

Reading Genesis 1–36 in Persian Yehud

Using a multi-dimensional historical-critical and literary method this thesis examines Genesis in a fixed socio-historical location, the Achaemenid Persian period, and compares the polemic and function of the myths in Genesis to contemporaneous literature and competing ideology. The purpose of analyzing Genesis in such a fashion is to determine how the normative myths recontextualized in the text would have functioned polemically for the Yehud elite who had returned to a land with which they had ethnic ties, and who were empowered by the Persian Empire to govern. Ultimately, it is argued that while no history can be found in these myths, the paradigmatic actions of the patriarchs in Genesis communicates the ideology of the authors, and a great deal of the textual data can be explained through the historical setting of Persian Yehud, and the social, ethnic, religious, and political concerns of the Yehud elite.