Clan Names of Returnees
to Judah in Ezra 2//Nehemiah 7:
An Analysis of the Onomastic
Reality Behind the Names*

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Introduction

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are essentially a historiographic composition that recounts the story of the returnees from the Babylonian exile (586 BCE) to Judah during the Persian Period (Ezra 1:1,5; 3:11). Scholars have debated whether Ezra-Nehemiah were initially composed as one book or as two books that were later merged. VanderKam, Kraemer, Grabbe, and Becking claim that Ezra and Nehemiah are two separate compositions based on the introductory verse in the book Nehemiah (Neh 1:1), the almost identical list of returnees included in both Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 2//Nehemiah 7), and conceptual and ideological differences between the two compositions.[1] Other scholars argue for one composition as the earliest canonical traditions consider Ezra and Nehemiah to be one book. These include the Septuagint [LXX], the Talmud (b. B. Bat. 14b–15a), and the earliest manuscripts of the Masoretic Texts. These scholars point to the unity of the two books.[2]

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[1] James C. VanderKam, "Ezra-Nehemiah or Ezra and Nehemiah?" in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp*, ed. Eugene Ulrich, et al., JSOTSup 149 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 55–75; David Kraemer, "On the Relationship of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah," *JSOT* 59 (1993): 73–92; Lester L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (London: Routledge, 1998), 100–105; Bob Becking, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, HCOT (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 3–4.

[2] Tamara C. Eskenazi, *In an Age of Prose: A Literary Approach to Ezra-Nehemiah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 11–14, 37–126; Christiane Karrer-Grube, "Scrutinizing the Conceptual Unity of Ezra and Nehemiah," in *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric and Reader*, ed. M. J. Boda and Paul L. Redditt (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 136–159; Kyung-jin Min, "Nehemiah Without Ezra?" in Boda and Reddit, *Unity and Disunity*, 160–175; Douglas J. E. Nykolaishen, "The Restoration of Israel by God's Word in Three Episodes from Ezra-Nehemiah," in Boda and Reddit, *Unity and Disunity*, 176–199; Lisbeth S. Fried, *Ezra: A*

Dating the final form of Ezra-Nehemiah must be after the events it depicts: Japhet dates it to about 400, as the last king mentioned is Darius II (423–404 BCE; Neh 12:26), or Artaxerxes III (403–359 BCE).[3] Williamson assigns the date to the Hellenistic period—around 300 BCE,[4] and Fried also dates to the Hellenistic period, after Alexander's conquest (330–323 BCE), based on the verse which lists the last four priests (Neh 12:22), up to the reign of Darius III (335–330 BCE).[5] Eskenazi suggests a date between 400 and 350 BCE, with some Hellenistic revisions.[6] In recent decades, most scholars agree that Ezra-Nehemiah is a unified work that underwent editing/redaction in Yehud during the early Hellenistic period.[7]

The historical reliability of Ezra-Nehemiah is also a subject of scholarly debate, mainly due to the scarcity of extra-biblical data from the Persian period.[8] Torrey has challenged the historical reliability of Ezra-Nehemiah, claiming that it is literary fiction.[9] Generally speaking, scholars accept the broad historical framework of Ezra-Nehemiah: during the Persian period, Judeans were permitted to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple. However, they question the reliability of certain historical details and events described in the text, as well as the authenticity of the included documents, such as royal edicts and correspondence, memoirs, and lists.[10]

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah contains numerous long lists of names, which play a significant role in the composition of this book. These lists

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Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2017), 3–4; Hans-Georg Wuench, "The Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah as a Literary Unit," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42 (2021): 1–9.

[3] Sara Japhet, "Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel against the Background of the Historical and Religious Tendencies of Ezra–Nehemiah: Part 1," in *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Highlands of Judah* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 74, n. 55.

[4] Hugh G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, WBC 16 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), xxxv–xxxvi.

[5] Fried, *Ezra*, 4–5.

[6] Tamara C. Eskenazi, *Ezra: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 14A (New Haven: Yale University Pres, 2023), 6.

[7] Yigal Levin, review of *Ezra: A Commentary* by Lizbeth S. Fried, *JSS* 64 (2019): 642.

[8] Japhet, "Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel," 54–55.

[9] Charles C. Torrey, *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah*, BZAW 2 (Gissen: J. Ricker, 1896).

[10] Tamara C. Eskenazi, "Ezra and Nehemiah," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 303–305.

punctuate every important event in Ezra-Nehemiah, such as returning to Judah and building the temple (Ezra 2:1–70; Ezra 8:1–14, 18–20); addressing mixed marriages (Ezra 10:18–43); and constructing the city wall (Neh 3:1–32).[11] Maria Häusl notes that, with the exception of Neh 3:1–32, all lists in Ezra-Nehemiah are organized by groups, with priests, Levites, and laypeople forming their core framework. This group-structured description is also integrated into most narrative sections. Some of the lists correspond to each other in ways that suggests certain lists are dependent on others. Another characteristic of the lists is their independence from the surrounding narrative, as they contain information that is neither essential to nor referenced within it.[12]

The ideological purpose of the lists is to depict the legitimate population of Judah, that is, the returnees from the Babylonian exile. The lists' literary purpose is to enhance readers' confidence in the text. Including lists in narratives was a popular device among Hellenistic historians to support their credibility.[13]

The list in Ezra 2//Neh 7 is the most comprehensive in the book. According to the Book of Ezra–Nehemiah, this is one list, recording the names of the various groups of returnees from the Babylonian exile in the first wave of return, immediately after Cyrus's decree, under the guidance of Zerubbabel (Neh 7:5).[14] It is repeated almost identically in Ezra 2 and Neh 7:6–72. The main differences between these two occurrences of the list involve the spelling of proper names, discrepancies in numbers, and the final lines. Most of these variations are due to textual corruptions.[15] Most scholars agree that the list in

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[11] Maria Häusl, "It's All in the Lists! Building the Community through the Lists in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah," in *The Hunt for Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of Diana V. Edelman*, ed. Cynthia Shafer-Elliott, et al. (Sheffield: Equinox, 2022), 168–170.

[12] Sara Japhet, "Composition and Chronology in the Book of Ezra–Nehemiah," in Japhet, *From the Rivers of Babylon*, 250; Häusl, "It's All in the Lists," 169, 171, 173–176.

[13] Fried, *Ezra*, 136–137, 144.

[14] Japhet, "Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel," 56.

[15] Hugh G. M. Williamson, *Studies in Persian Period History and Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 245; Becking, *Ezra-Nehemiah,* 38; Michael Segal, "Reconstructing the List of Returnees: A Text-Critical Solution to Ezra 2 || Nehemiah 7 || 1 Esdras 5," *Textus* 32

Ezra 2 is dependent upon Neh 7, contrary to how it is presented in the biblical text (Neh 7:5).[16]

In this list, the Judean returnees are organized by clans or ancestral houses, referred to as 'sons of (בני) X', listing the names of the heads of the houses. This term 'בני X' is already found on an Iron Age II ostracon from Arad: בני בצל, בני קרח, בני כניהו, בני אחא.[17] In Judah during the Iron Age II, more so than in Israel, the patriarch—the male head of the family or tribe—held great importance, and his name became an integral part of an individual's personal identity and name.[18] Given names followed by a patronym are also characteristic of Judeans in Babylonian sources from the sixth to fifth centuries BCE.[19] However, the term "patriarch" may have changed in meaning from the pre-exilic to post-exilic periods, potentially coming to define a broader social unit.

The list comprises several groups: the men of the people of Israel (family units and villages), the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, the temple servants (*netinim*; Ezra 2:43),[20] and the sons of Solomon's servants. Williamson argues that this list should be viewed as a

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(2023): 66–88. Wuench argues that the discrepancies between the two lists cannot be attributed solely to scribal errors. Instead, he suggests that the differing numbers of returnees in Ezra and Nehemiah reflect different points in the journey: Ezra records those who left Babylon, while Nehemiah records those who arrived in Jerusalem. It is possible that, along the way, some may have turned back while others might have joined the group (Wuench, *Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah*, 6–7).

[16] Haran argues that there is no direct connection between the two lists, asserting instead that both are copies of a version presumed to have been kept in the temple (Menahem Haran, *The Biblical Collection: Its Consolidation to the End of the Second Temple Times and Changes of Form to the End of the Middle Ages*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1996–2014), 4:217–220 (Hebrew). Wuench goes further, claiming the lists originate from two different sources: the list in Ezra includes those who departed from Babylon, while the list in Nehemiah contains those who ultimately arrived in Jerusalem (see previous note; Wuench, *Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah*, 6–7). For a detailed discussion on the literary connection between these two texts, see Williamson, *Studies*, 245–250; for additional references see Becking, *Ezra-Nehemiah,* 38, n. 53.

[17] Shmuel Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 145–148.

[18] Mitka R. Golub, "In the Name of the Father: Patronyms in Iron Age II Hebrew Epigraphy," *IEJ* 70 (2020): 42–44.

[19] Kathleen Abraham, "Hebrew Names," in *Personal Names in Cuneiform Texts from Babylonia (c. 750–100 BCE): An Introduction*, ed. Caroline Waerzeggers and Melanie M. Groß (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 139–165.

[20] Fried, *Ezra*, 119–120.

compilation of originally separate elements.[21] Zadok identifies the temple and Solomon's servants as one distinct group, suggesting their probable non-Israelite origin, inferred from their names.[22] Fried, however, challenges these views, comparing the list's structure to one from Elephantine (TAD C 3.15)[23] to demonstrate that it is not necessarily a composite of multiple lists.[24] Eskenazi argues that the list should be seen as a comprehensive record that presents people from the beginning of the return until the mid-fifth-century celebrations in Neh 8–12, consolidating three stages of return and reconstruction.[25]

As said, including the list of returnees in the narrative serves to illustrate continuity with pre-exilic Judah and to describe the legitimate population of Judah.[26] Moreover, it glorifies the Second Temple by depicting the vast number of people returning to participate in its construction. The detailed information in the list—such as names, numbers, and towns of origin—also bolsters the reader's confidence in the author.[27] However, the figure of over 42,000 returnees does not correspond to the historical reality of the Judean region during the Persian period, as archaeological evidence indicates that the actual population was significantly smaller.[28] Furthermore, Finkelstein argues that the archaeological findings from the listed sites does

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[21] Williamson, *Studies*, 249, n. 21.

[22] Ran Zadok, "Notes on the Biblical and Extra-Biblical Onomasticon," *JQR* 71 (1980): 110–116.

[23] Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993), 3:226–234 (=TAD).

[24] Fried, *Ezra*, 139–141. Fried also proposes that the list of names may be a list of ḫadrus—estates, each held by a group of patrilineal relatives (ibid., 137–139).

[25] Eskenazi, *Ezra*, 146–147. See also Haran, *Biblical Collection,* 4:180–181 (Hebrew).

[26] Jan Clauss, "Understanding the Mixed Marriages of Ezra-Nehemiah in the Light of Temple-Building and the Book's Concept of Jerusalem," in *Mixed Marriages; Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 111; Fried, *Ezra*, 144.

[27] Fried, *Ezra*, 137.

[28] Oded Lipschits, "Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 364–365; Bob Becking, "'We All Returned as One!': Critical Notes on the Myth of the Mass Return," in Lipschits and Oeming, *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, 7–10.

not align with Persian-period realities.[29] This challenges the views of scholars who consider the list to be reflections of the early settlement following the return,[30] during Nehemiah's time,[31] or as a summary of various waves of immigrants prior to Nehemiah's time. [32] Finkelstein offers two possible interpretations for the reality behind the list: it either depicts the late Iron II period or the late Hellenistic (Hasmonaean) period.[33]

The aim of this study is to explore the characteristics of the clan names listed in Ezra 2//Neh 7, by shedding additional light on their onomastic reality. Given that these names are attributed to Judean exiles and probably reflect their ancestral patriarchs, this study seeks to assess whether they indeed represent the Judean onomastic reality of the end of the First Temple period (e.g., late Iron Age II), or a later period. Specifically, I have applied quantitative analyses to determine the characteristics of the clan names, such as the distribution of the main types of names (theophoric names, hypocoristic theophoric names, and other names), theophoric elements, and most common roots in the names (see below *Methodology: Data Sets and Analytical Approaches*). Then, I compare these characteristics with those of names found on Judean epigraphic artifacts from the last century before the exile (seventh to early sixth centuries BCE). The substantial number of clan names listed in Ezra 2//Neh 7 allows for a comparison with the extensive collection of Judean names, leading to meaningful conclusions.

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[29] Israel Finkelstein, "Archaeology and the List of Returnees in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah," *PEQ* 140 (2008): 14.

[30] For example, Kurt Galling. "The 'Gōlā-List' According to Ezra 2// Nehemiah 7," *JBL* 70 (1951): 149–158; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 31.

[31] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 83.

[32] Summarized in Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah Under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 159–160, n. 91.

[33] Finkelstein, "Archaeology and the List of Returnees," 15. For a summary and conclusions regarding the list in Ezra 2//Neh 7, including the relationship between Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, the list's origin, date, compositional history, and purposes see Eskenazi, *Ezra*, 188–194.

Methodology: Data Sets and Analytical Approaches

The clan names were collected from Ezra 2:3–61 and Nehemiah 7:8–63 (the Masoretic Text[34]). Clan names based on the exiles' place of residence were excluded. These names, found in Ezra 2:20–35 [35] and Neh 7:25–38, are sometimes denoted as אַנְשֵׁי instead of בְּנֵי, such as אנשי נטפה, אנשי ענתות, and אנשי מכמס (Ezra 2:22, 23, 27; Neh 7:26, 27, 31). Most of these place names are mentioned in the Bible. The clan names כרוב, אדן, and אמר whose Israelite/Judean origin is questionable according to the biblical text (Ezra 2:59; Neh 7:61) were also excluded. This is because my aim is to compare Judean exiles' clan names with Judean personal names from the late Iron Age.

A few clan names are written differently in the two sources, such as חגבה/חגב (Ezra 2:45,46) vs. חגבא (Neh 7:48), שמלי *ketiv* (שלמי *qere*; Ezra 2:46) vs. שלמי (Neh 7:48), יורה (Ezra 2:18) vs. חריף (Neh 7:24). Additionally, עקוב is mentioned twice in Ezra (2:42,45) but only once in Neh (7:45). The clan אסנה is mentioned only in Ezra (2:50). As noted above, these differences are due to textual corruptions (see Introduction, above) and do not affect the study's conclusions. I defined לבני ישוע יואב (Ezra 2:6) as two separate clan names, as they are listed in Neh 7:11—בני אטר ליחזקיה/חזקיה. Similarly, לבני ישוע ויואב (Ezra 2:16; Neh 7:21) are also defined as two clan names: יחזקיה/חזקיה is probably a clan within the larger clan named אטר.

Appendix A lists the names of 85 different clans in the order they appear in Ezra 2. The order is almost identical in both Ezra and Nehemiah, with only a few variations in Ezra 2:17–19 and Neh 7:22–24. Each entry (row) in the table represents one clan. Different clans bearing the same name are listed separately. For example, the name ישוע is mentioned three times, corresponding to three different clans of: the men of the people of Israel (Ezra

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2:6; Neh 7:11), the priests (Ezra 2:36; Neh 7:39), and the Levites (Ezra 2:40; Neh 7:43). The table of names includes two columns:

1) *Name*: The clan name, including all its forms, as they appear in Ezra and Nehemiah. This includes *plene* and *defective*, *qere* (marked by 'ק) and ketiv (marked by 'כ). The name is vocalized as it appears in the biblical text. However, when changes occur in the name's vocalization, such as dropping the light dagesh in the בגדכפת letters, or changing a vowel caused by disjunctive accents, the initial vocalization is used.

2) *Source:* A reference in Ezra and Nehemiah for each clan name.

The extra-biblical Judean personal names included in this study are an updated dataset of those listed in a previous study.[36] These names are found on epigraphic artifacts from archaeological excavations in Judah during the late Iron Age II (seventh century to 586 BCE). Names found on artifacts from the antiquities market were excluded due to unknown geographical origin and uncertain authenticity. The Judean names were collected from several corpora,[37] as well as excavation reports, books on Iron Age epigraphy, and relevant journal articles, which cover sources from 2000 through the end of 2022. A total of 435 Judean names were found and are included in a digital onomasticon of the Iron II southern Levant.[38]

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[36] Mitka R. Golub, "Personal Names in Judah in the Iron Age II," *JSS* 62 (2017): 36–58, Appendix A.

[37] These corpora are: 1) Shmuel Aḥituv, *HaKetav VeHaMiḵtav*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 2012), and its English version: *Echoes from the Past* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008); 2) Johannes Renz, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik: Die althebräischen Inschriften: Text und Kommentar,* vol. I (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995); Johannes Renz and Wolfgang Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik: Siegel, Gewichte und weitere Dokumente der althebräischen Epigraphik, Materialien zur althebräischen Morphologie*, Vol. II/2 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003); 3) Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997); 4) F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); and 5) Graham Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991–2004).

[38] The digital onomasticon is available on the website onomasticon.net: Mitka R. Golub, "Onomasticon.net: Personal Names from the Iron II Southern Levant," <www.onomasticon.net> (June, 2023). Special thanks to Itay Zandbank for developing and maintaining this website.

Studies of Hebrew onomastics typically focus on the theophoric content of names, which reflect religious beliefs and the deities that were worshipped.[39] Thus, Hebrew personal names are sorted into three main groups:

1) *Theophoric names*: These are nominal or verbal sentence names, compounded with a divine name or a divine appellative. Examples of divine names are YHWH (יו, יה, יהו), Horus (חור), and Qaus (קוס). Examples of divine appellatives are אדן ('lord'), מלך ('king') and familial nouns where the divine was perceived as a part of the family like אב ('father') and אח ('brother'). El (אל) may be interpreted either as a divine name—the head of the Canaanite pantheon-- or as a divine appellative—a general term for god.

2) *Hypocoristic theophoric names*: These are abbreviated theophoric names where the theophoric element was dropped, such as גדל —an abbreviation of גדליהו ('YHWH was great, has shown his greatness').[40] Some abbreviated names have a suffix appended to them, such as א, ה, or י.

3) *Other names*: These do not include a theophoric element. Most of them have no religious meaning, such as fauna (חגב ['locust'], פרעש ['flea']), or appellatives (פסח ['lame'], לבן ['white']).

Using the above categorizations of Hebrew names, I analyzed the names from Ezra-Nehemiah and epigraphic artifacts according to their type: theophoric, hypocoristic or other. Theophoric names were further analyzed based on the type of theophoric element within the name (prefixed or

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[39] For example, Jeffrey H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions*, HSS 31 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Jeaneane D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study*, JSOTSup 49 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); Richard S. Hess, "Aspects of Israelite Personal Names and Pre-exilic Israelite Religion," in *New Seals and Inscriptions, Hebrew, Idumean and Cuneiform*, ed. Meir Lubetski (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 301–313; Rainer Albertz, and Rüdiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012); Stig Norin, *Personennamen und Religion im alten Israel: untersucht mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Namen auf El und Ba'al*, CBOT 60 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013); Mitka R. Golub, "The Distribution of Personal Names in Israel and Transjordan during the Iron II," *JAOS* 134 (2014): 621–42; Seth L. Sanders, "When the Personal Became Political: An Onomastic Perspective on the Rise of Yahwism," *HeBAI* 4 (2015): 103–104.

[40] Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 479.

suffixed). Since some scholars identify the temple and Solomon's servants as a separate group, I also analyzed this group and the rest of the clan names (Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers) separately. Additionally, I identified the most common roots in Ezra 2//Neh 7 and in Judean names. For sentence names, the root was determined based on the predicate. Finally, I compared the characteristics of the clan names with those of Judean names.

Results

The three following paragraphs compare the characteristics of the clan names in Ezra 2//Neh 7 with those of the Judean names on excavated epigraphic artifacts from the end of Iron Age II.

Table 1 presents the distribution of the three main groups of names (theophoric, hypocoristic theophoric, and other) of clans and Judean names in percentages, with absolute numbers provided in parentheses. The table reveals remarkably different distributions between the two groups. In the clan names, the dominant category is other names, comprising 60% of the total. In contrast, theophoric names dominate the Judean names, also at 60%. The remaining categories in each distribution account for approximately 20% each: theophoric and hypocoristic names in the clan names, and hypocoristic and other names in the Judean names.

	Theophoric Names	Hypocoristic Theophoric Names	Other Names	Total
Clan names in Ezra 2//Neh 7	20% (17)	20% (17)	60% (51)	100% (85)
Judean names at the end of Iron Age II	60% (262)	17% (72)	23% (101)	100% (435)

Table 1. Distribution of the three main groups of names of clans and Judean names

Some scholars assert that the clans of the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants (44 clans) form a distinct group (see Introduction, above). To explore this, I compared their distribution with that of the other clans in the list: the men of the people of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers (41 clans). Table 2 reveals that the specific distribution of the entire list also applies to these sub-groups. In both sub-groups (as in the entire list), 'other names' is the dominant category, with the remaining two categories being of similar size. Despite variations in the percentages of theophoric names and other names, the distribution of the names of the two sub-groups is not dependent on the sub-group at the 0.05 significance level.[41] Therefore, the scholarly view that the list of the returnees is a composite of these sub-lists reflecting different onomastic realities cannot be statistically validated.

	Theophoric Names	Hypocoristic Theophoric Names	Other Names	Total
The temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants	11% (5)	18% (8)	70% (31)	100%[42] (44)

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[41] A chi-squared test for independence shows that the null hypothesis—that there is no difference in the distribution of clan names between the two sub-groups of returnees—cannot be rejected (p-value = 0.074) at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, we cannot rule out that the clan names are independent of the sub-group of returnees. The p-value in this test is the probability of obtaining test results at least as extreme as the result actually observed, under the assumption that the null hypothesis is correct. A p-value smaller than 0.05 means that such an extreme observed outcome would be very unlikely under the null hypothesis. However, in this case, the p-value is larger than 0.05.
[42] All percentages in the table are rounded. As a result, the total percentage for the clans of temple Solomon's servants is 99% instead of 100%.

The men of the people of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers	29% (12)	22% (9)	49% (20)	100% (41)

Table 2. Distribution of the three main groups of names of clans within the list

Table 3 displays the distribution of theophoric elements—YHWH, El, divine appellatives, and divine names other than YHWH and El—in clans and Judean names. The distribution is presented in percentages, with absolute numbers provided in parentheses. The table reveals differences in these distributions. Although the number of theophoric clan names is small—17— we can observe the following: 1) YHWH is the dominant theophoric element in both onomastica, but its prevalence is lower in clan names (59%) than in Judean names (80%). Additionally, the percentage of Yahwistic names in the entire list of clans is 12% (10 out of 85), whereas in Judah, it is 49% (212 out of 435), four times that of Yahwistic clan names. 2) Other divine names are common in clan names (29%), including the names Amun, Bes, Gad, Horus, and Qaus. In contrast, these names are almost non-existent in Judean names, with only one occurrence (פשחור) out of 266 names. A comparison of the distributions of theophoric elements between the two sub-groups defined above (see Table 2) is not feasible due to the small size of theophoric names in the two sub-groups (12 and 5).

	YHWH	El	Divine Appellatives	Divine Names Other than YHWH and El	Total
Clan names in Ezra 2/Neh 7	59% (10)	6% (1)	6% (1)	29% (5)	100% (17)
Judean names at the end of Iron Age II	80% (212)	14% (36)	6% (17)	0%[43] (1)	100% (266)[44]

Table 3. Distribution of theophoric elements in clans and Judean names

Among clan names, the root ישע ('to save') is most common, found in three clans named ישוע. Seven roots appear twice in names, while all others appear only once. With such low numbers of root reoccurrences, it is difficult to identify common roots other than perhaps ישע. In contrast, the multitude of Judean names allows us to more confidently determine the five most common roots: שלם ('to be safe, unharmed, be in/make peace, pay, reward')[45], שמע ('to hear'), אח ('brother'), נתן ('to give'), and שוב ('to return') (Table 4). Notably, three of these common Judean roots are absent from the clan names entirely. שלם appears twice, and שוב appears once in clan names. In summary, the most common roots in Judean names are not the most common in clan names. Had the list included more clan names, the number of root recurrences would likely have increased, perhaps revealing shared common roots between clan and Judean names.

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[43] The percentage is zero due to rounding of all percentages in the table.

[44] The total number of Judean names including a theophoric element in Table 3 is higher than in Table 1 (266 vs. 262) because four hypocoristic names include a theophoric element: אחא, אבי (2 names), and מלכי.

[45] Avigad and Sass (1997: 535).

Root	Number of Names
שלם	22
שמע	17
אח	16
נתן	15
שוב	14

Table 4. The five most common roots in the Judean names

Only 18% of the clan names (15 out of 85) are found in Judaean names from excavated epigraphical artifacts dating to the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE. These names are: דליה (דליהו in Judah), הודויה (הודויהו in Judah), ידעיה (ידעיהו in Judah), טוביה (טביהו in Judah), חנן, חזקיה (חזקיהו in Judah), יואב שלמי, שלם, שבי, פשחור, פרעש, פסח, and two clans named שפטיה (יהואב in Judah), שפטיה (שפטיהו in Judah). In comparison, nearly half (46%) of the names of donors to YHWH, listed in a document from Elephantine dated to 400 BCE, were also borne by Judeans (see below).

Discussion and Conclusions

The clan names listed in Ezra 2//Neh 7, presented as the ancestral patriarchs of the returnees, are attributed in the biblical text to Judean exiles who returned from Babylon immediately after Cyrus's decree. However, comparing characteristics of these clan names with those of Judean names before the exile (seventh to early sixth centuries BCE) reveals remarkable differences, indicating that the clan names do not reflect the pre-exilic Judean onomastic reality. The distributions of the three main groups of names and theophoric elements differ significantly between the clan names and the Judean names. For example, other names dominate the clan names, whereas theophoric names dominate Judean names. Yahwistic names are less prevalent in the clan

names compared to Judean names,[46] and divine names other than YHWH and El are common in clan names but almost non-existent in Judah. Furthermore, I was unable to find any shared most-common roots between the clan names and Judean names. It is worth noting that the name ישוע, which belongs to three different clans, is absent from pre-exilic Judean names but ranks as the sixth most common name during the Second Temple period. However, this name does not appear among the Hasmonaean dynasty, whose names are the most prevalent in the Second Temple period.[47] This could suggest that ישוע was already in common use during the Persian period.

Did the clan names change during the exile in Babylon before Cyrus's decree? While Judeans born in exile may have adopted local names—whether Babylonian or from neighboring ethnic groups—clan names are generally less susceptible to change within such a time span, and therefore, likely retain their Judean origin.[48] Moreover, a change like this seems unlikely given that several clan names in Ezra 2//Neh 7 are based on the exiles' places of residence, which scholars have identified as Judean locations.[49] This reflects a strong and persistent connection to their origin. In sum, the differences in characteristics between the clan names and Judean names suggest that the clan names do not reflect the onomastic reality of the early settlers after the decree of Cyrus but rather a later period. While it is possible that some of these returnees were not of Judean origin, this alone does not sufficiently explain the observed differences in onomastic characteristics.

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[46] The low prevalence of Yahwistic names among the clan names has already been observed by scholars, e.g. Zadok, "Notes on the Biblical and Extra-Biblical Onomasticon," 115.

[47] Rachel Hachlili, "Hebrew Names, Personal Names, Family Names and Nicknames of Jews in the Second Temple period," in *Families and Family Relations: As Represented in Early Judaisms and Early Christianities: Texts and Fictions – Papers read at a NOSTER colloquium in Amsterdam, June 9-11, 1998*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Jan W. van Henten (Leiden: Deo, 2000), 113, Table 1; Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 1:56, Table 7.

[48] cf. Tero Alstola, *Judeans in Babylonia: A Study of Deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE*, CHANE 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 48–49.

[49] Finkelstein, "Archaeology and the List of Returnees," 7–16.

A donation list from the Nile island of Elephantine, dated to 400 BCE during the Persian period (C3.15:1),[50] might also point to a later date for the onomastic reality behind the clan names. This document lists over one hundred individuals, collectively referred to as 'the Jewish garrison', who each donated two shekels for YHWH. These individuals probably venerated YHWH and thus may be considered Jewish.[51] The names of these donors, along with the names of their fathers, and occasionally their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, were analyzed and compared to Judean names from the last century before the exile, similar to the method used in analyzing the clan names.[52] Though several donors bore Egyptian or Persian names, the comparison revealed notable similarities between the two groups. Close to half of the names in the donation list were also borne by Judeans. The three most popular roots in pre-exilic Judean names—שלם, נתן, and שמע—are among the five most popular roots in the donation list, with שלם being the most popular root in both groups. The theophoric element יהו/יה is dominant, with its prevalence among theophoric names being very similar (84% in the donation list and 80% in Judah). The overall prevalence of Yahwistic names among all listed donors is half that in Judah. In sum, the donors' names from Elephantine exhibit more Judean onomastic characteristics than those of the returnees from the Babylonian exile. This is remarkable given that both the Elephantine[53] and Babylonian communities lived in multicultural societies. Additionally, there is a greater time gap between the exile from Judah and the period of these donors (in the second half of the fifth century BCE) than between the exile and the period of the returnees from Babylon following the decree of Cyrus. Thus, the Judean onomastic characteristics of the community

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[50] TAD, 226–34.
[51] The term "Jews" here refers not to practitioners of formative or rabbinic Judaism, but a Persian-period form of Yahwism.
[52] Mitka R. Golub, "A Donation List from Elephantine: Judean and Non-Judean Onomastic Characteristics from the Persian period in Egypt," *JSS* 69 (2024): 135–160.
[53] For an analysis of why the donation list, primarily reflecting two generations of Jews from the latter half of the fifth century BCE, constitutes a partial yet significant portion of the Jewish Elephantine onomasticon, see Golub, "Donation List," 146–147.

in Elephantine, combined with this study's results, support scholars' views that the list of clans may originate from a later date in the Persian period (see Introduction, above). Although it is also possible that the list reflects Judean names from the early Hellenistic period, this requires further study. A comprehensive analysis would involve gathering Judean names from the early Hellenistic period found in extra-biblical sources, examining their characteristics, and comparing them with those of the clan names.

The remarkable differences in characteristics between the clan names listed in in Ezra 2//Neh 7 and pre-exilic Judean names from the seventh to early sixth centuries BCE suggest that these clan names do not reflect the onomastic reality of the ancestral patriarchs of the early settlers after Cyrus's decree. The Judean onomastic characteristics found in the Elephantine community during the second half of the fifth century BCE—yet absent from the clan names—further support the view that the list represents a later wave of returnees, possibly from the late Persian Period. The extended time span between the exile and the return to Judah likely contributed to the notable changes in the characteristics of these clan names.

APPENDIX A – The Table of Clan Names in Ezra 2//Nehemiah 7

	Name in Ezra-Neh	Biblical Source: Ezra-Nehemiah
1	פַּרְעֹשׁ	Ezra 2:3; Neh 7:8
2	שְׁפַטְיָה	Ezra 2:4; Neh 7:9
3	אָרַח	Ezra 2:5; Neh 7:10
4	פַּחַת מוֹאָב	Ezra 2:6; Neh 7:11

5	יֵשׁוּעַ	Ezra 2:6; Neh 7:11
6	יוֹאָב	Ezra 2:6; Neh 7:11
7	עֵילָם	Ezra 2:7; Neh 7:12
8	זַתּוּא	Ezra 2:8; Neh 7:13
9	זַכָּי	Ezra 2:9; Neh 7:14
10	בָּנִי, בִּנּוּי	Ezra 2:10; Neh 7:15
11	בֵּבַי	Ezra 2:11; Neh 7:16
12	עַזְגָּד	Ezra 2:12; Neh 7:17
13	אֲדֹנִיקָם	Ezra 2:13; Neh 7:18
14	בִּגְוַי	Ezra 2:14; Neh 7:19
15	עָדִין	Ezra 2:15; Neh 7:20
16	אָטֵר	Ezra 2:16; Neh 7:21
17	יְחִזְקִיָּה, חִזְקִיָּה	Ezra 2:16; Neh 7:21
18	בֵּצָי	Ezra 2:17; Neh 7:23
19	יוֹרָה, חָרִיף	Ezra 2:18; Neh 7:24
20	חָשֻׁם	Ezra 2:19; Neh 7:22

21	יְדַעְיָה	Ezra 2:36; Neh 7:39
22	יֵשׁוּעַ	Ezra 2:36; Neh 7:39
23	אִמֵּר	Ezra 2:37; Neh 7:40
24	פַּשְׁחוּר	Ezra 2:38; Neh 7:41
25	חָרִם	Ezra 2:39; Neh 7:42;
26	יֵשׁוּעַ	Ezra 2:40; Neh 7:43
27	קַדְמִיאֵל	Ezra 2:40; Neh 7:43
28	הוֹדַוְיָה, הוֹדְוָה	Ezra 2:40; Neh 7:43
29	אָסָף	Ezra 2:41; Neh 7:44
30	שַׁלּוּם, שַׁלֵּם	Ezra 2:42; Neh 7:45
31	אָטֵר	Ezra 2:42; Neh 7:45
32	טַלְמוֹן, טַלְמֹן	Ezra 2:42; Neh 7:45
33	עַקּוּב	Ezra 2:42; Neh 7:45
34	חֲטִיטָא	Ezra 2:42; Neh 7:45
35	שֹׁבָי	Ezra 2:42; Neh 7:45
36	צִיחָא, צְחָא	Ezra 2:43; Neh 7:46

37	חֲשׂוּפָא, חֲשֻׂפָא	Ezra 2:43; Neh 7:46
38	טַבָּעוֹת	Ezra 2:43; Neh 7:46
39	קֶרֹס, קֵירֹס	Ezra 2:44; Neh 7:47
40	סִיעֲהָא, סִיעָא	Ezra 2:44; Neh 7:47
41	פָּדוֹן	Ezra 2:44; Neh 7:47
42	לְבָנָה	Ezra 2:45; Neh 7:48
43	חֲגָבָה, חָגָב, חֲגָבָא	Ezra 2:45,46; Neh 7:48
44	עַקּוּב	Ezra 2:45
54	שמלי כ', שַׁלְמַי ק', שַׁלְמַי	Ezra 2:46; Neh 7:48
46	חָנָן	Ezra 2:46; Neh 7:49
47	גִּדֵּל	Ezra 2:47; Neh 7:49
48	גַּחַר	Ezra 2:47; Neh 7:49
49	רְאָיָה	Ezra 2:47; Neh 7:50
50	רְצִין	Ezra 2:48; Neh 7:50
51	נְקוֹדָא	Ezra 2:48; Neh 7:50
52	גַּזָּם	Ezra 2:48; Neh 7:51

53	עַזָּא	Ezra 2:49; Neh 7:51
54	פָּסֵחַ	Ezra 2:49; Neh 7:51
55	בֵּסַי	Ezra 2:49; Neh 7:52
56	אַסְנָה	Ezra 2:50
57	מְעוּנִים	Ezra 2:50; Neh 7:52
58	נפיסים כ', נְפוּסִים ק', נפושסים כ', נְפִישְׂסִים ק'	Ezra 2:50; Neh 7:52
59	בַּקְבּוּק	Ezra 2:51; Neh 7:53
60	חֲקוּפָא	Ezra 2:51; Neh 7:53
61	חַרְחוּר	Ezra 2:51; Neh 7:53
62	בַּצְלוּת, בַּצְלִית	Ezra 2:52; Neh 7:54
63	מְחִידָא	Ezra 2:52; Neh 7:54
64	חַרְשָׁא	Ezra 2:52; Neh 7:54
65	בַּרְקוֹס	Ezra 2:53; Neh 7:55
66	סִיסְרָא	Ezra 2:53; Neh 7:55
67	תֶּמַח	Ezra 2:53; Neh 7:55
68	נְצִיחַ	Ezra 2:54; Neh 7:56

69	חֲטִיפָא	Ezra 2:54; Neh 7:56
70	סְטַי, סוֹטַי	Ezra 2:55; Neh 7:57
71	הַסֹּפֶרֶת, סֹפֶרֶת	Ezra 2:55; Neh 7:57
72	פְּרוּדָא, פְּרִידָא	Ezra 2:55; Neh 7:57
73	יַעֲלָה, יַעְלָא	Ezra 2:56; Neh 7:58
74	דַּרְקוֹן	Ezra 2:56; Neh 7:58
75	גִּדֵּל	Ezra 2:56; Neh 7:58
76	שְׁפַטְיָה	Ezra 2:57; Neh 7:59
77	חַטִּיל	Ezra 2:57; Neh 7:59
78	פֹּכֶרֶת הַצְּבָיִים	Ezra 2:57; Neh 7:59
79	אָמִי, אָמוֹן	Ezra 2:57; Neh 7:59
80	דְּלָיָה	Ezra 2:60; Neh 7:62
81	טוֹבִיָּה	Ezra 2:60; Neh 7:62
82	נְקוֹדָא	Ezra 2:60; Neh 7:62
83	חֲבַיָּה	Ezra 2:61; Neh 7:63
84	הַקּוֹץ	Ezra 2:61; Neh 7:63

| 85 | | בַּרְזִלַּי | Ezra 2:61; Neh 7:63 |