



HAL
open science

Response to Richard Nelson, Steven McKenzie, Eckart Otto, and Yairah Amit

Thomas Römer

► **To cite this version:**

Thomas Römer. Response to Richard Nelson, Steven McKenzie, Eckart Otto, and Yairah Amit. Person Jr Ray, F. In Conversation With Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (2005), 9 (17), T. & T. Clark, pp.36-49, 2009, 10.5508/jhs.2009.v9.a17 . hal-03820996

HAL Id: hal-03820996

<https://hal.science/hal-03820996>

Submitted on 19 Oct 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures

ISSN 1203-1542

<http://www.jhsonline.org> and

<http://purl.org/jhs>



Articles in JHS are being indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, [RAMBI](#), and [BiBIL](#). Their abstracts appear in Religious and Theological Abstracts. The journal is archived by *Library and Archives Canada* and is accessible for consultation and research at the Electronic Collection site maintained by [Library and Archives Canada](#) (for a direct link, click [here](#)).

VOLUME 9, ARTICLE 17

RAYMOND F. PERSON, JR., ED.
IN CONVERSATION WITH THOMAS RÖMER, *THE SO-CALLED DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY: A SOCIOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL AND LITERARY INTRODUCTION* (LONDON: T. & T. CLARK, 2005).

**RESPONSE TO RICHARD NELSON, STEVEN
MCKENZIE, ECKART OTTO, AND
YAIRAH AMIT**

THOMAS RÖMER
UNIVERSITY OF LAUSANNE,
LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND

I recently heard about a proverb in the former communist countries saying: “You never know how the past will be made up tomorrow.” This is a very fine observation; we always reconstruct our past under new circumstances and we also reconstruct scholarly hypotheses of the past to make them fit better new ideological and/or scientific situations. And this is also what happened and still happens with the “so-called” Deuteronomistic History. First of all, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my esteemed colleagues who agreed to participate in this panel: Yairah Amit, Eckart Otto, Steven McKenzie, Richard Nelson, and Raymond Person. They have raised so many questions and offered so many helpful comments and themes for further research that I am unable to deal with them all during this response. But I hope to continue this discussion in the following years, since there is still plenty of work to do for the “Deuteronomistic History Section.”

Let me begin with some remarks about the English title “The So-Called Deuteronomistic History,” a question that Nelson rose. Indeed, the title may sound a bit strange. I did not think that this would give a pejorative tone. I was more inspired I guess by Schmid’s book “Der sogenannte Jahwist,”³⁰ in which he tried to show that one should not give up the idea of Yahwistic texts in the Pentateuch, but that there is need to redefine the term. I also thought and I still think that the term “Deuteronomistic History” is used in many different ways among scholars: some use the term as Noth put it, others think more of a document written during the

³⁰ H. H. Schmid, *Der sogenannte Jahwist. Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976).

seventh century, others still just take it as a “synchronic” designation for the books from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings (Polzin for instance³¹), others again think that this term should only apply to the books of Kings.³² One may get the impression that each scholar is constructing his own Deuteronomist or his own Deuteronomistic History. The panel of respondents is indeed quite representative of different views and approaches to the “Deuteronomistic History.” Amit and Nelson insist on the importance of the seventh century. Nelson is close to the model of Cross, which in a certain way takes up some ideas from Wellhausen, but seems to acknowledge that Deuteronomy was in a way separated from Joshua-Kings; Amit stresses the need to pay attention to the eighth century where scribal activity in Judah can be detected, whereas McKenzie, whom I labeled a Neo-Nothian,³³ defends the idea of one author in the exilic period; Otto as well as Person³⁴ would emphasize the importance of the Persian era as producing an important number of revisions and redactions, and Otto even claims that a Deuteronomistic History never existed at all.

Because of that situation I thought that it was adequate to speak of a “so-called” Deuteronomistic History. But I must confess that the translators were apparently not very happy with this title: in French the book is called “Israel’s first history,” in Italian “From Deuteronomy to the books of Kings” and in Japanese “The Making of a Historiography in the Old Testament.” I would like to add a “form-critical” remark: this book was conceived as an “introduction” for students, but the question immediately arose: to what kind of Deuteronomistic History should I introduce them? And having in mind that even if one writes for students one also writes for colleagues, I tried to pick up observations made by scholars from very different positions regarding the Deuteronomistic History and bring them together in some way or another. I am personally convinced, that in human sciences the opposition between “totally true” and “totally false” applies very rarely and that competing hypotheses can offer valuable insights, which may sometimes even be combined. That is what I tried to do in this book. I

³¹ R. Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist. A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: Seabury, 1980).

³² Ernst Axel Knauf, “Does A ‘Deuteronomistic Historiography’ (DtrH) Exist?” A. de Pury, T. Römer, J.-D. Macchi (eds), *Israel Constructs its History. Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOTSup, 306; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 388–98.

³³ T. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 31–32.

³⁴ R. F. Person Jr., *The Deuteronomist School. History, Social Setting, and Literature* (Studies in Biblical Literature 2; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

may have done this sometimes too quickly, and was not always able to buttress my views in a satisfactory way.

Let me pick up some of the most important points and questions that arose in the reviews. I would like to organize these in the following way:

1) The question of the historicity of Josiah's reform account in 2 Kings 22, and the topic of the book-finding (a question raised by Nelson);

2) The question of pre-deuteronomistic texts and especially the book of Judges (this is an important point of Amit's paper) and the question of other sources (Elijah-Elisha, David, etc.);

3) The question of the social location of the Deuteronomists or of the Deuteronomist: an individual author or a group, school, etc. (this question was brought forward by McKenzie, Nelson and also Otto);

4) The importance or non-importance of the Persian Period for the Deuteronomistic History (this is a point that underlies most of the responses);

5) The end of the Deuteronomistic History in both senses: its ending and its disappearance (this also is a question that is common to most of the panelists);

6) What texts should we label "deuteronomistic" (a very important question brought up by Nelson)?

JOSIAH'S REFORM, 2 KINGS 22–23 AND THE ORIGIN OF THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

First of all, I am convinced that 2 Kings 22–23 does contain some historical data about political and cultic changes in Jerusalem at the end of the seventh century BCE. The reference to the horses and chariots of Shamash, the Sun-God, and to the *keमारim*-priests has historical plausibility in the Assyrian period.³⁵ Na'aman also pointed to the historical plausibility of "reforming kings" by citing examples from Akhenaton to Nabonidus.³⁶ Having said this, I remain convinced that most of the account in 2 Kings 22–23 as it stands now comes from the Babylonian and early Persian period. I remain especially convinced that the book-finding motif should be considered a later addition, even though I may have done too much "surgery" as Nelson puts it. What strikes me is that in the Chronicler's account the cultic reform, and the finding followed by the

³⁵ C. Uehlinger, "Was there a Cult Reform under King Josiah? The Case for a Well-Grounded Minimum," L. L. Grabbe, (ed), *Good Kings and Bad Kings. The Kingdom of Judah in the Seventh Century B.C.E.* (LHBOTS, 393; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 279–316.

³⁶ N. Na'aman, "The King Leading Cult Reforms in his Kingdom: Josiah and Other Kings in the Ancient Near East," *ZAR* 12 (2006), 131–68.

public reading of the book are clearly separated. 2 Chr 34:1–7 reports the destruction of all non-Yahwistic cult symbols in Josiah's eighth year, without any mention of a book, and only in 34:8–35:19 does the narrator report the book-finding, the public reading of the book and the Passover celebration in the eighteenth year of the king's reign (interestingly it is said in 35:18 that no Passover like that had been kept from the days of Samuel, whereas 2 Kgs 23:22 says "from the days of the judges that judged Israel"). The double account in Chronicles shows that the reform and the book-finding were not considered related to each other, and even if it may be impossible to reconstruct the older reform account in 2 Kings 22–23 verbatim one may recall that verse 22:8 stands a bit awkwardly between vv 3–7 and 9 (see also the double introduction in v 9 and 10; one may also recall that the literary distinction between a "finding account" and a "reform account" was a classic assumption in older research).

Regarding the finding and reading of the scroll, Nelson recalls that "Nabonidus reports finding the old foundation stone of Naram-Sin in order to support his contemporary policies." The difference with Josiah lies in the fact that his counselors do not find a foundation stone but a book and that the book is read in order to renew a covenant between Yhwh and Israel. The foundation stone has therefore been replaced by a scroll and the temple emptied of all cultic symbols has become a proto-synagogue of a sort, in which this scroll is read in public.

Josiah's behaviour according to the book is also constructed in opposition to Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 36, who burns the book that is presented to him. Of course, it depends a great deal whether one considers Jeremiah 36 as a historical report, which I am not so much inclined to do. Anyway, there is no doubt that both texts were meant to be read together; they oppose Josiah, "the good king," and Jehoiakim, "the bad king." Both kings are confronted by the discovery of a book, but they act in opposite ways. Interestingly, the fate announced to both kings contradicts the information given in the book of Kings. Josiah does not die peacefully but is slain by Pharaoh Neco at Megiddo (2 Kgs 23:29) while Jehoiakim, even though he did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, "slept with his ancestors" (2 Kgs 24:6).

This apparent contradiction is a good example of the way reality can be made to fit the prophetic word. Huldah's oracle to Josiah is "true" in the sense that the "reforming king" dies before the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile, and Jeremiah's oracle to Jehoiakim is "true" since his reign was the time of the rise of the "enemy from the North" (Jeremiah 2–6) and his son Jehoiachin finished his life not on the throne of David, but on a seat next to the king of Babylon (2 Kgs 25:28). Therefore I have some difficulties considering Huldah's oracle as stemming from the seventh

century. The consultation of Huldah is, indeed, astonishing. A prophet is normally consulted when a major or minor problem arises for which no other solution is available (see 1 Sam 9:8–10; Ezek 20:1–2; Zech 7:3). A prophetic oracle depends only on the prophet's ability to contact God via trance or another method. In 2 Kgs 22:13–20, however, the prophetess' role is to interpret a book. There is no longer free access to the divine will. Huldah in 2 Kings 22 shares with Jeremiah in Jeremiah 36 the same fate: both prophets are no longer autonomous but depend on a book. Summing up: I think that 2 Kings 22–23 is based on a historical event, but reflects in its present form ideological concerns from the Babylonian and Persian periods.

This brings me to another question raised by Nelson: Why not imagine that the Deuteronomists started their work under Hezekiah or under Manasseh? Hezekiah is indeed, especially in Kings, presented as a forerunner of Josiah; but contrary to Josiah, his reign is not depicted in an entirely positive way. 2 Kgs 18:14–16 states that Hezekiah submitted himself to the Assyrian king; and the strange story about the Babylonian embassy (2 Kgs 20:12–19) ultimately alludes to the Babylonian exile. Sweeney is right, when he states that the Deuteronomistic account of Hezekiah displays an interest in Hezekiah's actions as partial causes for the Babylonian exile.³⁷ I may add another reason, why I find it unlikely that Deuteronomistic activity began already under Hezekiah: I am quite convinced by the works of Steymans and Otto, who have shown, that the model of Deuteronomy's first edition is Esarhaddon's loyalty oath from 672 BCE.³⁸ If this is right and if the book of Deuteronomy belonged to the first writings of the Deuteronomists, then one would need to date it at least one decade after this treaty. It could be that the Deuteronomists were involved in Amon's murder as Nelson suggests, but I think it is easier to imagine that Deuteronomy's first edition was written after the Deuteronomists' rise to power than as an underground document under Manasseh. If they had to hide their scroll, then who were the recipients?

If Deuteronomistic activity started in the seventh century why then not imagine that the whole Deuteronomistic History existed already at that time? Nelson claims that many elements in the Deuteronomistic History have nothing to do with the fall of Jerusalem and the exile. He notably mentions the celebration of David's dy-

³⁷ M. A. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah. The Lost Messiah of Israel* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001).

³⁸ H. U. Steymans, *Deuteronomium 28 und die adé zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons. Segen und Fluch im Alten Orient und in Israel* (OBO 145; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1995); E. Otto, *Das Deuteronomium. Politische Theologie und Rechtsreform in Juda und Assyrien* (BZAW 284; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999).

nasty, the justification of the disaster that engulfed the Northern Kingdom, and the advocacy of the Josianic reform. These are exactly the themes emphasized by Cross (the sins of Jeroboam and the dynastic promise to David), but they do not cover the whole of the Deuteronomistic History, but rather only the books of Samuel and Kings. As to the construction of Deuteronomy as a Mosaic discourse before entering the land, I think that this fits an exilic situation better than Josiah's (in the oldest kernel of Deuteronomy 12 this setting outside the land does not appear; this is only the case in verses 8–12, which belong to an exilic redaction of the centralization law). So Otto may be right that the literary link between Deuteronomy and Joshua was only created in the exilic period.

I think Noth is still right that the coherence of the Deuteronomistic History is related to the events of 597 and 587. In his *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, Noth starts with the observation that the historical periods are construed by discourses, which he called “chapters of reflection.” Interestingly enough, in almost all of these speeches and narrator's comments we find allusions to the deportation and fall of Judah. These elements can only be eliminated from these speeches by much more radical surgery than the one I was blamed for. Therefore I remain convinced that the chronological arrangement of the Deuteronomistic History was made after the events of 587. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the whole Deuteronomistic History was written on a single scroll. There might be evidence that even the Babylonian edition of the Deuteronomistic History was written on three or four scrolls. I will take this point up again in giving some comments on the book of Judges.

THE USE OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES IN THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY AND THE DEUTERONOMISTS' ATTITUDE TO OLDER SOURCES

The book of Judges is indeed quite a puzzling piece inside the Deuteronomistic History. I agree with Amit that a first edition of this scroll predated its insertion in its present place. I also agree with her that the first edition of Judges “belongs to a generation that did not yet know Deuteronomy, its ideas and style.” But I wonder whether Judean scribes were the first writers of this scroll. I remain quite convinced by Richter's idea of a “book of saviours” stemming from the North³⁹ since, as Amit has reminded us, all the judges or saviours are located in Northern territories, except the editorial passage on Othniel. The stories that we can read inside the book do not betray a “pan-Israelite” perspective and certainly not a

³⁹ W. Richter, *Die Bearbeitungen des “Retterbuches” in der deuteronomischen Epoche* (BBB 21; Bonn: Hanstein, 1964).

pro-Assyrian attitude as recently argued by Guillaume.⁴⁰ Originally there might have been a collection about local heroes, which was edited in the Northern Kingdom. Nelson recently argued that the list of the so-called minor judges found in chapters 10:1–5 and 12:7–15 originated as an anti-monarchic scribal construction composed in the Northern Kingdom, which was modelled after scribal conventions for summarizing royal successions but in order to subvert royal ideology.⁴¹ If he is right, the scroll of Judges already existed before it came to Judah. I agree again with Amit that something must have happened in the mountains of Canaan before the rise of an Israelite monarchy, but I am sceptical whether we can use the book of Judges to reconstruct this reality. If the scroll about the judges was first kept in Bethel as suggested by Knauf,⁴² its transfer to the South could easily be explained.

But now comes the crucial question: at which stage was the book of Judges incorporated into the Deuteronomistic History? Some scholars have recently observed that the book of Joshua ends in the mountains of Ephraim and that is exactly where the book of Samuel starts. Does this mean that there was at some stage a transition from the conquest to the stories about Saul and Samuel without the interlude of the Judges? Besides the Deuteronomistic introduction in Judges 2:6–3:6* clear deuteronomistic texts appear scarcely, most clearly in 6:7–10 (maybe also in verses 11ff) and 10:6–16. Judges 6:7–10 is missing in a Qumran manuscript and may therefore be a much later addition. If one looks at the remaining deuteronomistic passages in Judges, it is striking that the deuteronomistic vocabulary is somewhat different than in the surrounding books. In Judges 2 and 10 the Israelites, in good deuteronomistic manner, are accused of venerating other deities. These deities are “normally” labelled *'elohim 'acherim*, a term that also occurs in Judges 2 (3 times) and once in 10:16. However in these texts the Israelites are also blamed for worshipping the *ba'alim* and the *'ashtarot*. Inside the Deuteronomistic History this expression only occurs in Judg 2:13; 10:6 and then in 1 Sam 7:4; 12:10 (see also the expression foreign gods which in Deuteronomy – 2 Kings only occurs in Josh 24:20, 23; Judg 10:16; 1 Sam 7:3; see however Deut 31:16). So one might speculate that there existed an independent deuteronomistic scroll about the judges reaching from Judg 2:6ff to 1 Samuel 12. Indeed, according to the Deuteronomists, Samuel is presented as the last judge. I wonder whether it is only by chance that Samuel, if one omits Samson as Noth and many others did,

⁴⁰ P. Guillaume, *Waiting for Josiah. The Judges* (JSOTSup 385; London: T & T Clark, 2004).

⁴¹ R. D. Nelson, “Ideology, Geography, and the List of Minor Judges,” *JSOT* 31 (2007), 347–364.

⁴² E. A. Knauf, “Bethel,” *RGZ* 1 (1998), 1375–76.

appears as the twelfth and last judge. The idea that there was a separate scroll of Judges under the supervision of another scribe than the surrounding material could explain some stylistic differences inside Judges 2 – 1 Samuel 12. So maybe the Deuteronomistic History never existed on one scroll but on three: Deuteronomy – Joshua; Judges (Judges 2 – 1 Samuel 12); Samuel – Kings, which were of course considered to be in a chronological relation, but were not necessarily revised altogether at the same time.

Another aspect of Judges that would need further research is the presence of texts that betray parallels with Hellenistic literature: the story of Jephthah's daughter which can easily be recognized as an insertion reminds us clearly of the drama of Iphigenia, especially in the version of Euripides;⁴³ the fable of Jotham has a stunning parallel in a fable attributed to Aesop and the possible Hellenistic influences of the Samson stories have long been acknowledged.⁴⁴ These observations may indicate that the book of Judges underwent some special post-deuteronomistic editing.

Some comments on other sources inside the Deuteronomistic History:

The case of David is puzzling. In the books of Kings David is clearly the positive reference according to which all southern kings are evaluated. So Van Seters's idea that the so-called Succession Narrative or as he calls it the Court History should be seen as a later insertion, remains a good option.⁴⁵ One could modify the thesis and allow for a shorter account of the succession story, which would have been part of the Deuteronomistic History. It is noteworthy that the Chronicler does not report the episodes from the Succession Narrative, rather concentrating only on David's rise and preparations for the temple building. One could argue that the Chronicler deliberately omitted the court history; but it is also possible that he knew about a scroll in which this story had not yet been told. Of course, McKenzie is right that the story of David's rise also depicts an ambiguous portrayal of the Judean dynasty's founder, but these stories follow the pattern of the "young hero," who might very well make some errors before ascending to the throne; once he has become king he behaves, as a good king needs to. I am convinced that the Deuteronomists took over an older

⁴³ T. Römer, "Why Would the Deuteronomists Tell About the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter?" *JOT* 77 (1998), 27–38.

⁴⁴ C. Briffard, S. Goffard and L. Piccolin, *Pour lire aujourd'hui les textes de l'Antiquité* (Argos Démarches; Créteil: CRDP de l'Académie de Créteil, 2003).

⁴⁵ J. Van Seters, "The Court History and DtrH: Conflicting Perspectives on the House of David," A. de Pury and T. Römer (eds), *Die sogenannte Thronfolgeschichte Davids. Neue Einsichten und Anfragen* (OBO, 176; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2000), 70–93.

story, which they edited by showing that everything told in it happened according to Yahweh's will. In this respect the Deuteronomists would only be "half-honest brokers": they took over traditions and perhaps written documents too but modified them in order to make them fit their intentions.

The question of prophetic material within the Deuteronomistic History is also a very complex one. The Germans have resolved the problem by attributing all prophetic stories to a DtrP, but the existence of this Deuteronomist remains somewhat dubious. There are indications that some prophetic stories, especially from the Elijah- and Elisha-Tradition, should be considered additions, as McKenzie brilliantly demonstrated.⁴⁶ 1 Kings 17–19, for instance, interrupt quite unexpectedly the Deuteronomistic report on Ahab's reign and reveal aspects that differ from deuteronomistic vocabulary and theology (the allusion to Jacob in 1 Kgs 18:31 apparently presupposes the P-account in Genesis 35; the building of an altar does not fit with the idea of cult centralization; the polemics against Baal reminds us of texts from Second Isaiah; and so on). Nevertheless I would not generally exclude all prophetic material from the work of the Deuteronomists. The deuteronomistic text in Deuteronomy 18 presents Moses as Israel's first prophet that will be followed by others. The theme of Yahweh's constant sending of prophets comes to an end either in 2 Kings 17 or in the book of Jeremiah, since Jeremiah is presented in the deuteronomistic edition of his book as a prophet like Moses (see Jeremiah 1).

HOW MANY DEUTERONOMISTS DO WE NEED?

McKenzie quite often asks me "how can schools write a book?" and this is indeed a good question. I am tempted to respond to this question with another question: "how much evidence do we have for individual authors in the Hebrew Bible?" We do not have any book in the Hebrew Bible that we could attribute to one individual author, who clearly expresses his view, except perhaps the book of Qoheleth, but even this case is disputable. The major difference between the Deuteronomistic History and Greek historians like Herodotus and Thucydides is that the latter ones speak in the first person, presenting and commenting on their sources, whereas in the Deuteronomistic History we hear voices of omniscient narrators, to pick up a term from narrative analysis, who have full knowledge of everything being told, even divine intentions. All Hebrew Bible literature is anonymous, we do not even have the name of the scribes who copied the texts, as this is the case, for instance, for the Gilgamesh epic or for some mythical tablets from

⁴⁶ S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings. The Composition of the Books of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VTSup, 42; Leiden: Brill, 1991).

Ugarit. Another point, which I would like to recall, is the differences within the deuteronomistic style and vocabulary that one is, thanks to electronic concordances, easily able to observe. For all these reasons, I remain convinced that the Deuteronomistic History, as well as the Priestly material and most of the prophetic books, are works that should be attributed to groups of scribes or high officials, which can include priests as well as lay people. Of course, McKenzie is right, that we do not have much evidence inside the Hebrew Bible about the existence and organization of scribal guilds. But we do have evidence from Mesopotamia and Egypt that there existed scribal hierarchies (see also the work of Person) and that those chief scribes were important people in administration, civil servants, who accumulated and codified knowledge for their masters but also for themselves. Hence, scribes can be identified as intellectuals or sages. It seems quite logical that those people also existed in Israel and in Judah during the period of the monarchies, and that many Judean scribes were deported to Babylon. The rest is, of course, speculation. But Noth too did speculate, when guessing in a footnote that the Deuteronomist could have written his opus in Mizpah. I find that the Deuteronomistic history has more of a Golah perspective: 1 Kings 8 presupposes a community that prays from outside the land in direction to the Temple, 2 Kings 25 clearly states that Judah went into exile and creates the idea of an empty land during the exile and finally the whole story ends in Babylon. “Golah perspective” would then mean that the “exilic” edition of the deuteronomistic scrolls could have been done in Babylon in order to be read for the Judeans deported there and to convince them that Babylonians acted according to Yhwh’s will. But a “Golah perspective” can also serve as foundation for texts from the early Persian period composed by members of the former Golah who had returned to Judah. That brings us to our next point.

THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY AND THE PERSIAN PERIOD

It is no secret that we do not have much evidence for dating the Deuteronomistic History. We can, of course, follow Noth and claim that the *terminus a quo* is the last event reported in 2 Kings 25, that is, Jehoiachin’s release from Babylonian prison, which took place around 562 BCE. But not all scholars would agree that the last verses of the books of Kings are identical with the original ending. For the *terminus ad quem* Noth only stated, “we have no reason to put Dtr. much later than this *terminus a quo*.”⁴⁷ After

⁴⁷ M. Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup, 15; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 27.

Noth, it has often been observed that the Deuteronomistic History contains no clear allusion to the Persian period (contrary to the end of Chronicles) and should therefore be dated at the latest during the Neo-Babylonian period. Nevertheless, one may wonder whether what I have called the exilic edition could also be placed at the beginning of the Persian era. Eissfeldt, one of the harshest critics of Martin Noth, already raised the question whether it would be reasonable to assume that after Jerusalem's destruction and the deportation to Babylon people did not have anything else to do except sit down and write or edit the Deuteronomistic History.⁴⁸

The question whether the Babylonian period offers a fitting setting for the production of literature should be taken seriously, but we cannot rule out the possibility of writing and editing during the 570's to the 540's in Babylon and maybe even in Judah. But I would like to explain now why I postulate for some texts inside the Deuteronomistic History a Persian period setting (let's say around 450). There are indeed some texts that seem to reflect issues and controversies from the Persian period. This seems to be the case with texts like Deut 7; 12:2–7; 23:1–9; Josh 23:7–12; 2 Kgs 17:11–12 and others reveal an ideology of segregation, which fits into the Persian period. Nelson asked why one could not understand those texts as a “vilification of the people's traditional religious practices of the late monarchy.” To this I would like to answer that the best literary parallels to these texts outside the Deuteronomistic History can be found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (see especially for Deuteronomy 7 and the parallels in Ezra 9; the almost identical list of the nations in the land in Deut 7:3 and Ezra 9:1; or the exclusion of the Moabites and Ammonites in Deuteronomy 23, which apparently alludes to Nehemiah's main opponents Tobiah the Ammonite, Neh 13:4–9, and Sanballat the Moabite, Neh 13:28). McKenzie finds the idea of the Golah community as the true people of Yhwh and the movement toward diaspora, which I tried to detect in the Persian period layer, as alien to the deuteronomistic idea of centralization; I am not convinced by this objection. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah show that members of the Babylonian Golah supported the rebuilding of the Temple and of Jerusalem. They accepted the idea of centralization and invented the synagogues in order to live a religious life far away from the Temple.

Other texts with a Persian period setting are certainly Deuteronomy 4 and 26:12–15, as well as the latest layer of Solomon's Temple speech. These texts are characterized by a monotheistic conception, whereas most of the deuteronomistic texts should be

⁴⁸ O. Eissfeldt, *Geschichtsschreibung im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1948).

labelled “monolatric.” They are influenced by Priestly and Second Isaianic ideas and terms and should therefore be placed in the beginning or middle of the fifth century BCE. The Persian period redaction of the Deuteronomistic History did not alter the “exilic perspective” of the history. It introduced themes that were important at that time, accepting or even buttressing the idea that “exile” had become an important part of the identity of rising Judaism.

THE END AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

The question of the present ending of the books of Kings is an ongoing debate. Do these verses belong to the Deuteronomistic history? And if so, do they just report the latest news that the Deuteronomist had at his disposal (Noth)? Or, do they on the contrary express hope for the monarchy’s renewal or even messianic expectations (von Rad)?⁴⁹ I am more impressed by the parallels that this short story shares with the Joseph, Esther and Daniel (Daniel 2–6) narratives and have therefore argued that these verses could be read as legitimating a diaspora situation through a reference to the king’s fate. But I agree that the end of 2 Kings 25 can also be read differently (a compromise solution would be to understand 25:28–29, where the parallels to the diaspora novellas occur, as a later insertion). The quite abrupt ending should not intrigue scholars that much, since a look at the endings of Herodotus and Thucydides shows that these historians ended their works abruptly as well.

When did the Deuteronomistic History come to an end, when was it deconstructed? In my view, Deut 34:10–12 shows that this happened when the Torah was created. The epilogue about Moses (which corrects the deuteronomistic idea of Moses as Israel’s first prophet) clearly separates Deuteronomy from the following books. Something similar occurs in Joshua 24, Joshua’s second farewell discourse. I would like to quote again Nelson: “Joshua 23 works well as a summary to the book of Joshua ... Chapter 24, in contrast, seems designed as a conclusion for the Hexateuch as a whole.”⁵⁰ This means that Joshua 24 and Deut 34:10–12 could be located approximately at the same time around 400 (Joshua 24 probably a bit earlier); both texts reflect a conflict between advocates of a Hexateuch and a Pentateuch, as Otto and others have

⁴⁹ G. von Rad, “Die deuteronomistische Geschichtstheologie in den Königsbüchern (1947),” *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (TB 8; München: Chr. Kaiser, 1958), 189–204.

⁵⁰ R. D. Nelson, *Joshua. A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 1997), 268.

shown.⁵¹ Both texts also participated in the Deuteronomistic History's dissolution. The addition of Joshua 24 created a break between Joshua 23 and Judg 2:6ff and the need for a new introduction to the book of Judges, to be fulfilled by Judges 1, which offers an alternative conquest account. At the same time Samuel was perhaps exclusively related to the scrolls to which his name was given and the appendices in Judges 19–21 (which contain some connections with chapter 1; see 20:18 and 1:1) were added. The separation between Samuel and Kings with the insertion of 2 Samuel 21–24 (see the inclusion made by the psalm of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2 and the psalm of David in 2 Samuel 22) may have happened at the same time.

If these observations have some plausibility and if the Deuteronomistic History was dismantled at the time the Torah was set up, we should limit the existence of our Deuteronomists from the seventh to the end of the fifth century BCE. This brings me to my last point.

WHAT DOES “DEUTERONOMISTIC” MEAN?

As I said in my introductory remarks the present research on “deuteronomism” is quite confusing and one gets the impression that almost every scholar has his/her own idea of what “Deuteronomistic” should mean. I remember a panel in this same section about pan-deuteronomism organized by Schearing and McKenzie, where this problem was already flagrant.⁵² I am convinced that scholarly research on deuteronomism can only progress if we reach a consensus on how to use the term deuteronomistic. I have no clear idea of how to achieve such a consensus, especially since biblical scholars are reluctant to consensuses. I would suggest that there should be at least some objective control on the expressions that we might consider to be deuteronomistic; but on the other hand it is impossible to restrain the definition of “deuteronomistic” to a purely linguistic level, because otherwise we would find very late texts up to the New Testament that could be labelled “deuteronomistic.” Therefore we cannot limit ourselves to stylistic criteria; these must be complemented by chronological as well as ideological criteria. However, here things start to become subjective and dangerous.

⁵¹ E. Otto, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte von Pentateuch und Hexateuch im Lichte des Deuteronomiumsrahmens* (FAT 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

⁵² Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie (eds.), *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (JSOTSup, 268; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

SOME FINAL WORDS

To conclude I would like to thank again all panellists and assure each of them that we have points of agreement. With Otto, I share the idea that there was no Deuteronomistic History in the way that Noth put it. With McKenzie I agree on the importance of the exile; with Amit and Nelson I am convinced that deuteronomistic activity started in the seventh century. Can we all come closer? Let us hope that future meetings and research will allow us to get new insight in Noth's great invention.