Anti-Idol Polemics in the Hebrew Bible," *HeBAI* (forthcoming in an issue dedicated to iconographic approaches to biblical interpretation).

power, I show the class photographs of fired clay figurines recovered from Elephantine.¹⁴ I also pair these images of figurines with Jeremiah 44 to create a pointed demonstration of the stakes involved in the prophets' claims—the rivalry of theological interpretations over which deity, whether *YHWH* or the *Queen of Heaven*, caused the Judeans' suffering.¹⁵

In conjunction with lectures on the book of Daniel, I assign students to read the Proverbs of Aḥiqar in their Elephantine form (TAD C1.1), and I ask them to consider a series of questions about the profile of court tales; how they characterize kings as powerful but manipulable, courtiers as loyal and shrewd, and deity as sovereign over foreign rule.

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Over the past two decades, I have seen biblical competence decline markedly in my beginning students. This means I have to assume that in many cases my students know nothing about the content of the Tanakh or Christian Old Testament when they begin their first course. While this has its downsides—there's no shared body of knowledge to draw on, and notions of biblical authority are often not well articulated or understood—it also has a positive side in that students are often eager to learn and don't have preconceptions about what biblical "religion" might look like. In this environment I can introduce material like the Elephantine texts without students immediately dismissing it as "unbiblical." Because I want students to learn about the cultural contexts that produced biblical texts, in the first course I introduce a number of extra-biblical texts and inscriptions that show two things: 1. That biblical concepts of deity and cult are thoroughly grounded in the broader eastern Mediterranean context; and 2. That where there are unusual features, these developed in response to particular historical situations.

However, given the lack of knowledge of the Bible, I haven't dealt much with the Elephantine material in detail until after the first course. In one of my intermediate courses on Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi, we spend a lot of time with Elephantine. Here the importance is clear: when discussing Persian-period Yahwism, we have evidence for a well-developed cultic discourse and practice in a community that was probably larger than the contemporary Yahwistic community in Jerusalem, while the biblical texts pre-

14. Collin Cornell, "The Forgotten Female Figurines from Elephantine," *JANER* 18 (2018), pp. 111-132.

15. Bob Becking, "Only One God? On Possible Implications for Biblical Theology," in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah*, ed. Bob Becking, Mindert Dijkstra, Marjo Korpel and Karel Vriezen (*Bib-Sem*, 7; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 189-201, here pp. 197-99.

sent the Jerusalem community as normative. This helps students see the contingent nature of religious discourse and practice—both in antiquity and today.

What exercises do you assign to theological students in introductory Bible courses that address the archives from Elephantine?

In the course on Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi, I present an archaeological survey of the site and the reconstructed temple. I use Rosenberg's illustrations, which are perfect for this level of student, and they project well on a screen.¹⁶

Students read a number of the Elephantine texts in translation. We begin early in the course with the Bisitun inscription, which is also an Elephantine text and crucial to understanding the textual deposit of the Judean community.¹⁷ Later we read a series of texts and ostraca: *TAD* D7.6 and D7.16, which mention Pesach and Shabbat, respectively; *TAD* A4.1, the so-called "Passover" letter; *TAD* C4.4, which is a list of nine names; *TAD* C3.15, cols. 1 & 7, the "Collection List;" and *TAD* A4.5, A4.7-10, the temple destruction and rebuilding dossier. I use the temple rebuilding texts *instead of Ezra and Nehemiah* in order to give context to the temple rebuilding in Haggai-Zechariah 1-8 and cultic activities in Malachi, because I am persuaded by Williamson's argument that Ezra 1-6 in particular has Haggai-Zechariah as its source.¹⁸ The lists I use to give context to Mal 3:16-18 ("book of remembrance") and other references to records and lists. The texts referring to festivals I use alongside the others in order to fill out the picture of religious practices. The "Passover" letter I use to provide an example of how scholars have to work hard to break out of biblical paradigms when working with non-biblical Judean texts.

Many of my ideas about Elephantine and the Judean community that lived there have come from teaching these texts. Students have helped me understand these texts better by their questions. I teach these texts differently now than I did ten years ago because of the work that has happened in the classroom over the years.

16. Stephen G. Rosenberg, "The Jewish Temple at Elephantine," *NEA* 67 (2004), pp. 4-13.

17. Christine Mitchell, "Berlin Papyrus P. 13447 and the Library of the Yehudite Colony at Elephantine," *JNES* 76 (2017), pp. 139-147.

18. H.G.M. Williamson, "The Composition of Ezra i-vi," *JTS* 34 (1983), pp. 1-30.

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The Aramaic texts from Elephantine provide Hebrew Bible students with an opportunity to see a “real-life” ancient community of Yahweh-worshippers. Who were they? How did they get there? What were their stories? The Elephantine documents reveal a society very different from what many theological students expect from an ancient community that identifies as Judean (or Jewish). They had a temple outside of Jerusalem where they not only offered sacrifices but also acknowledged other deities. They seemingly had no qualms about exogamy, with documents testifying to several intermarriages between Judeans and other ethnic groups. Even temple-workers—whom one might presume from a Mosaic perspective needed to maintain the greatest separation between Judeans and “the other”—intermarried. In fact, hardly any direct connection to the Mosaic discourses of Torah or covenant can be discerned among the documents. For some, then, it may be easy to dismiss the Elephantine Yahweh-worshippers as an exception, an outlier group fully extracted from their traditionally Israelite trappings. And yet the documents demonstrate that this community seemed still to identify with their Judean past in some way. Copies of correspondence with regional authorities back in the “Land” suggest a continuation of a shared kinship and a maintenance of a particular Judean identity—even if that identity does not resemble our biblically-based expectations. Indeed, the greatest importance of the Elephantine documents may be that it is *our* expectations of what a sixth/fifth-century BCE Judean, Yahweh-worshipping community should be that is problematic, and not the Elephantine Judeans themselves. This is one of the most important lessons that I try to teach my students: to question our own expectations and assumptions when it comes to reading and interpreting the biblical texts.

A second important feature of the Elephantine documents to which I draw my students is the Book of Ahiqar. With a secure dating to at least as far back as the fifth century BCE, the Aramaic Book of Ahiqar presents students with an example of an extra-biblical piece of literature, written in a biblical language, and being produced (and/or copied) and read by Yahweh-worshippers around the same time as many of the biblical texts were being produced (and/or copied).¹⁹ More than that, the specific contours of Ahiqar’s story as

19. If not for the fortuitous discovery of such an ancient version of Ahiqar’s tale and wise sayings, this character might have remained—at least from a biblical scholar’s perspective—an obscurity, a background figure from a late Jewish novella (Tobit) who only secondarily gained some fame in the eastern Christian imaginary.

well as the form and content of many of its wise sayings resonate strongly with several biblical passages, especially the book of Proverbs and the novellas like Joseph, Esther, and Daniel (see below). But, more generally, I point to the Book of Ahiqar from Elephantine in order to exemplify one of the most important lessons that I try to teach my Hebrew Bible students: the texts of the Hebrew Bible are not the only writings from the ancient Near East, they're not even the oldest, and they often reflect (sometimes intentionally) similar ideas, literary tropes, and worldviews of their ancient Near Eastern literary milieu.

What exercises do you (or might you) assign to theological students in introductory Bible courses that address the archives from Elephantine?

Although I make recourse to the Elephantine documents on several occasions in my course (e.g., in a lecture about post-exilic views on foreign domination in conjunction with readings from Ezra, Second Isaiah, and Haggai), I will focus here on the latter point from above, that is, the Book of Ahiqar from Elephantine as an exemplar of comparative literature that helps inform students about the literary and ideological milieu of the Hebrew Bible.

Like many Hebrew Bible instructors, I have students read the Enuma Elish, Gilgamesh, and Atrahasis alongside the primordial narratives in Genesis. But the similarities do not stop with these ancient "mythologies." In a class period devoted entirely to the Joseph story, I also have students read the introduction and reconstructed translation of the Ahiqar narrative.²⁰ During the lecture, I ask them what Ahiqar and Joseph have in common, how their stories are similar or different, and what the significance of the similarities is. The class discussion focuses primarily on literary themes (e.g., betrayal by family, redemption arc, and a specialized knowledge/wisdom). Later in the semester, on a day devoted to the Daniel novellas, I ask the students to recall both Joseph and Ahiqar.²¹ Again, attention is on thematic similarities, but I also press further on the issue of what these stories suggest about identity and empire. As the Daniel stories are situated in a broader text from the Seleucid era, I find it a unique opportunity to discuss these three stories where a "Jew" (or at least one with whom the Jewish audience sympathizes) is both a functionary of the foreign empire while at the same time is suffering or being

20. James M. Lindenberger, "Ahiqar," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 479-507, esp. pp. 479-498.

21. In an introductory course I want students reading (and re-reading) mostly primary materials with a textbook as guide, but I usually include a list of "recommended" readings for those interested. Here especially I point to Lawrence Wills's classic *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends* (HDR, 26; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) and the still-helpful article by Susan Niditch and Robert Doran, "The Success Story of the Wise Courtier: A Formal Approach," *JBL* 96 (1977), pp. 179-193.

threatened by that very empire.²² How do the portrayals of the kings in each story reflect their view on empire? How do providence, wisdom/revelation, or loyalty factor in to the stories?

Finally, Ahiqar surfaces again in my two-day discussion of the Book of Proverbs. The first meeting's readings comprise introductions to "wisdom literature" and Proverbs 1-9. In the second class period, though, I have students read Proverbs 10-12 and 22-24, Amenemope,²³ and the Ahiqar sayings.²⁴ As a part of class preparation, I have students choose proverbs that they find to be the most interesting from each (usually, they choose the oddest or funniest).²⁵ We discuss several topics frequently found in proverbial collections—discipline of children, controlled speech, economic and other practical advice. However, I typically end the discussion with a question about divine justice. I focus on Proverbs' presentation of retributive justice and a seemingly just and predictable deity who rewards the wise/righteous and punishes the foolish/wicked. I then counter this view with passages from Ahiqar which, while similar in form and theme, nevertheless present a more complicated picture of justice. In addition to the narrative context, the most poignant examples come from Ahiqar's other unique stylistic feature—the fable (e.g., 166-173). Ahiqar's striking similarities to Proverbs and yet contrastive views on suffering and the rewards of wisdom or folly provide a great segue into the subsequent class lecture where students read Qoheleth and the Job narrative, wherein we discuss in great detail wisdom, justice, and theodicy.

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I am thinking about a course on "Religion in Ancient Israel" for students in their final year of undergraduate study. The rationale behind this course consists of two convictions: (1) students of theology and religion should be

22. I should note that Esther is a fantastic conversational partner here, and some students do make this connection. However, I usually assign Esther (along with Ruth) in another class about gender and identity in Jewish novellas.

23. Taken from Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3 vols., 2nd edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), vol. 2, pp. 146-166.

24. I distribute my own translation that follows the edition by Porten and Yardeni in the third volume of *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1993) = TAD C1.1

25. The recommended reading for this day is a section from Michael Fox's commentary on Proverbs that focuses primarily on "The Foreign Background of Proverbs 22:17-24:22"; Fox, *Proverbs 10–31 (AB)*, 18b; New Haven: Yale University Press), pp. 753-769.

aware of the context of scripture and (2) to make clear that Yahwism as a living religion had various forms and faces. This basic attitude will help students in reading the Bible within its context and hence enabling them better to communicate its message in the present culture, which is characterized by complex structures and multiplicity in beliefs. During the course, students have to read a textbook on this topic.²⁶ In the seminar section, four topics will be discussed: prophecy, cult, (an)iconism,²⁷ and monolatry. In the last section, some Aramaic texts from Elephantine will be discussed. The aim of that section is to make the students aware of the fact that monolatry was not self-evident in ancient Yahwism.²⁸ The section will start with the biblical polemics against “other deities” with the question: if these other deities did not exist, why are the Israelites warned about them? The concept “to exist” will be discussed. I would like to make clear that the veneration of a deity does not refer to the ontological existence of the divine but is speech-act to formulate the secrets of life.

Then we will turn to the inscriptions in paleo-Hebrew referring to Yahweh and his Asherah.²⁹ The discussion of these texts will lead to the conclusion that there are “facts on the ground” that give evidence for the veneration of the consort of Yahweh. The character of that veneration, however, cannot be deduced from the inscriptions alone. In an interlude, the concept of the pantheon as a mirror of the (human) court will be introduced.

When it comes to Elephantine, the reason for the existence of a Persian border garrison and its multi-ethnic character will be discussed. A set of texts will be read (in translation).³⁰

TAD D7.21 with its greeting: “I send you peace and wellbeing. I bless you by Yahô and Khnum.” This will be a starting point to the idea that at Elephantine the deities of the other ethnic groups were respected.³¹

26. Probably Aaron Chalmers, *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel: Prophet, Priest, Sage and People (Exploring Topics in Christianity)*; London: SPCK, 2012).

27. Background reading: S.I. Kang, “In Search of the Origins of Israelite Aniconism,” *Acta Theologica* 38 (2018), pp. 84-98.

28. Background reading: André Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism: The Rise and Disappearance of Yahwism*, trans. Jack Meinhardt (Washington: The Biblical Archaeology Society, 2007).

29. Using Meindert Dijkstra, “I Have Blessed You by YHWH of Samaria and His Asherah: Texts with Religious Elements from the Soil Archive of Ancient Israel,” in *Only One God?*, pp. 17-44.

30. Using Bezalel Porten, *The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change*, 2nd rev. ed. (DMOA, 220; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011).

31. Background reading: Bob Becking, “Exchange, Replacement, or Acceptance? Two Examples of Lending Deities among Ethnic Groups in Elephantine,” in *Jewish Cultural Encounters in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern World*, ed. Mladen Popović, Myles Schoonover, and Marijn Vandenberghe (*JSJSup*, 178; Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 30-43.

TAD C3.15 with the reference to the gifts for the cult of:

126	In it: for Yahô: 126 Sheqel
127	For Eshembethel: 70 Sheqel
128	For Anathbethel: 120 Sheqel Silver. ³²

TAD B7.3 as a starting point for a discussion for a discussion of the respectful swearing by the deity of the other party.³³

Then we will make an aside to papyrus Amherst 63, the Aramaic text in Demotic script in which, for instance, the deity Eshembethel is referred to.³⁴ After that we will have a look at the correspondence about rebuilding the devastated temple of Yahô in which mention is made of “pillars.” To what degree were these iconic representations of Yahô or one of the other deities?

The conclusion will be that in Elephantine a form of Yahwism can be found in which, next to Yahô, other deities received venerated. I would refrain from an evaluation, such as the question: what was the original or best form of Yahwism, but hint at the strength of this religion that made it possible to appropriate itself to local circumstances.

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One of the discoveries I came to realize relatively late in my scholarly formation is that there is a principal difference between the literary universe of any text (“the world within the text”) and the historical, social, and religious realities the text refers to and claims to represent (“the world behind the text”). The referential value of any text can be questioned because it reflects the selective, idealizing, or even utopian biases of its author. In my opinion, the Aramaic documents from Elephantine are important for theological students studying the Hebrew Bible because they refer to a world behind the text that partly overlaps with the world behind (many of the texts of) the Hebrew Bible. Contrary to the highly-edited texts of the Hebrew Bible—whose provenance and earliest phases of formation history remains obscure despite centuries of historical-critical research—the original form of the Aramaic texts can, to some extent, be read or recovered. I believe the Aramaic documents

32. Background reading: Bob Becking, “Temple, *marzēah*, and Power at Elephantine,” *Transeu* 29 (2005), pp. 37-47

33. Background reading: Karel van der Toorn, “Herem-Bethel and Elephantine Oath Procedure,” *ZAW* 98 (1986), pp. 282-285.

34. Using the edition of Karel van der Toorn, *Papyrus Amherst 63*.

are significant for theological students in that they give glimpses of everyday Judean and Yahwistic practice on the basis of unquestionably contemporary sources. This everyday quality differs from the world referred to by many of the biblical texts, such as, e.g., Ezra, Nehemiah, and prophetic writings from the so-called Second Temple period. In addition, the Aramaic documents seem to suggest that the Judeans of Elephantine were ignorant of the legal and calendrical traditions reflected in the Pentateuch, even though they stood in contact with Jerusalem. The Elephantine Judeans did not worship YHWH (or: YHW) alone, they seem to have been unaware of the (Deuteronomistic) concept of cult centralization, they did probably not know the seven-day week with the Sabbath as the seventh day, and they did not have a fixed date for the Passover, nor was it clearly connected to a religious myth like the case is in Exodus 12 (the exodus out of Egypt)—to mention some significant features.

I think it is important to make theological students aware of how the Hebrew Bible and its reception has provided readers of all ages with templates or paradigms. For centuries and still today, the Hebrew Bible has provided us with the “Great Code” that students of the Bible have explicitly or tacitly accepted. The “Great Code” has coined our perception of the history Israel and the religious history of Hebrews/Israelites/Judeans/Jews in the first (and second) millennium BCE. Theological concepts, thought-patterns, periodizations, etc. for understanding the world behind the biblical texts are still drawn from the biblical meta-narrative about the patriarchs, the Mosaic covenant, the “exile and return,” and Jerusalem as the centre of Yahweh worship. However, epigraphic sources like, e.g., the Aramaic documents from Elephantine, challenge them all. Perhaps we can compare the world behind the text with a jigsaw puzzle: there are pieces that cannot be found in the Bible, and there are pieces from the Bible that do not fit into it. Moreover, an additional learning outcome derived from the Aramaic documents and the archaeology of Elephantine relates to the material dimension of YHWH religion. In my view, it is the irony of history that the YHWH temple that is best attested—meaning: both on the basis of contemporary textual and archaeological sources—is the temple of YHW in Elephantine. The same cannot be said about the Jerusalem temple in any of its phases, at least before Herod the Great’s (37–4 BCE) considerable expansion of the temple acropolis. Thanks to the Aramaic documents and thanks to excavations undertaken by German and Swiss archaeologists over the last decades, we know its exact location in the urban plan of Elephantine, its plan, and its phases (it was rebuilt around 402 BCE, after it had been laying in ruins since ca. 410 BCE). Furthermore, in my view, the Aramaic documents (especially TAD A4.7–10) offer empirical evidence for a traditio-historical process *in situ*. Biblical scholarship postulates that traditio-historical processes took place and hypothesizes how. However, TAD A4.7–10 (date: 407 BCE and shortly thereafter) illustrates empirically how the idea of the former and the future temple of YHW in Ele-

phantine was negotiated and developed.³⁵ The *traditum*, that is, the *content* of the tradition about the former temple of YHW in Elephantine was that it was a temple of antiquity (it was allegedly built before the Persian conquest of Egypt in 525 BCE) and of privilege (allegedly, the Persians spared it, as they did not with the temples of the Egyptians). The *traditio*, that is, the process of passing on the *traditum* involved *tradentes*, transmitters, such as the Elephantine Judean community, the Persian governors of Judah and Samaria, the upper social and religious echelons of Judah and Jerusalem, and the Persian satrap of Egypt. The Elephantine Judeans' attempt around 407 BCE to rebuild the destroyed former temple of YHW reveals a great deal of *conservatism* or *antiquarianism*, which, however, had to be reconciled with the realities represented by the demands of the other *tradentes* who were involved in the *traditio*. Continuity and resumption of the former state of affairs was a *desideratum*, not any religious reforms.

What exercise do you (or might you) assign to theological students in introductory Bible courses that address the archives from Elephantine?

At my institution, the theological students start with the obligatory introductory studies in Christianity and Religious and Ethical Education (5+5 ECTS), which is taken together with students from other programs and which uses the Bible in translation. The course primarily focuses on isagogics, but also includes some exegesis on select HB/OT texts from the Genesis, Exodus, the Book of Psalms, and Amos.

The curriculum only allows me to present one excursus in the course. In the first semester, after the students have been introduced to the classical theories about the origin of the Pentateuch, I offer an excursus under the heading "A side-view to the Judeans in Elephantine (Southern Egypt) in the fifth century BCE." The students are invited to reflect upon just a handful of topics. One of them is that the way Passover and Sabbath are treated in the Aramaic documents. Students are invited to discuss whether we can find traces of anything like the Pentateuch. Another topic is related to the temple of YHW in Elephantine. The Elephantine Judeans seem to have involved key figures from Jerusalem in their attempts to rebuild the destroyed temple of YHW. We discuss what implications this has for the question of whether there was a (Deuteronomistic) cult centralization or not. A third topic is that the divine name YHW as used in the Elephantine texts suggests that the etymology and reverence of YHWH suggested by, e.g., Exod 3:14 is primarily important within the literary universe of the biblical texts, and not "on the ground" in the world behind the text, at least in the fifth century BCE. These considerations lead to the overall question: How widespread/well-known was the Pentateuch (or proto-versions thereof) at the closure of the fifth century

35. Gard Granerød, "The Former and the Future Temple of YHW in Elephantine: A Traditio-Historical Case Study of Ancient Near Eastern Antiquarianism," *ZAW* 127 (2015), pp. 63-77.

BCE, and what does this have to say for the question of the date of the Pentateuch?

With regard to the obligatory HB/OT courses (Methods in the Study of the HB/OT, Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Literature [10 ECTS]; The Book of Isaiah and HB/OT Theology [10 ECTS], The Book of Psalms [5 ECTS]), the Aramaic documents from Elephantine function as “conversation partners” and “texts of comparison and/or contrast” with the texts and themes from the HB/OT. One thing I try to emphasize is how the Aramaic documents illuminate how our “mental maps” of the world behind the HB/OT have been coined by the HB/OT. Moreover, when teaching biblical theology (which is done on the basis of a descriptive and religio-historical approach), I find Elephantine to be a good case exemplifying—and expanding—what Benjamin D. Sommer refers to as the fluidity model for the embodiment of God (the hypostases of YHWH known as “YHWH from Zion,” cf., e.g., Ps 135:21; “YHWH from Samaria,” and “YHWH from Teman,” cf. the Kuntilled Ajrud inscriptions—but also “YHW(H), the god of heaven” and “YHW, the god who dwells in the fortress of Elephantine”).³⁶

In reality, due to the strict compartmentalization at my institution and the fact that the course descriptions are partly governed by the *candidatus/-a theologiae* programme committee, the Aramaic documents from Elephantine are in the center of only one course, the planned elective “Judaisms” in the Persian (and Hellenistic) Period(s) (539–332 BCE) (10 ECTS).³⁷ In the planned elective, the learning outcome goals initiate a dialogue between recent research on important Judean communities outside of the province of Yehud (Elephantine and Babylon) and recent research on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, including: theological profile, identity construction centered around the return and restoration of the people/community, the temple, and identity markers as “the book of the law of Moses,” the Sabbath, Passover etc. The students will be asked to use these insights in the study of selected texts, such as Ezra 1; 4:1-5; 6:16-22; 9-10; Neh 8; 13 on the one hand, and TAD A4.1-10 (“Yedoniah Communal Archive”), TAD B2.6 (“Document of Wifehood”), TAD C3.15 (“Collection Account”), TAD C2.1 (the Aramaic Bisitun Inscription by King Darius, and TAD D7.6 (“Instructions regarding Children and Request regarding Passover”) on the other.

36. Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

37. For the text of the course description, see <http://www.mf.no/emnekatalog?mode=emne&idnr=TEOL6137> (in Norwegian).

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I use the Elephantine corpus in my introduction to the Hebrew Bible in two ways: first, to provide an insight into the non-theologically-edited experience of a Jewish community contemporary to the times in which portions of the Bible were being written and/or edited. I pay close attention to the rights of women (property holders, their right to divorce their husbands, etc.), and also to the expressions of popular Judaism represented in the presence of a temple outside Jerusalem, in the mention of other deities attested side by side with Yhw, etc. I also highlight several points of coincidence between the religious practices of Elephantine Jews and biblical Judaism and the practices of the Jewish communities in Eretz Israel (the worship of the biblical god, the mention of the Sabbath, the dominance of Yahwistic names etc.). Second, I use some of the terminology attested in the papyri to illustrate or clarify some biblical concepts. For example, the use of “eternal” in covenantal biblical terminology³⁸ (*berit olam*, Gen 9:16; 17:7,13, 19; Exod 31:16; Lev 24:8; 2 Sam 23:5; Isa 24:5; 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26; Ps 105:10; 1 Chr 16:17) compared with the use of “eternal” in the marriage and divorce clauses in our documents (TAD B3.3; B2.6 and B3.8) to argue that “eternal” in the Bible might have the nuanced meaning “not a priori limited by time” as Loewenstamm and Yaron pointed out.³⁹ When I teach a course on the cultural background of the Hebrew Bible (for which the introductory course is a prerequisite), I ask students to read one of the Elephantine documents of wifehood, describe the marriage customs attested in the papyrus and then we compare it with what they know of the marriage regulations and traditions in the Hebrew Bible.

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A half-dozen passages in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel may be illustrated by the Elephantine papyri:

38. Alejandro F. Botta, “How Long Does an Eternal Covenant Last? עולם in the Light of Aramaic-Egyptian Legal Documents,” *BT* 59 (2008), pp. 158-163.

39. S.E. Loewenstamm, “Notes on the Alalakh Tablets,” *IEJ* 6 (1956), pp. 220-221; Reuven Yaron, “Aramaic Marriage Contracts from Elephantine,” *JSS* 3 (1958), pp. 1-39; p. 4

1. Isa 11:11 *the Lord will redeem the remainder of His people that shall remain from Assyria—as also from Egypt, Pathros, Nubia.* Three parts of Egypt; are Jews already settled in Egypt in the time of Isaiah? Is this section authentic or a later addition?

2. Five things that shall happen “in that day,” (Isa 19:16, 18, 19, 23, 24), the most relevant being verse 19: *In that day, there shall be an altar to the Lord inside the land of Egypt and a pillar to the Lord at its border.* The verse served as warranty for the Jewish temple at Leontopolis and may have also for that at Elephantine, a border town.

3. Isa 49:12 *Look! These are coming from afar, these from the north and the west, and these from the land of the Syenians.* The reading follows that in 1QIs^a and not only shows that the Jews were settled in Elephantine in the second half of the sixth century but also introduces the student to the DSS.

4. Jer 24:8-9 *and those who are living in the land of Egypt: I will make them a horror.* Even before the destruction of the Temple, Jews were living in Egypt and they were rejected by the prophet.

5. Jer 44:1 *The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah for all the Judeans living in the land of Egypt, living in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Noph, and in the land of Pathros.* Jews live throughout Egypt and are mobile.

6. Jer 44:15-17 *all the women present ... all the people who lived in Pathros ... we will ... make offerings to the Queen of Heaven* One of the gods of the Arameans with a temple at Syene was the Queen of Heaven (TAD A1.2:1).

I would have them read my translations in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (eds.), *The Context of Scripture 3* (Leiden 2002), pp. 116-134, 141-198, 205-218 (=COS).