

**Jewish History:  
From Zedekiah to Bar Kochba  
586 BC – 135 AD**

**James W. Garrett**

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# Introduction

Over the next eight weeks we will study the history of the Jewish people from the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC) to the 132/135 AD rebellion of Bar Kochba.<sup>1</sup> The first of these parameters marks the end of the Davidic monarchy and the final parameter marks the end of Jewish occupation of Palestine (Following the 132 rebellion, the Romans made it illegal for any Jew to be found within the environs of Jerusalem).

The study of history can be undertaken for a number of reasons. For the Christian, the underlying motive is to recognize the Hand of God in the story of the nations and to learn the lessons of history in our efforts to be responsible citizens of His Kingdom. Such an endeavor is faith-building and gives us assurance that God is in charge, even when circumstances seem to be bewildering and confusing.

The years included in our study, as well as those immediately preceding, grandly illustrate God's steady and relentless moving of nations toward the fulfillment of His grand purpose. He truly is the Great Chess master. The players upon the board usually are unaware of His Hand's moving them this way and that way, but in retrospect his Hand is apparent to those who are acquainted with his ultimate goal.

If one were to look for a theme under which our present studies might be conducted, none would be more appropriate than Daniel's words when he blessed the God of heaven,

*It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.*<sup>2</sup>

There are some challenges to be found in our study. Biblical history presents a rather clear record of God's Chosen People, up to the time of the fall of Jerusalem, 586 BC. Following that event, there are gaps in the biblical record and, in some cases, even in the secular record. In the course of our study we will seek to ferret out the available information where it is obscure and summarize data when it is abundant.

We assume a degree of knowledge in those who will be undertaking this study. Therefore, we will not always give detailed attention to the biblical text, but will rely on summaries and references. In some instances, when necessary and appropriate, we will give focused attention to the text.

The portion of Jewish History that is before us is divided into five distinct periods:

- Babylonian
- Persian
- Greek
- Maccabean
- Roman

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<sup>1</sup> The English alliteration of the Hebrew name varies

<sup>2</sup> Daniel 2:21

## Assyria's deportation of the Northern Kingdom

The most significant event that preceded the fall of Jerusalem was Assyria's deportation of the northern kingdom. Following the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel divided into two nations. The ten northern tribes came to be known as *Israel*, and the southern tribes as, *Judah*. The northern kingdom was subdued by the Assyrians in 721 BC when the capital, Samaria, was captured and occupied. The Assyrians transported the Israelites to various locations in the Assyrian Empire, leaving behind many of the farmers who could till the soil and produce the crops needed for that portion of the Assyrian Empire. Citizens of other nations captured by the Assyrians were transplanted into Israel. As a result of this bi-directional transplanting, two things happened: (1) from that time forward, no strong racial identity existed in the north; (2) the Israelites that were relocated intermarried with the people of the regions in which they were settled, and thus, the northern tribes vanished from the pages of history.

Having been successful in the north, the Assyrians launched an aggressive campaign against the south. They conquered many Judean cities and then they laid siege to Jerusalem. Jerusalem would have fallen had it not been for Jehovah's supernatural intervention.<sup>3</sup> The southern kingdom survived for about 100 years after the fall of Samaria.

## Prophetic Warnings and Predictions

Significant prophetic activity took place during the period leading up to and during Judah's Babylonian exile. We are reminded of Jesus statements concerning the consistent manner in which the religious and political leaders had rejected God's messengers throughout the history of the nation.

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*<sup>4</sup>

*Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*<sup>5</sup>

- Jeremiah was called to prophetic ministry during the reign of the reforming king, Josiah. He continued to prophesy during the entire period from Josiah to the fall of Jerusalem. He had the unpleasant task of declaring God's judgment on Judah. Jeremiah predicted that the captivity would last 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11-12; Daniel 9:2; Ezra 1:1).
- Zephaniah, a younger contemporary of Jeremiah, was a brilliant orator who also preached in Jerusalem during the days of Josiah. Zephaniah declared a coming "day of Jehovah," referring to a day of terror, about to break forth on Judah and surrounding nations (Zephaniah 1:7, 14)
- Nahum prophesied during the reign of Josiah (probably in 630 BC). He predicted the fall of Nineveh and as a result, the shift of power from Assyria to Babylon.
- Daniel was a man of royal blood. Even though he was a Jewish exile, he became a counselor to the Babylonian and Persian monarchs. Daniel prayed for God to reveal to him the fate of captive Judah (Daniel 9), referring to Jeremiah's prediction that the exile

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 36-37; II Kings 18:13 – 19:37; II Chronicles 32:1 - 23

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34; Matthew 5:12

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 5:11-12

would last 70 years. One of the significant revelations that Jehovah imparted to Daniel was the identity of the future empires that would rule the world.

- Habakkuk preached during the early years of Jehoiakim's reign (probably about 607 BC). He preached the same message that Jeremiah preached, i.e., God's coming judgment on Judah.
- Ezekiel was a priest who was one of the exiles in Babylon. He arrived in Babylon eight or nine years after Daniel. He was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah and they preached essentially the same message. Ezekiel's message was that God's judgment on Judah and Jerusalem was unavoidable. He called for repentance. His prophecies were delivered both before and after the fall of Jerusalem. In a grand vision, Ezekiel foretold the restoration of the Temple.

In addition to the prophetic activity that immediately preceded the Exile, Both Isaiah and Micah had predicted these events 100 years earlier (Isaiah 39:6; Micah 4:10).<sup>6</sup> Especially striking are Isaiah's predictions concerning Israel and the Captivity. Here are some of the more significant prophecies recorded in Isaiah:

- Babylonian Captivity (39:5-7)
- The involvement of the Medes and Elamites (13:17; 21:2; 48:14)
- Cyrus called by name (44:28; 45:1-4)
- Cyrus' conquest of the world (41:2-3)
- Cyrus to liberate the captives (45:13)
- Israel to be restored (27:12-13; 48:20; 51:14)
- Babylon's perpetual desolation (13:20-22)

## **The Significant and Lengthy Ministry of Jeremiah**

Following the death of Manasseh, Josiah became the King of Judah. Manasseh had tolerated, and in some ways encouraged, witchcraft, divination, and wizardry. He even permitted child sacrifice in the Valley of Hinnom. Tradition says that that during the reign of Manasseh Isaiah was sawn asunder beside the pool of Siloam.<sup>7</sup> Josiah came to the throne as a reformer. He was inspired and encouraged by the high priest and other righteous men and women, including Zephaniah and Jeremiah. As a result of the reforms, Jehovah blessed the nation and Judah enjoyed great prosperity.

After Josiah died from wounds suffered in the battle at Megiddo, the Judeans lapsed into their old idolatrous ways. The prosperity passed and evil began to take its sad toll. Jeremiah's voice was heard lamenting the pervasive evil and calling for repentance.

*Roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, And look now and take note. And seek in her open squares, If you can find a man, If there is one who does justice, who seeks truth, then I will pardon her.*<sup>8</sup>

Jeremiah went to the leading men of the city, expecting them to lament with him. To his sorrow, he found that they had "broken the yoke"<sup>9</sup> and were rejecting the authority of Jehovah. Because

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<sup>6</sup> Isaiah died c695 BC. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 11:37, *they were sawn asunder*, probably is a reference to Isaiah's martyrdom.

<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah 5:1

<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah 5:5

of his call for repentance and God's coming judgment, Jeremiah became the most unpopular man in Jerusalem. He was reviled by the mobs and priests alike. Plots against his life were formed.<sup>10</sup> He was publicly struck by a Temple priest and put into stocks to be taunted by passing crowds.<sup>11</sup> When the king prepared for war against Babylon, Jeremiah announced that Jerusalem would be destroyed and the people carried into captivity unto the third generation. For this, he was accused of a mortal crime. A friend rescued him and concealed him from his enemies.<sup>12</sup>

When he came out of hiding, Jeremiah dictated to his scribe, Baruch, the sermons which he had preached. The scroll of the sermons came to the attention of the officials of the city and they asked that the scroll be read in the presence of king Jehoiakim. After a few columns were read, Jehoiakim took out his pen knife and cut off these columns and threw them into the fire.<sup>13</sup> The process was repeated until the entire scroll was consumed. Jeremiah rewrote the scroll, and elaborated on what previously had been written declaring that Judah would fall.<sup>14</sup>

During the succeeding reign, that of Zedekiah, Jeremiah walked through the streets of Jerusalem with a yoke on his shoulders to illustrate what lay ahead.<sup>15</sup> The yoke was torn from his shoulders by the false prophet Hananiah.<sup>16</sup> As predicted by Jeremiah, the Babylonians laid siege against Jerusalem for a year and a half, causing unspeakable horror within the city's walls. During these horrible days, Jeremiah continued to declare that calamity was ahead for Zedekiah and his associates, the destruction of the Temple, the city, and the land, unless Zedekiah capitulated to the Babylonians.. For this, Jeremiah was whipped, and thrown into prison.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of his public opposition to Jeremiah, Zedekiah did respect the prophet. He ordered that Jeremiah be kept in the outer court of the prison, rather in the inner dungeon. The king made certain that Jeremiah had food, during the horrible days of famine and suffering.<sup>18</sup> When the princes learned what Zedekiah had done, they clamored for the prophet's blood. Zedekiah, in his weakness, surrendered Jeremiah to his enemies and they cast him into a cistern that contained no water, but was heavy with mire – hoping to extinguish his voice forever.<sup>19</sup>

An Ethiopian palace servant told the king what the princes had done. Zedekiah, not wanting to be responsible for the death of a prophet, had Jeremiah taken from the cistern and brought to the outer court of the Temple.<sup>20</sup> Zedekiah promised Jeremiah protection if he would tell him the outcome of the siege. Jeremiah unflinchingly told the king what the outcome would be if Zedekiah and the princes continued in their course of resisting the Babylonians. Jeremiah urged Zedekiah to go out to the Babylonian commanders and surrender. If he did this, then the city and

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<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah 11:21ff; 20:10

<sup>11</sup> Jeremiah 20:1ff

<sup>12</sup> Jeremiah 26:7-24

<sup>13</sup> Jeremiah 36:1-26

<sup>14</sup> Jeremiah 36:27-32

<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah 27:2ff; 28:10

<sup>16</sup> Jeremiah 28:10

<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 37:11ff

<sup>18</sup> Jeremiah 37:17ff

<sup>19</sup> Jeremiah 38:1-6

<sup>20</sup> Jeremiah 38:7ff

the lives of the people would be spared.<sup>21</sup> Zedekiah, fearing the princes more than he trusted the word of the prophet, refused to comply with Jeremiah's instructions.

When Jerusalem fell and the captives began their sad journey to Babylon, Jeremiah was among the prisoners. Nebuchadnezzar knew that Jeremiah had urged Zedekiah to surrender and had suffered because of it. Therefore, he sent word to Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, to take Jeremiah from among the prisoners, look after him, and allow him to do as he wished. Jeremiah wished to remain in Jerusalem, even though the city was destroyed.<sup>22</sup>

When the captives arrived in Babylon, they could not accept their fate and make the best of things in their new surroundings. They could not reconcile their situation with the fact that they were "God's Chosen People." Certain false prophets kept them from settling in, by prophesying that Jehovah shortly was going to deliver them and that they were going back to Jerusalem. Once again, Jeremiah was God's voice. Jeremiah wrote the following letter to the exiles.

*Thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,*

*"Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce.*

*Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.*

*Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to Jehovah on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.*

*For thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel,*

*"Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them," declares Jehovah.*

*For thus says Jehovah,*

*"When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you," declares Jehovah, "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope."<sup>23</sup>*

As discussed more fully in following chapters, when Jeremiah was taken, unwillingly, to Egypt, he once again had a difficult ministry of calling those around him to faithfulness to Jehovah. Sadly, they rejected him and turned to the worship of false Gods.

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<sup>21</sup> Jeremiah 38:14ff

<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah 39:11-14

<sup>23</sup> Jeremiah 29:4-11

# **PART ONE**

## **THE BABYLONIAN PERIOD**

The Babylonian Period extends from the fall of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh (612 BC), to the fall of Babylon (538 BC). This period embraces the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile. In the sections that follow we will present various important elements and a summary of events that transpired during this period.

### **SECTION I**

#### **A Synopsis of the Historical Setting and Prelude to the Exile**

Throughout the centuries, the Land of Israel had been coveted by the powerful nations that surrounded the area.

- The location was the natural trade route between east and west.
- The farmland of Israel was verdant and desirable.
- Beginning with the reign of Solomon, Jerusalem was a city of wealth; greedy kings longed for the treasures kept within its walls.

The kings of Egypt, Syria, Assyria, and Babylon tried to make Israel their possession. Jehovah protected and prospered Israel, as long as the nation continued to be faithful to the Jehovistic Covenant.

The tragic story of Israel has as its nexus the nation's lust for idolatry. Like an insidious and pernicious disease, idolatry survived every attempt of God-directed reformers to eradicate this sin from Israel. As already noted, Jehovah sent a number of courageous prophets and priests to call the nation to repentance – to no avail.

Most of Judah's reforming kings tolerated some compromise but even those who didn't were unable to eradicate the folk idolatry that was practiced in the villages. As chastisement, and in an effort to bring repentance, Jehovah did two things:

1. He allowed marauding Gentile nations to harass His chosen people;
2. He allowed famine and drought to afflict the land.

The prophetic message that accompanied these miseries consistently declared that the hardship was the result of idolatry and sin.

## Babylon's rise to power and the downfall of Judah

Babylon's ascendancy from a vassal state of Assyria to becoming the dominant world power was in reverse synchronization with the downfall of Judah.

### Historical Time-line from Josiah to the Fall of Jerusalem

639-608 BC	Josiah King of Judah, great reformation
626 BC	Assyria greatly weakened by Scythian invasion; death of Assurbanipal
625 BC	Babylon declared its independence from Assyria
612 BC	Babylonians, Medes and Scythians attacked and destroyed Nineveh, the Assyrian capital
608 BC	Jehoahaz reigned in Judah for three months, then was taken to Egypt
608-597 BC	Pharaoh-Necho installed Jehoiakim as King of Judah, a very wicked reign
605 BC	Babylonians defeated Egyptians at Carchemish
605 BC	Babylonians subdued Judah, retained Jehoiakim as king, but exacted tribute and carried hostages (including Daniel) back to Babylon
602 BC	Jehoiakim begins rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar
597 BC	Nebuchadnezzar put down rebellion and Jehoiachin placed on throne. Jehoiachin reigned in Judah for about 3 months then was removed and taken to Babylon as a prisoner.
597 BC	Zedekiah installed as ruler of Judah
597-586 BC	Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar resulting in devastation of Jerusalem and many more Jews taken to Babylon.
586 BC	Jerusalem burned and the land desolated.

Babylon originally was the master of the Euphrates region. Some settlers moved north and established the city of Nineveh and subsequently the nation of Assyria. In time, Assyria became the dominant power and Babylon became an Assyrian province, ruled by an Assyrian viceroy. In the years immediately preceding the fall of Jerusalem, three world powers vied for dominance:

- Assyria, located in the North Euphrates valley, with its capital at Nineveh, had been the dominant world power for 300 years.
- Babylon, in the South Euphrates valley, was becoming increasingly powerful.
- Egypt, in the Nile valley, had not been the dominant world power for almost 1000 years, but was gaining strength and displaying an ambition to reclaim world dominance.

Two important events contributed to the downfall of the Assyrian Empire.

- First was the wild horde of Scythians that burst out of the Caucasus into the Fertile Crescent.
- The second event that led to the downfall of the Assyrian Empire was the death of the great Assyrian monarch, Ashurbanipal, in 626 BC.

The unruly mob of skilled Scythian horsemen penetrated into Media and inundated the Assyrian Empire. Looting and burning, they forced their way from Mesopotamia through Palestine, all the way to Egypt. Fortunately for Judah, their north/south route was through the maritime plain by the Mediterranean, west of Judah, rather than through the middle of the country. The Scythian invasion greatly weakened the Assyrian Empire.



Many scholars consider Zephaniah 2:4-6 to be a prophecy of the horror that was to be perpetrated by these merciless marauders, who, if this understanding of Zephaniah be correct, were Jehovah's instrument of punishing those whom the Scythians invaded.

*For Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon a desolation;  
Ashdod will be driven out at noon and Ekron will be uprooted.  
Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites!  
The word of Jehovah is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines;  
And I will destroy you So that there will be no inhabitant.*

With the death of Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian Empire began to break up. Nabopolassar, the Chaldean prince who ruled the vassal state of Babylon, asserted his independence in 625 BC. In that same year, Media in the northeast, and Phoenicia and Palestine in the west declared their independence.

A long drawn-out struggle ensued, in which Egypt and the Scythians supported Assyria against Nabopolassar of Babylon and Kyaxares, the king of the Medes. Not long into the conflict the Scythians changed their loyalty and joined forces with Nabopolassar and Kyaxares. (**MAP I**)

The Assyrian capital, Nineveh, fell to the rebel forces in 612 BC. What was left of the Assyrian army reassembled at Haran, a city about 100 miles west of Nineveh. Late in 610 BC the Scythians, Medes, and Babylonians came against Haran. The Assyrian king and his troops fled further westward in order to get in closer touch with his Egyptian allies. Carchemish, on the west bank of the Euphrates, became the new Assyrian capital.

In the summer of 609 the Egyptian Pharaoh-Necho went up to Carchemish to assist Asshurballit, the last Assyrian monarch, in a campaign to recapture Haran (See **MAP II**).

*In his days Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. And King Josiah went to meet him, and when Pharaoh-Necho saw him he killed him at Megiddo. (II Kings 23:29)*

#### **THE DIFFERENCE IN ONE LITTLE WORD**

The King James Version states that Pharaoh went "against" the king of Assyria. If this were true, then Josiah would have been going to the aid of the Assyrian monarch, from whom Judah recently had been delivered. This puzzled Bible students until Assyriologist, C.I. Gadd, serendipitously solved the puzzle. In 1923, in the British Museum, Gadd was translating a badly damaged cuneiform text that had been dug up in Mesopotamia many years before. He came across this passage: "In the month of Du'uz [June-July] the king of Assyria procured a large Egyptian army and marched against Haran to conquer it...Till the month of Ulul [August-September] he fought against the city but accomplished nothing." The "large Egyptian army" clearly was a reference to the forces of Pharaoh-Necho, mentioned in II Kings 23:29.

The problem with which Bible students had wrestled for many years was the result of the KJV translator's rendering of the Hebrew preposition, *ל* (*al*), which can be rendered as: *on, upon, above, over, against*. The KJV translators and later translations that followed their lead had chosen the wrong rendering of the preposition.

The appearance of Egyptian troops in Palestine stirred Josiah to prevent the Egyptians, at all costs, from rendering aid to the Assyrians. So, the little army of Judah marched against the vastly superior Egyptian force. The battle was fought at the pass of Megiddo, and in the conflict

the godly king was slain. The Greek historian, Herodotus, describing this campaign, wrote, “Necho also defeated the Syrians [Judah] in a land engagement at Magdolus [Megiddo]”

After dispatching the Judeans, Necho joined forces with the Assyrians and they re-crossed the Euphrates intending to recapture Haran. As already noted, their campaign was unsuccessful. The Assyrians holed up in Carchemish for the next four years.

Pharaoh-Necho, on the way back to Egypt, took on the role of overlord of Syria and Palestine. He made an example of Judah by stripping Jehoahaz of all royal dignities and taking him back to Egypt as a prisoner (II Kings 23:31-34). In his place, he installed another of Josiah’s sons, Eliakim, and changed his name to Jehoiakim.

The Medes and Babylonians divided between them the empire of Assyria. The Medes annexed the north and northeast; Babylon took the south and southwest. This meant that the Judean King, Jehoiakim, became a vassal of Babylon, even though Babylon had to assert itself before the vassalage was reality.

Nabopolassar was growing old and so he assigned the leadership of the Babylonian army to his son, Nebuchadnezzar, who became co-regent in 606 BC. Nebuchadnezzar was given the task of solidifying Babylon’s possession of its new empire.

Pharaoh-Necho was not ready to give up Palestine. He considered it to be his vassal state. In 605 BC he once again came against the Babylonians and once again the battleground was at Carchemish on the banks of the Euphrates (See **MAP III**). A decisive battle was fought and the Egyptians were soundly defeated (interestingly, the Assyrians are not mentioned in the extant records). The Egyptians fled back to their own country with Nebuchadnezzar’s troops in hot pursuit. At Pelusium, near the Brook of Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar received word that his father had died and that a rival was moving to claim the throne. Nebuchadnezzar broke off pursuit of the Egyptians and hurried back to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar arrived in Babylon in time to lead the solemn New Year’s Eve festival procession, honoring the Babylonian God, Marduk. Babylonians did not consider a king to have begun his reign until on New Year’s Day he had entered the temple and grasped the hands of the god. By this act, Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed himself to be King of Babylon and all rivals were left out in the cold.

After Carchemish (in the third year of Jehoiakim’s reign) Nebuchadnezzar established control over Judah. He exacted an oath of obedience from Jehoiakim and retained him as King. Nebuchadnezzar took significant booty from Jerusalem and transported it to Babylon. He also took a number of hostages from the royal family (including Daniel).

*In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. Jehovah gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god. Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. (Daniel 1:1-4)*

After three years, Jehoiakim ignored his oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar and capitulated to the pressures exerted by the Egyptian party in Jerusalem. He sought to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar and seek a new alignment with Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar dispatched to Jerusalem troops from Moab, Ammon, and Syria, with some Chaldean regulars. All available information points to the conclusion that King Jehoiakim was assassinated and given the shameful *burial of an ass* (Jeremiah 22:19; 36:30).

The Babylonians installed Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's eighteen year old son, as king in 597 BC.<sup>24</sup> After Jehoiachin had ruled for three months and ten days, Nebuchadnezzar arrived in Jerusalem and cut short the young king's reign.<sup>25</sup> We must assume that the Babylonian ruler suspected Jehoiachin of disloyalty. Jehoiachin and all who were of royal descent were taken to Babylon as captives (See **MAP IV**). Jehoiachin spent the next thirty-seven years in prison.<sup>26</sup>

Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, King of Judah, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king and he ruled for eleven years. Zedekiah was a weak king. Like Jehoiakim, he became a tool in the hands of wicked princes who pressured him to align with Egypt and rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah yielded to the pressure and turned to Pharaoh-hophra (also known as Aries) for aid and then he revolted against Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar quickly responded by launching a vigorous attack upon Judah. (See **MAP V**). In the horrifying siege of Jerusalem that followed, pestilence, famine and even cannibalism prevailed (II Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 32:24) The Egyptian army came on the scene briefly and gave a momentary respite to the city (Jeremiah 37:5). Jerusalem fell in 586 BC. Zedekiah tried to escape but he was captured at Jericho and brought to trial before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah (Jeremiah 39:5-7) on the Orontes River. Nebuchadnezzar executed Zedekiah's sons, before his very eyes and then had Zedekiah blinded. The Judean king was fettered and carried captive to Babylon where he was imprisoned until his death (II Kings 25:1-7; Jeremiah 52:11)

Jerusalem was mercilessly sacked and razed to the ground (II Kings 24:17 – 25:10). Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, was placed in charge of the sacking of the city.<sup>27</sup> Nebuzar-adan collected everyone in Jerusalem who had any sort of a leadership role and took them to Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah, where they were executed. Every effort was made to kill all descendents of David. Citizens of Jerusalem were forced to march to Babylon where they were exiled for the next seven decades. 586 BC marked not only the end of a dynasty but of an age. As Werner Keller stated, "The story of the children of Israel is at an end – the story of the Jews begins."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The II Chronicles 36:9 statement that he was eight years old is generally viewed as a scribal slip of the pen.

<sup>25</sup> Ezekiel 19:5-7 gives this length of his reign

<sup>26</sup> Nebuchadnezzar's successor, Evil-merodach, for some unknown reason, released Jehoiachin from prison and gave him a place of honor in Babylon, where he later died (II Kings 25:27; Jeremiah 52:31)

<sup>27</sup> Nebuzar-adan is listed in the Babylonian chronicles as Nabu-seri-Idinnam, a grand vizier.

<sup>28</sup> Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (New York, William Morrow and Company) 1956, page 293

## The Babylonian Monarchy

The experience of the exiles in Babylon was a reflection of the character of the rulers of the empire. For that reason, we must acquaint ourselves with the Babylonian rulers and the brief history of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.<sup>29</sup>

<b>Babylon's Rulers</b>	
625-604 BC	Nabopolassar (founder of the empire)
604-561 BC	Nebuchadnezzar <sup>30</sup>
561-560 BC	Evil-Merodach (Nebuchadnezzar's son)
560-556 BC	Neriglissar (Evil-Merodach's brother-in-law)
556 BC	Labosoarchad (Neriglissar's son)
556-538 BC	Nabonidus (Belshazzar as co-regent)
538 BC	Cyrus conquered Babylon

Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne as the master of the dominant world power. The Assyrian Empire had become a thing of the past; Egypt lay at the feet of Babylon; Syria and Palestine were a part of the Babylonian Empire. The north and northeast were a part of the Median Empire and Nebuchadnezzar was on friendly terms with the Medians. For the most part, the reign of Nebuchadnezzar was peaceful (See **MAP VI**)

After securing his empire, Nebuchadnezzar's chief occupation was building Babylon into a city without historical equal. Indeed, it generally is conceded that no previous city (some also would add, "or later city"), surpassed Babylon in architectural wonder. Daniel record's Nebuchadnezzar's boast,

*The king reflected and said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?"*<sup>31</sup>

These words are not an exaggeration. No king before him had given himself to such aggressive building. Archaeologists have discovered hundreds of thousands of bricks with Nebuchadnezzar's name inscribed. The plans of many buildings have been preserved (more on this in the next section).

Nebuchadnezzar ruled for 42 years. In 562/561 BC, he was succeeded by his son, Amel-Marduk (his biblical name is Evil-Merodach – II Kings 25:27-30; Jeremiah 52:31-34). Amel-Marduk ruled for just under two years. He was assassinated by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar (in Jeremiah 39:3, he is Nergal-sharezer), who then declared himself king in 560 BC.

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<sup>29</sup> The Babylonian Empire of the era before us technically is designated, the "Neo-Babylonian Empire." The original Babylonian Empire had dominated the Euphrates for many centuries. The first dynasty was established in c2260 BC. This dynasty came to an end with the invasion of the Hittites. As a result, a people group known as the Cassites established a Babylonian dynasty c 1750 BC. The Isin, or Pash, Dynasty was established c 1172 BC. The most famous ruler of this dynasty was Nebuchadnezzar I, who reestablished the rule of Babylon over the region. The Assyrians rose to power during this dynasty and Babylon became a vassal state of Assyria. Thus, the dynasty that was established by Nabopolassar (discussed above) is labeled, technically, Neo-Babylonian Empire."

<sup>30</sup> Nebuchadnezzar II, but for our purposes he is described as Nebuchadnezzar.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel 4:30

An ambiguous inscription left by Nabonidus states that Neriglissar “went the way of fate and his young son, Labashi-Marduk, who had not yet attained to understanding, seated himself upon the throne of the kingdom against the gods.” This implies that Neriglissar died a natural death. Further on in the inscription Nabonidus wrote, “At the command of Marduk my Lord was I raised to the rulership of the land, while they shouted, ‘Father of the land! His equal exists not!’”<sup>32</sup> Evidently, Nabonidus led a revolt and succeeded in having himself proclaimed king.

With the exception of Syria, the empire created by Nebuchadnezzar still was intact when the last Babylonian monarch, Nabonidus, came to the throne. Nabonidus reigned seventeen years. He was more interested in scholarship and archaeology than he was in running the empire (see **ADDENDUM F**). After resubjugating the Syrians in 553 BC, he busied himself with building a temple to the moon-god, Sin in Ur. When he completed this task, he appointed his eldest son, Belshazzar, regent of the kingdom. This left him free to pursue his objective, which ultimately was the city of Tema in the Arabian Desert, east of the Red Sea. He built himself an elaborate palace in Tema. This was his principal residence from 552 BC, until he was forced to return to Babylon in 539 BC because of the looming Persian onslaught.

As far as the record goes, Nabonidus was history’s first archaeologist.<sup>33</sup> He excavated ruined shrines and temples, deciphered and translated old transcriptions. At Ur he restored the staged tower which had been weakened by age and neglect. In one inscription Nabonidus tells of how he discovered the foundation-stone of the Shamash-temple in Sippar; he dug down eighteen “ells” into the soil and came upon this foundation-stone which had been laid by Naram-Sin, the son of Sargon. Nabonidus elatedly wrote that after 3,200 years he was the first person to see the foundation-stone. In another inscription he refers to the subject again, saying that the “renovated the foundation stone of the ancient king Naram-Sin, and made it an object of glory.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Excursus – Belshazzar**

In the early 1800’s, rationalist liberal critics of Scripture declared Daniel’s description of Belshazzar’s feast to be a fantasy. All archaeologists and historians knew that Nabonidus, not Belshazzar, was the last king of Babylon.

In 1853, an inscription was found in a cornerstone of a temple built by Nabonidus in Ur, which reads, *May I, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, not sin against thee, and may my reverence for thee dwell in the heart of Belshazzar, my first-born, favorite, son. . .*<sup>35</sup> Since the 1853 discovery, a number of additional inscriptions have been found validating Daniel’s information that Belshazzar was the ruler of Babylon during the final days of the empire. Most notable of these is the Chronicle of Nabonidus, a document from the Persian era, describing the reign of Nabonidus and the victory of Cyrus. The Chronicle states that Belshazzar was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar, as Daniel states, but the grandson. This is not a contradiction, but rather is consistent with the use of the term, “son,” in the biblical record. i.e., descendent.

<sup>32</sup> W.O.E. Oesterley, *A History of Israel*, Volume II (Oxford, Clarendon Press) 1957, page 13.

<sup>33</sup> His daughter, Princess Bel-Shalti-Nannar (Belshazzar’s sister) had the same interests as her father. Archaeologist Woolley discovered in an annex to the temple in Ur, where she had been priestess, a regular museum with objects which had been found in the southern states of Mesopotamia – probably the earliest museum in the world. She had actually catalogued her collection, piece by piece, on a clay cylinder. This is, in Woolley’s words, the “oldest museum guide known.” See Keller, page 305

<sup>34</sup> Oesterley, page 16

<sup>35</sup> *Halley’s Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House) 1965, page 344

## SECTION II

### **The Judean Experience under Babylonian Dominance**

As the various waves of Judeans were taken to Babylon, they completed a circle that had begun with the call of Abraham, approximately 1400 years before.<sup>36</sup> They passed near the traditional site of the Garden of Eden. They also were near to Ur, Abraham's place of birth and the city from whence Abraham's father, Terah, transported his family to Haran, which ultimately resulted in the establishment of Israel. The Tower of Babel also was nearby.<sup>37</sup>

There is no record that the Jews harbored in their hearts a sense that they were suffering injustice. They were conscious of their sins (reminded of them by faithful prophets) and that they were being punished for apostasy.

A number of scenarios must be considered in an effort to see the full picture of what life was like for Judeans following the destruction of Jerusalem. Those who remained in Palestine had one experience. Those who fled to Egypt had another experience. Those in Babylonian cities had another experience. Those who lived in the rural villages of Babylonia had another experience.

The young man, Daniel, was among the first wave of captives taken to Babylon in 605 BC. Ezekiel was transported to Babylon in 597 BC, following the rebellion of Jehoiakin. Thus, Daniel had been in Babylon eight or nine years before Ezekiel arrived and already had achieved a high status among the Babylonians. Daniel's realm of influence was governmental. Ezekiel lived and prophesied among the people.

The Babylonian Empire lasted just over seventy years and Daniel was there from the time of its rise to the time of its fall. Daniel continued to live through the Babylonian reign of Darius the Mede, who conquered Babylon as a general in the command of Cyrus, and into the third year of Cyrus, the Persian<sup>38</sup> (from 606 – 534 BC). Thus, Daniel lived in Babylon from the first year of the captivity until the second year after the return to Jerusalem (72 years). For 69 of those years, Daniel was a man of influence.

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<sup>36</sup> c.2000 BC is the date normally assigned to Abraham.

<sup>37</sup> Two sites vie for the location of the Tower of Babel.

- The traditional site is at Borsippa, 10 miles southwest of Babylon. Sir Henry Rawlinson found in a foundation corner of the tower a cylinder which reads, "The tower of Borsippa, which a former king erected, and completed to a height of 42 cubits, whose summit he did not finish fell to ruins in ancient times. There was no proper care of its gutters for the water; rain and storms had washed away its brick, and the tiles of its roof were broken. The great god, Marduk urged me to restore it. I did not alter its site, or change its foundation walls. At a favorable time I renewed its brick work and its roofing tiles, and I wrote my name on the cornices of the edifice. I built it anew as it had been ages before; I erected its pinnacle as it was in remote days."
- Archeologists tend to consider a more likely spot to be the ruins just north of the Marduk Temple in Babylon proper. G. Smith found an ancient tablet reading, "The building of this illustrious tower offended the gods. In a night they threw down what they had built. They scattered them abroad, and made strange their speech." This seems to be a tradition closer to the account of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. It is now an immense hole 330 feet square which has been used as a quarry from which to take bricks. It originally consisted of a series of platforms, one on top of the other with each ascending platform smaller than the one beneath it. A sanctuary to Marduk topped off the tower.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel 10:1

As noted in the above accounts, Babylon's captivity of Judah was accomplished by stages. Nebuchadnezzar could have destroyed Jerusalem and taken the citizens into captivity in one fell stroke, but he tried to keep Judah alive as a source of tribute. Those who were of the earlier deportations seemed to have had an easier time of it than those who were deported in 586 BC.

### **Timeline of Judah's Fall and Babylonian Exile**

**605 BC** Nebuchadnezzar subdued Jehoiakim and took Temple treasures and members of the royal family, including Daniel, to Babylon (II Chronicles 36:6-7; Daniel 1:1-3). Jehoiakim was assassinated while awaiting transport to Babylon

**597 BC** Nebuchadnezzar came again and carried off to Babylon the rest of the Temple treasures, king Jehoiachin, and 10,000 princes, officers, and chief men (II Kings 24:14-16).

**586 BC** Nebuchadnezzar came again. After a year and a half of siege, the Babylonians conquered the city.<sup>39</sup> Nebuchadnezzar put out the eyes of Zedekiah and took him in chains to Babylon, along with 832 captives. One month later, under the command of Nebuzar-adan, the Babylonian troops broke down Jerusalem's walls and burned the city. Only a remnant of farmers was left in Judah under the oversight of Gedaliah, a Jew whom Nebuchadnezzar had appointed governor (II Kings 25:8-12; Jeremiah 52:28-30).

**581 BC** The Babylonians came again (probably in retaliation for Ishmael's killing of governor Gedaliah) and took 745 more people to Babylon (Jeremiah 52:30). This was after a remnant had fled to Egypt, taking the aged Jeremiah with them.

### **Jewish experience in Palestine after the destruction of Jerusalem**

Nebuchadnezzar left a few Jews in Palestine to serve as vinedressers and husbandmen (II Kings 25:12, 22), as well as some royal princesses and courtiers who were unlikely to cause any trouble. Many of the abandoned settlements in Judah were quickly occupied by the "residue of the people" (Jeremiah 40:10).<sup>40</sup> This caused resentment among the exiles in Babylon, because their former properties were being taken over by those still in the land.

The central highlands of Judah were denuded of their population and the Babylonians did not bring in new settlers to replace those who had been removed. The Edomites, who were being crowded by the migrating Arabian tribes, gradually began to occupy the vacated areas in the southern Judean hills. This region (Beth-zur) became "Idumea" (See **MAP VII**)

Gedaliah<sup>41</sup> was installed as governor of the land. He chose Mizpah, a few miles northwest of Jerusalem, as his headquarters. Jeremiah joined him there (Jeremiah 40:6). Four Jewish commanders and their soldiers had escaped capture when the Babylonians overran Jerusalem. When Gedaliah was made governor, the officers and their men came to Mizpah for a conference

<sup>39</sup> Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah, in the 10<sup>th</sup> month, the 10<sup>th</sup> day. The city fell in the 11<sup>th</sup> year, 4<sup>th</sup> month, 9<sup>th</sup> day. One month later the city was burned on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month.

<sup>40</sup> Nehemiah includes in the list of the "residue of Israel," settlements in the outlying regions in Benjamin, the Negev, and Shephelah, on the border of Philistia (Nehemiah 11:20-36)

<sup>41</sup> Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam, who was a friend and protector of Jeremiah and the grandson of Shaphan, who was the scribe in the reign of Josiah (II Kings 25:22-25; Jeremiah 39:14; 40:5-16; 41:1-18).

with the governor.<sup>42</sup> Two of the officers who led these soldiers were named, Ishmael and Johanan. Gedaliah assured them that they need have no fear of vengeance from their conquerors if they would become peaceful subjects to the King of Babylon. For about two months, Gedaliah's beneficent and wise administration brought encouragement and hope to his feeble countrymen.

Peace in Judah proved to be as elusive as ever. With the departure of the Babylonian army, Baalis, King of Ammon hoped to begin making conquests in the area. In order to fulfill his ambitions, Baalis knew that he had to get rid of Governor Gedaliah (Jeremiah 40:13-16). Baalis found a ready accomplice in Ishmael, who not only was a Jewish military officer but also a member of the Davidic family. No doubt Ishmael thought that he should be the governor. Johanan learned of the plot and revealed it to Gedaliah. Johanan, asked Gedaliah to give him permission to go and secretly kill Ishmael, because the fate of the Jews in Judah depended on the life of Gedaliah. Gedaliah refused to sanction the assassination, believing that his generous treatment of the remnant was such that Ishmael surely could not carry out such an heinous act against him. He was mistaken.

Ishmael and ten companions came to visit Gedaliah. They were warmly hosted and entertained. After the dinner, Ishmael and his cohorts killed not only Gedaliah but the Jews and Chaldean soldiers who were with him (these had been left in Judah to assist Gedaliah in administration). They also slew 80 pilgrims who happened to be passing through the area, in order to keep them from spreading the word about their crime. They threw the bodies of their victims into the cistern which Asa had made. Ishmael took as his prisoners the rest of the inhabitants of Mizpah. Johanan and a group of commanders from the Jewish army learned of these murders and they set in pursuit of Ishmael. They overtook him at Gibeon and freed the prisoners. Some of Ishmael's band quickly deserted him. Ishmael and eight of his co-conspirators escaped into Ammon.

Johanan and the other captains feared that Nebuchadnezzar would descend upon them because of the murder of Gedaliah.<sup>43</sup> Out of fear, they led the remnant to Egypt, taking the protesting Jeremiah with them (Jeremiah 41-44).

## **Exiled Judah in Egypt**

Yeb, the colony to which Johanan and his companions repaired, later was renamed, *Elephantine*. Elephantine is an island in the Nile.<sup>44</sup> In 1907-1908, German archaeologists, Rubensohn and Zucker, as agents of the Berlin *Papyrusskommission*, conducted extensive excavations of the site. The most important finding was a discovery of a horde of 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC papyri (written between 494 and 400 BC). One of the most significant facts is that the papyri were written in Aramaic, which contributes to the identifying the authors.

Many important details about the colony are established by the papyri. Other details must be explained by knowledge of external data. In our opinion, W.O.E. Oosterley has presented the

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<sup>42</sup> 2 Kings 25:23 *When all the captains of the forces, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah governor, they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, namely, Ishmael the son of Nathaniah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men.*

<sup>43</sup> In memory of Gedaliah's death, the Jews established a fast day, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, Tishri (Zechariah 7:5; 8:9).

<sup>44</sup> Yeb is well known from the Persian archives documenting events during Persian rule of Egypt.



most cohesive and reasonable harmony of the data.<sup>45</sup> Below, we summarize the history of Yeb, as clearly revealed in the papyri and Oesterley's coalition of that data with external information.

The original colonists were Israelites from Assyria. These were the second generation of the Israelites who had been transported to Assyria after the fall of Samaria. They were from the Israel exiles who had settled in Halah and Gozan (in Mesopotamia) and cities among the Medes (II Kings 17:6). These Mesopotamian provinces spoke Aramaic. Thus, the Israelites who came from these provinces would have been Aramaic speakers – having adopted the language of the area in which they lived.

When the Assyrian monarch, Ashurbanipal conquered Egypt in 667 BC, his army included troops from many regions of the Assyrian Empire. Among these would have been Israelites, who by this time were integrated into Assyrian communities. After conquering Egypt, Ashurbanipal established Assyrian garrisons throughout the region. Two important garrisons, Yeb and Syene, were established near the border with Nubia.

In 663 BC, Psammetichus, the Egyptian ruler, aided by mercenaries from Lydia, cleared the Assyrians from the area. Some of the Israelites presented themselves to Psammetichus as being Israelites, not Assyrians, pledged loyalty to the Egyptian and took service in his army. For understandable reasons, these Israelites did not want to return to Assyria. Some of them settled in Yeb and other localities (Jeremiah 44:1).

From the papyri, it is evident that the Israelites in Yeb had erected a temple in which they worshipped *Yah*, a form of *Yahweh* (Jehovah). They developed a sacrificial system, had a priesthood, kept the Passover and The Feast of Unleavened Bread.

They also worshipped *Ishumbethel* & *Anathbethel*,<sup>46</sup> and *Herembethel* & *Anathyahu*. *Ishumbethel* and *Herembethel* are male. *Anathbethel* and *Anathyahu* are female. The combination of *Anath* and *Yahu* indicate that they considered *Anathyahu* to be Jehovah's spouse. Women had a prominent role in the worship. None of this is surprising since the Israelites had perverted Jehovistic worship after the division of the Kingdom. This perversion is one reason Jehovah allowed them to be captured and taken into Exile. Thus, in Egypt they were continuing in their tradition.

Johanan and his company settled into this century-old Israelite community when they fled Judah, taking along the protesting Jeremiah. Jeremiah Chapter 44 is a record of Jehovah's word to that community. The conditions described by Jeremiah are consistent with the picture of the community presented in the Elephantine Papyri. Especially consistent with the picture is the manner in which the women mocked Jeremiah for calling them to forsake the seductive worship of Astarte, the Queen of Heaven (Jeremiah 44:15-30).

## **Jewish Life in Babylon**

Every day life for the exiles in Babylon was quite different from the harsh existence that the children of Israel had experienced in the closing years of their stay in Egypt. Heavy forced labor was not the common experience for the exiles. Those who took Jeremiah's advice (Jeremiah 29:4-11, cited above) got along well. For the most part, the Babylonian rulers adopted a liberal policy of dealing with the exiles. After they had been in Babylon for a few years, the Babylonian ruler created the office of *Rosh Galutha*, - the "Prince (or head) of the Captivity". He was fourth

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<sup>45</sup> Oesterley, pages 159-165

<sup>46</sup> Bethel was a Canaanite deity (Genesis 31:13)

in rank from the king himself and his power over the Hebrews was almost equal to that of a sovereign over his people. He appointed judges, inflicted corporal punishment, imposed fines, and had the power to imprison.<sup>47</sup>

Some of the exiles were settled in communities north of Babylon. These probably came in contact with the descendants of the Israelites who had been carried from Samaria to Assyria/Babylon a century earlier. Some settled south of Babylon, and these would have been closer to the original home of Abraham. Those who were settled in the City of Babylon itself would have faced a dramatic culture shock.

### **The City of Babylon (MAP VIII)**

The Babylon to which the Jews were exiled was one of the wonders of the ancient world.<sup>48</sup> According to Herodotus, its walls were sixty miles in circumference – 15 miles on each side.<sup>49</sup> The walls were 300 feet high and 80 feet thick, extending 35 feet below ground so that enemies could not tunnel under the walls. The walls were built of brick, one foot square and 3-4 inches thick. There was ½ mile of clear space between these outer walls and the buildings that were within them. 250 towers, containing barracks for troops were on the walls. One hundred bronze gates pierced the walls. The walls were surrounded by wide moats.

The Euphrates River ran north and south through the center of the city, dividing Babylon into two distinct sections. A bridge spanned the river with draw bridges on either side, which were raised at night. There also was a tunnel that ran under the river, 15 feet wide and 12 feet high.<sup>50</sup>

The splendors of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon are well known, not only from ancient records (including Nebuchadnezzar's own inscriptions) but from descriptions penned by visitors to the city and extensive modern excavations. Babylon would have been dazzling to the eyes of the exiles. Herodotus described the town plan of Babylon and it is quite similar to the blue print for a modern American city (see **ADDENDUM A**).

“The center of the city, which is full of three- and four-storied buildings, is traversed by dead straight streets not only those that run parallel to the river but cross streets which lead down to the water side.”<sup>51</sup>

Beginning in 1899, and continuing for eighteen years (the work was interrupted by World War I), the *Deutsche Orientgesellschaft*, under the leadership of Robert Koldewey, excavated the site of Babylon and uncovered the remains of the vast building projects (see **ADDENDUM B**). Koldewey transported to Berlin many of the objects that he uncovered. The most famous of these is the Ishtar Gate (See **ADDENDA B, C & D**). The gate, a tower, was lifted, from the site and the many broken pieces of enameled tile were reconstructed in the central court of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum (now the Pergamum Museum). A brief video of the gate can be seen at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HN9lmEX5rC4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HN9lmEX5rC4).

The brick laying technique described in the Bible for the building of the Tower of Babel corresponds with what has been unearthed at Babylon.

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<sup>47</sup> G. Frederick Owen, *Abraham to Allenby* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1943 page 98

<sup>48</sup> Babylon is situated about 55 miles south of Bagdad

<sup>49</sup> See **ADDENDUM A** for a critique of Herodotus figures.

<sup>50</sup> Information on the tunnel is available in *Halley*, page 336

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Keller, page 28

*They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.<sup>52</sup>*

Only asphalted bricks were used in construction. Because of the city's being built upon the banks of the Euphrates, and the resultant dampness, foundations and stone work were made waterproof and damp-proof with tar (asphalt). Among the ruins rose the vast Ishtar Gate, leading through a massive double wall of fortifications and ornamented with bulls and dragons in enameled colored brick.

The Ishtar gate gave access to the city's great processional street, the Esaglia. The Esaglia was an elevated thoroughfare that rose above the roofs of the surrounding buildings. The walls that were erected on both sides of the Esaglia were adorned with enameled lions. The walls of the throne room of Nebuchadnezzar's palace were adorned with the same enameled lions. In the temple area, south of the palace, only the ground plan remains of Nebuchadnezzar's ziggurat, but according to the Greek historian, Herodotus, it towered to a height of eight stages (300 feet).<sup>53</sup> A short distance away was Marduk's temple,<sup>54</sup> which Nebuchadnezzar restored and built with step-backs like a modern skyscraper.

In the general area of the northern palace, but no longer identifiable, stood the most famous of all of Nebuchadnezzar's constructions, the hanging gardens. The gardens were built in terraces to compensate Nebuchadnezzar's Median queen for the absence of her beloved mountains. The ancient Greeks listed the hanging gardens as one of the seven wonders of the world.

One of the great challenges faced by the Jews was the prevalence of polytheism in Babylon. Babylon was a very religious city. Every street bore the name of one of the gods of the Babylonian pantheon. There were 53 temples of chief gods, 55 chapels of Marduk, 300 chapels for the earthly deities, 600 for heavenly deities, 180 altars for the goddess Ishtar, 180 altars for the gods Nergal and Adad and 12 other altars for different gods.<sup>55</sup> The nine gates of the city were named after Babylonian gods (see **MAP VIII**).

God	Gate	Description
Marduk	East	The great god of Babylon (Bel)
Zababa	East	Warrior god
Enlil (Ellil)	South	God of earth and wind
Urash	South	Earth goddess
Shamash (Babbar, Utu)	South	Sun god
Adad	West	Storm or weather god
Lugalgirra	North	One of the twin gods
Ishtar	North	Goddess of fertility
Sin (Nannar)	North	Moon god

<sup>52</sup> Genesis 11:3

<sup>53</sup> A tablet belonging to an architect was found in the temple excavation states that the length, breadth, and height of the ziggurat were equal and that only the terraces had different measurements. Archaeologists have measured the sides of the base as 295 feet. Therefore, the ziggurat would have been almost 300 feet high.

<sup>54</sup> Also known as Merodach

<sup>55</sup> Keller, page 299

Polytheism to this degree, with the worship rituals that included public prostitution, made Babylon a place of abominable temptations and enticements. Although the Greek traveler, Herodotus, had visited many exotic cultures, he experienced shocked astonishment when he encountered one aspect of Babylonian culture.

“The Babylonians have one most shameful custom. Every woman born in the country must once in her life go and sit down in the precinct of Aphrodite, and there consort with a stranger. Many of the wealthier sort, who are too proud to mix with the others, drive in covered carriages to the precinct, followed by a goodly train of attendants, and there take their station. But the larger number seat themselves within the holy enclosure with wreaths of string about their heads---and here there is always a great crowd, some coming and others going; lines of cord mark out paths in all directions the women, and the strangers pass along them to make their choice. A woman who has once taken her seat is not allowed to return home till one of the strangers throws a silver coin into her lap, and takes her with him beyond the holy ground. When he throws the coin he says these words: "The goddess Mylitta prosper you" (Aphrodite is called Mylitta by the Assyrians.) The silver coin may be of any size; it cannot be refused, for that is forbidden by the law, since once thrown it is sacred. The woman goes with the first man who throws her money, and rejects no one. When she has gone with him, and so satisfied the goddess, she returns home, and from that time forth no gift however great will prevail with her. Such of the women as are tall and beautiful are soon released, but others who are ugly have to stay a long time before they can fulfill the law. Some have waited three or four years in the precinct.<sup>56</sup>

Given the prevailing polytheism and practices such as just described, it is no wonder that the exiled Jews considered this metropolis to be *Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth* (Revelation 17:5). Even today, the idea of Babylon as a cesspool of vice is rooted in our vocabulary.

## **Jewish Self-Identity in Exile**

Apparently, the exiles of the Northern Kingdom had no hope of returning to their homeland and they began to lose their identity. Such was not the case with the Judeans.

Four things kept the Judeans from losing their identity and becoming a lost people, as was the fate of their northern relatives:

1. From the time of its establishment, the Northern Kingdom had developed alternatives to the ordinances that Jehovah had prescribed. They substituted two worship sites for the site that Jehovah had consecrated in Jerusalem. They substituted Jehovistic calf worship for the altar at the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>57</sup> Thus, when they went into captivity, they already were losing their identity as the People of Jehovah.

The Southern Kingdom, on the other hand, had the Jerusalem Temple. It was central to Judah's self-identity. Even though the nation often was guilty of apostasy and idolatry, at least Judah kept up a perfunctory observance of the Temple rites. Longing for the Temple is one of the themes of Judah's lament in exile.

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<sup>56</sup> Herodotus, *The History of the Persian Wars*, I.199

<sup>57</sup> I Kings 12:25ff; II Kings 10:29ff; II Kings 17:7ff

2. The Southern Kingdom had the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, which Jehovah spoke through these prophets after the Northern Kingdom had gone into exile. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied a future return to Palestine – in God’s own time. In exile, the Judeans began to appreciate, deeply, these prophecies and meditated upon them.

An example of such activity is seen in Daniel Chapter Nine. Daniel read Jeremiah’s prophecy that Jerusalem’s devastation would last seventy years. He began to intercede for Jerusalem and the exiled Judeans. In response, Jehovah sent the angel, Gabriel, to Daniel, both to assure him that the prophecies would be fulfilled, but also to give Daniel further revelation.

3. The prophet Ezekiel was among the exiled Judeans. Ezekiel was commissioned to be Jehovah’s bold proclaimer, even if his audience did not accept his word (Ezekiel Chapters 2-4).

Jehovah spoke dramatically through Ezekiel. Not only was he commanded to speak the words that Jehovah put into his mouth, but he was called to illustrate the message through various dramatic acts.<sup>58</sup>

Most of Ezekiel’s prophecies were given to the exiles before the 586 BC destruction of Jerusalem. False prophets among Ezekiel’s fellow exiles kept declaring that in a year or so they would be returned to their homeland.<sup>59</sup> Ezekiel had the difficult task of declaring over and over again that Jerusalem was going to be destroyed because of the nation’s rebellion and idolatry - yet, a remnant would survive and join the exiles in Babylon. One of his prophetic declarations is so striking that it is appropriate for us to quote it here.

*Then the word of Jehovah came to me saying,*

*"Son of man, if a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it and cut off from it both man and beast, even though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their own righteousness they could only deliver themselves," declares Jehovah Jehovah.*

*"If I were to cause wild beasts to pass through the land and they depopulated it, and it became desolate so that no one would pass through it because of the beasts, though these three men were in its midst, as I live," declares Jehovah Jehovah, "they could not deliver either their sons or their daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the country would be desolate.*

*Or if I should bring a sword on that country and say, 'Let the sword pass through the country and cut off man and beast from it,' even though these three men were in its midst, as I live," declares Jehovah Jehovah, "they could not deliver either their sons or their daughters, but they alone would be delivered.*

*Or if I should send a plague against that country and pour out My wrath in blood on it to cut off man and beast from it,*

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<sup>58</sup> Examples of these are seen in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 12, 21, 24:15, etc.

<sup>59</sup> Ezekiel 13. Especially harsh is Ezekiel’s rebuke of the women who were wearing veils and magic armbands in an effort to seduce people into prophetic subjection (verses 17-23)

*even though Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, as I live," declares Jehovah Jehovah, "they could not deliver either their son or their daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."*

*For thus says Jehovah Jehovah, "How much more when I send My four severe judgments against Jerusalem: sword, famine, wild beasts and plague to cut off man and beast from it!*

*Yet, behold, survivors will be left in it who will be brought out, both sons and daughters.*

*Behold, they are going to come forth to you and you will see their conduct and actions;*

*then you will be comforted for the calamity which I have brought against Jerusalem for everything which I have brought upon it.*

*Then they will comfort you when you see their conduct and actions, for you will know that I have not done in vain whatever I did to it," declares Jehovah Jehovah. (Ezekiel 14:12-23)*

Thus, even in the midst of the dark messages, Jehovah gave Ezekiel a message of hope.<sup>60</sup> Chapters 40-48 contain his vision of a magnificent and enormous restored temple.

#### 4. The Judeans developed the synagogue.

*Synagogue* is a Greek term that means "to bring together." The synagogue was not, "God ordained," but was an instrument that the exiled Jews developed to keep alive their faith and their identity. More than anything else, the synagogue seems to be the main reason that the Judeans did not lose their identity.

The Book of Ezekiel describes gatherings of individuals who came together to listen to someone who was pious, God-fearing, and in touch with Divine revelation (Ezekiel 8:1; 14:1; 20:1; 33:31-32). The audience did not always heed the wisdom or revelation, but still they gathered to listen. There is universal agreement among students of the synagogue that such was the origin of that institution.<sup>61</sup> In time, these informal meetings became more formal. Philo, the Jew, states that the synagogues were "houses of instruction, where the philosophy of the fathers and all manner of virtues were taught."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See also 16:60-63

<sup>61</sup> Philo, the Jewish philosopher who flourished at the beginning of the First Century wrote, *The Life of Moses*, as an evangelistic tool for Judaism and as an explanation of Judaism for the Romans. In this document he states that Moses established the synagogue (*De Vita Moses*, 3:27). This clearly is not the case and no responsible student of the question takes seriously Philo's propaganda.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Levertoff, in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Volume V, "Synagogue" (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1952 pages 2877-2879

## Daily Life for an Exile

No doubt many of the exiles took up the pastoral enterprises to which they were accustomed. These would have lived in villages north and south of the city of Babylon. Others became business owners. Babylon was very similar to a modern financial and commercial capital. Keller describes the thriving business community of Babylon.

“Outside the double walls of the city...lay the “Chambers of Commerce.” It was on the riverbank that prices were fixed and exchange rates established for the commodities that arrived by boat. ‘Karum,’ or ‘quay,’ was the name the Babylonians gave to what we now call ‘the Exchange.’ As well as taking over the Quay, or Exchange, from the Babylonians, the Old World also has taken over its system of weights and measurements.”<sup>63</sup>

One family that made the grade was Marashu and sons. Scholars from the University of Pennsylvania discovered some of the Jewish firm’s records stored in its business headquarters in Nippur (south of Babylon). They were in large clay jars, which in keeping with security measures in that era, were sealed with asphalt. The “books” of Murashu and Sons are full of detailed information about the life of the exiles, such as their names, their occupations and their property. We quote the following from Keller:

“Marashu and sons – International Bank-Insurance, Conveyancing, Loans – Personal and Real Estate-Head Office, Nippur; Branches Everywhere- A firm with a reputation throughout the world, the ‘Lloyd’s’ of Mesopotamia. ... The Murashus – displaced persons from Judea – had done well for themselves in Nippur since 587 BC. They were an old established office. Their firm still stood for something in Mesopotamia, even in the Persian era.

“...The offices of Murashu and Sons were a hive of activity. For a hundred and fifty years they enjoyed the confidence of their clients, whether it was a matter of conveyance of large estates and sections of the canals, or of slaves. Anyone who could not write, when he came to add his signature, put...the print of his fingernail on the documents. It corresponded to putting an X in the presence of witnesses, as illiterates do today.

“One day three jewelers called on Murashu and Sons. ‘Elil-Aha-Idinna and Belsunu and Hatin said to Elil-Nadin-Sum, son of Murashu: In the case of this emerald ring, we give a twenty years’ guarantee that the stone will not fall out of the gold. If the emerald falls out of the ring before the expiry of twenty years, Elil-Aha-Idinna, Belsunu and Hatin undertake to pay damages to Elil-Nadin-Sum amounting to 10 Minas of silver.’ The document is signed by seven people. Before the lawyer’s name the clay bears the imprint of three fingernails.

“...An exiled Jew, Mannudannijama, came to Murashu and Sons, because he wanted to arrange a deed of conveyance with a Babylonian concerning an important herd of cattle: ‘13 old rams, 27 two-year old rams, 152 lambing ewes, 40 year-old rams, 40 year-old ewe-lambs, an old he-goat, a two-year old he goat... a total of 276 white and black, large and small sheep and goats... cash on delivery... Mannudannijama to be responsible for pasture, feeding, and safe custody....Nippur the 25<sup>th</sup> of Ulul... Signed: Fingernail of Mannudannijama.’

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<sup>63</sup> Keller page 301

“Securities for those imprisoned for debt were deposited with the bank. There were special departments for all eventualities of life. The rate of interest was 20 percent, not introduced by Murashu, let it be said. That was the normal rate in those days.”<sup>64</sup>

Much more could be quoted from the discovery of the records of Marashu and Sons, but this will suffice to demonstrate the extensive business success of one family of Jewish exiles in Babylon. That other families also succeeded financially in Babylon is apparent from the expensive gifts that repatriated Jews were able to give to facilitate the rebuilding of the Temple.<sup>65</sup>

However much the Jews may have “sought (and found) the peace of the city,” however much they would profit in the future from the things that they learned in Babylonia, their heart yearnings for the distant little homeland left them no peace. Their mourning, at least at first, was intense. Few passages of literature are more pathetic than the opening verses of Psalm 137.

*By the rivers of Babylon,  
There we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.  
Upon the willows in the midst of it we hung our harps.  
For there our captors demanded of us songs,  
And our tormentors mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."  
How can we sing Jehovah's song In a foreign land?  
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
May my right hand forget her skill.  
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
If I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.*<sup>66</sup>

## **The Important Role of Daniel**

Through both providential and supernatural activity, Jehovah sovereignly installed Daniel in a place of influence, during both the Babylonian and the Persian periods. Jehovah elevated Daniel into these posts by using him in the interpretation of dreams, then giving him great wisdom in the administration of governmental affairs so that the kings held him in great esteem. Daniel, imbued with the wisdom of God, displayed the dictum, “Let us become Babylonians, in every way that is unimportant.” He was a man who displayed God-given talent and ability, but also was diligent and pursued excellence in all that he did. To repeat the statement made in our introduction,

“If one were to look for a theme under which our present studies might be conducted, none would be more appropriate than Daniel’s words when he blessed the God of heaven,

*It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings;  
He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.*<sup>67</sup>

Being among the first band of exiles transported to Babylon, and being of royal blood, he was among those chosen to be educated so that he could be of use to the Babylonians in governmental affairs. The hand of God is seen throughout Daniel’s career. His career began

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<sup>64</sup> Keller, page 205-296

<sup>65</sup> Ezra 1:4, 6

<sup>66</sup> Psalm 137:1-6

<sup>67</sup> Daniel 2:21



early in the Babylonian period, when God gave a troubling dream to Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>68</sup> The dream must have been confusing, because Nebuchadnezzar called together his wise men and told them to tell him the dream and then to interpret it. They declared that no one could tell a man what he had dreamed. Angrily, Nebuchadnezzar accused the wise men of being fakes and ordered all of the wise men to be killed. Although not a part of the group that had been called to declare and interpret the dream, Daniel and his companions were counted as being among the wise men, and thus they were slated for death. Daniel asked for a reprieve to give him time to discern the dream and declare its interpretation. This was granted. Daniel declared that the ability to know such mysteries did not rest in any man, but in God's choosing to reveal mysteries.

*Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. . ."*<sup>69</sup>

After Daniel described the dream and then gave the interpretation, the awed Nebuchadnezzar declared Daniel's God "to be a God of gods and a Lord of kings." Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel the overseer of the province of Babylon (the vicinity immediately surrounding the city) and his companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were made administrators. Daniel also was made chief prefect over all of the wise men of Babylon. A number of plots designed to destroy Daniel and his companions were instigated by politicians, both during the Babylonian and Persian eras. All failed, because of God's intervention.

Because Daniel was in such a powerful place, supervising affairs of the kingdom, he would have been in a position to influence how the Jewish people were treated. For that matter, in a number of areas he would have been the only one to make the final decisions concerning the fate of all citizens, including his countrymen.

## **Daniel's role in the two empires**

Daniel was a key figure in the administration of both the Babylonian and Persian Empires. He also had key interactions with the rulers. As a bridge between the two eras, we summarize Daniel's interaction with Babylonian and Persian rulers as recorded in the Book of Daniel.

### **Daniel and Babylonian rulers**

#### ***Nebuchadnezzar***

1. The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the multimedia statue, which was a prediction of the four great coming world empires (Daniel Chapter two). This occurred in 602 BC, the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign as the sole ruler. Daniel would have been living in Babylon for three or four years and would have been but a mere lad.

The Chaldeans had a tradition that Nebuchadnezzar ascended to the roof of his palace and shouted, "O Babylonians, there shall come a Persian to impose servitude upon you. A Mede shall be his associate." If this is true, then apparently

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<sup>68</sup> This account is in Daniel Chapter 2

<sup>69</sup> Daniel 2:27-28

Nebuchadnezzar had absorbed something this vision and others that Daniel interpreted.<sup>70</sup>

2. Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refuse to worship the golden statue of Nebuchadnezzar. They miraculously survive the fiery furnace, and as a result, Nebuchadnezzar declared the sacredness of Jehovah (Daniel Chapter three). In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, it is stated that this occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Daniel and his companions would have been living in Babylon for about 20 years. This also would have been the same year in which Jerusalem was destroyed (586 BC)
3. Daniel interprets the dream that foretold the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar, which was fulfilled one year later (Daniel Chapter four). Daniel's grief over this dream makes apparent the respect and affection that existed between Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel (Daniel 4:19). The Book of Daniel contains no record of the date of this episode.

Although ancient kings rarely reported any thing that might disparage their reputation, many consider the following Nebuchadnezzar inscription, translated by Sir Henry Rawlinson, to be a reference to this incident:

“For four years the residence of my kingdom did not delight my heart In no one of my possessions did I erect any important building by my might. I did not put up any buildings in Babylon for myself and the honor of my name. In the worship of Merodach my god I did not sing his praise, nor did I provide his altar with sacrifice nor clean the canals.”<sup>71</sup>

### ***Belshazzar***

It is a leap of decades from the last recorded episode that occurred between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar and the one encounter that Daniel had with Belshazzar. The irreverent bacchanal recorded in Daniel 5 took place on the very night that the Median/Persian army captured Babylon (539 BC).

#### **Excursus: Daniel, the third ruler in the kingdom**

The statement in Daniel 5:16 – as a promise – and 5:29 – as fulfillment, that Daniel was the *third ruler in the kingdom*, was perplexing for scholars until the discovery of the earlier mentioned texts, revealing that Belshazzar was the son and co-regent with Nabonidus. Thus, after Nabonidus and Belshazzar, Daniel would have been the third ruler. By describing Daniel in this manner, the Book of Daniel adds one more piece of evidence that it is historically accurate.

### **Daniel, Darius, and Cyrus**

Inscriptions found in recent years indicate that even though the army of Cyrus conquered Babylon, the actual general who led the army was Gobryas (described in greater detail in the next section).<sup>72</sup> There is much evidence to suggest that Cyrus was engaged in other battles when

<sup>70</sup> Halley, page 344

<sup>71</sup> Halley, page 344

<sup>72</sup> Halley, page 344-345; Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Volume 9, “Esther-Daniel” (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers) 1989, pages 192-200

Babylon was conquered and so he left Babylon under the rule of a surrogate. Cyrus, it seems, did not settle in Babylon until a year or more after the city was conquered. During the period between the capture of the city and Cyrus' arrival and settling down in the city, another Median/Persian reigned in his stead. Daniel states that this man was called, *Darius the Mede* (Daniel 5:31; 6:28). There has been much speculation as to the identity of this Darius. He is thought to have been either Gobyras or Cyaxares, the Median father-in-law of Cyrus. There are documents and traditions that allow arguments to be made for either of these men as being the Darius described in Daniel.<sup>73</sup>

1. Upon his ascendancy to the throne of Babylon, Darius the Mede appointed 120 satraps to oversee the kingdom. Three commissioners were placed over the satraps, Daniel being one of these commissioners. Daniel so distinguished himself in this role, that Darius planned to make him the top man on the satrapy pyramid. This produced jealousy among the others and so they schemed to find a way to bring Daniel down. They could not find any evidence of corruption. They knew that above all else, Daniel was faithful to Jehovah and that they might use this trait in some way to destroy him. They flattered Darius into proclaiming that for thirty days no one in the kingdom could pray to any god other than Darius. Anyone violating this would be thrown into the lion's den. Of course, Daniel did not abide by this proclamation and his rivals insisted that Darius order his officers to throw Daniel to the lions.

Darius did not want to execute Daniel (Daniel 6:14, 18), but his hands were tied. The law of the Medes and Persians declared that no law established by a king could be revoked – even the king himself could not revoke the law (this reflected the view that kings were agents of gods and that laws enacted by kings were divine law – thus, no king moved by human motives could revoke a law that he had established by divine guidance). God delivered Daniel. His enemies and their families suffered the fate that they had designed for Daniel (Daniel 6:18-24).

This episode resulted in Darius' esteem for Jehovah, just as Nebuchadnezzar's experiences had produced reverence for Jehovah a generation earlier. Daniel rose in power and importance in the Persian kingdom (Daniel 6:28)

2. Although there is no record of the event, one would assume that Daniel would have brought to the attention of the Persians the many prophecies of Isaiah that foretold the coming of the Persians and mentioning Cyrus by name. This in itself would have moved Cyrus toward favoring the Jews that came under his rule.

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<sup>73</sup> For a thorough, albeit rather complicated, discussion of the evidence for one or the other of these men, see Keil and Delitzsch, Daniel, pages 192-200

## PART TWO

### THE PERSIAN PERIOD

The Persian Period has its beginning in the ascendancy of Cyrus the Great. Legends concerning the birth and ascendancy of various monarchs were common fare in ancient times. These legends were passed on from generation to generation. Cyrus was no exception. Herodotus reports a legend of two dreams that decided the destiny of Cyrus. Whether or not the legends are true cannot be proven one way or the other. However, since they were so widely believed we do well to record them here.

When the Median King, Kyaxares (Nebuchadnezzar's ally) died, his son, Astyages, ascended to the Median throne. Astyages was the grandfather of Cyrus. Persia was a vassal state under the suzerain<sup>74</sup> of Astyages. Herodotus reports the following legend.

“Astyages...had a daughter who was named Mandane. He dreamed that from her such a stream of water flowed forth as not only to fill his capital but to flood the whole of Asia. This vision he laid before the Magi who had the gift of interpreting dreams, who expounded its meaning to him in full. He was greatly terrified. Because of this, when Mandane was of marriageable age, he would not give her to any of the Medes lest the dream should be accomplished, but married her to a Persian named Cambyses...”<sup>75</sup>

The legend goes on to say that the first year after Mandane's marriage to Cambyses, Astyages had another vision. He saw a vine grow from the womb of his daughter and overshadow the whole of Asia. He submitted this dream to the interpreters who informed him that the dream meant that the offspring of his daughter would overshadow Asia, replacing Astyages. After the interpretation was given, Astyages sent to Persia and fetched away Mandane, who was pregnant and not far from the time of delivery. He set a watch over her, intending to kill the child as soon as he was born. After Mandane gave birth, Astyages called for his most faithful servant, a Mede named Harpagus, and told him, “take the child born of Mandane; carry him with you to your home and slay him there.” Harpagus took the child but could not bring himself to kill the boy. He gave the baby to a shepherd and told him to kill the child. In her husband's absence, the shepherd's wife had given birth to a stillborn son. She persuaded her husband to present the stillborn child to Harpagus telling him that this was the body of prince. The shepherd and his wife kept Cyrus as their own child. Thus, Cyrus spent his earliest years as a child of shepherds. Later, Cyrus was returned to his biological parents where he was reared as a Persian prince.<sup>76</sup>

Cyrus was a prince with two streams of royalty as his ancestry. Being the son of Cambyses, Cyrus' fraternal descent was from the royal Persian race of Achaemenes. His maternal lineage was Median royalty. More than any other prince in the ancient world, Cyrus captured the imagination of story tellers. The Athenian gentleman soldier, Xenophon, wrote a complete romance about Cyrus, the *Cyropaedia*.

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<sup>74</sup> *Suzerain* refers to an hierarchy in which the king of an independent kingdom is subject to another king. The king who is over the other king is the *suzerain*.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Morrow page 308

<sup>76</sup> For more legends concerning the birth of Cyrus, see <http://www.farhangsara.com/cyrus.htm>

## The rise of the Persian Empire and the fall of Babylon

Cyrus first is described as the king of the small Persian kingdom of Anshan.<sup>77</sup> All of Persia was a vassal state under Cyrus' grandfather, Astyages, the Mede. Cyrus revolted against Astyages. Astyages marched against his grandson, but in the following conflict, for unknown reasons, the Median army mutinied and gave up Astyages to Cyrus. In 550 BC, Cyrus captured the Median capital of Ecbatana, banished his grandfather and thus became the ruler of the Medo-Persian state.

This new successful conqueror caused misgivings among rulers of the other great powers, Egypt, Babylonia, and the Lydian kingdom. The King of Lydia, Croesus,<sup>78</sup> attacked Cyrus in 547 BC. An indecisive battle ensued. With winter coming on, Croesus retired to his capital, Sardes. He sent messengers to his allies, Nabonidus, King of Babylon, and Amasis, King of Egypt, as well as the strongest Greek city-state, Sparta, instructing them to be ready by the spring to begin a campaign against Cyrus. Cyrus ignored the season and launched a wintertime attack on Sardes, achieving a total victory. When Cyrus' soldiers began looting Sardes, Croesus asked Cyrus, "Why are they doing that?" Cyrus replied, "Why not?" Croesus said, "It's your city." Croesus was put to death. With the dissolution of the Lydian Kingdom, most of Asia Minor became incorporated into Cyrus' empire. Unfortunately, no extant records reveal the course of events over the next few years.

### Cyrus' Victory over Babylon

The Babylonian king, Nabonidus, and his co-regent son, Belshazzar, were unpopular with the citizens of Babylon. The people resented several things about them, most notably the fact that the annual New Year's rite at the Temple of Marduk could not be held, since the presence of the monarch was necessary. Nabonidus had made Tema, in western Arabia (the southern edge of the province of Edom), his residence, building a palace there that was equal to his palace in Babylon. He often ignored the importance of his presence on New Year's Day by remaining in Tema, rather than returning to Babylon for the celebration. Not only that, but Nabonidus had become a worshipper of Sin, the Moon God. He built a temple to Sin at Ur and his daughter, Bel-Shalti-Nannar (Belshazzar's sister), was a priestess at that shrine. Babylonians were angry with Nabonidus because he transferred his loyalty to a god other than Marduk, the god who blessed and protected Babylon (**ADDENDUM F**). Also, it seems that Nabonidus and his son had become harsh with the citizens and they were eager to be relieved of their heavy handedness.

Cyrus began subduing cities of the Babylonian Empire but he delayed setting his sights on the seemingly impregnable, City of Babylon. Nabonidus, realizing the threat to his empire and even to his own personal safety, fled back to the security of Babylon. Finally, the Persians began their attack on Babylon, itself. (**MAP X**)

The Babylonian nobles were so confident of their security behind the great walls that even when the Persians laid siege to the city, they went about their business as if everything were normal. They thought that they had enough stores within the city to outlast any siege and that furthermore, the walls and moats that Nebuchadnezzar had designed and built made any Persian siege an exercise in futility. The scene depicted in Daniel Chapter 5 perfectly fits into the picture painted by the secular record. While Cyrus' armies were laying siege to the city, Belshazzar and the nobles partied. The haughtiness displayed at this drunken orgy is evidence of their attitude,

<sup>77</sup> Nabonidus Chronicle 2:1-4

<sup>78</sup> This is the king who was known for his great wealth, hence the expression, "as rich as Croesus."

“We are Babylonians and because of our impregnable walls, we are untouchable. Even the gods cannot touch us.”

*Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.<sup>79</sup>*

All Bible readers are familiar with the “handwriting on the wall,” that interrupted this ribald gathering. None of the wizards of Babylon could interpret the words, *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN*. Hearing the commotion in the banquet hall, the queen mother entered the room. When she learned the cause of the confusion, she suggested that Daniel be brought into the hall to interpret the handwriting. That was done and Daniel interpreted the words. Literally, the words were the names of coins:

*MENE* is a *mina* = 50 shekels;  
*TEKEL* is a *shekel*;  
*UPHARSIN* is *and a half-shekel*

Each of these terms is derived from a verb:

*Mina* is derived from the verb, *to number*;  
*Shekel* is derived from the verb, *to weigh*;  
*half-shekel* (singular *peres*) is from the verb, *to divide*

So, Daniel’s task was not merely to translate, but to interpret the meaning of the terms. He did so in the following fashion:

*MENE* – God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it  
*TEKEL* – You have been weighed on the scales and found deficient  
*PERES* – Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians

Daniel records that in that same night, Belshazzar was slain.

Cyrus’ armies began their siege of Babylon by capturing Opis, the village that was the northern terminus of the great wall. By capturing Opis, the Persians gained control of the canal-system. Cyrus divided his army into two groups. One group was on the south side of Babylon, at the point where the Euphrates exited the city. The other group, upstream at Opis, began digging trenches, diverting the river. When the water flowing through Babylon was only thigh-high, the Persian army proceeded to march into the river from both the north and the south. High walls containing brass gates bordered both sides of the river. The Babylonians had been so confident that the city was impregnable that they had not bothered to close the gates that opened onto the river. These gates provided the Persians access into the city. Had the gates been closed, Cyrus’ plan would have failed (See **ADDENDUM E** for Herodotus’ description of the Persian victory over Babylon). In 539 BC Cyrus entered the city and the populace hailed him as their liberator. The Babylonian Empire was a thing of the past.

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<sup>79</sup> Daniel 5:1-4

The displeasure that the citizens of Babylonia had with Nabonidus (described above) is one of the things that contributed to Cyrus' success. Ugbaru (popularly called, Gobryas), was the powerful governor of the province of Gutium. When Cyrus' army was advancing toward Babylon, Ugbaru and his troops joined the Persians. According to the *Chronicle of Nabonidus*,<sup>80</sup> Ugbaru led the invasion of Babylon and was the first commander to enter the city and capture Nabonidus.

A representative of Cyrus, a sixty-two year-old Mede named Darius, became the ruler of Babylon.<sup>81</sup> Darius seems to have served in this role until Cyrus was able to complete some military campaigns elsewhere before he settled in at Babylon.

Cyrus was a very religious man. He attributed his success to the Babylonian god, Marduk, and the moon god, Sin. The clay cylinder of Cyrus, discovered at Ur and written in Babylonian script, states,

“He (Marduk) sought out an upright prince, after his own heart, whom he took by his hand, Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan . . . Marduk, the great Lord the guardian of his people, joyfully beheld his good deeds and his upright heart. To his own city Babylon his march he commanded . . . like a comrade and helper he marched at his side. . . As I entered Babylon in peace, and established my royal residence in the palace of the princes amid jubilation and rejoicing, Marduk, the great lord, warmed the hearts of the Babylonians towards me, while I for my part devoted myself daily to do him reverence. My troops wandered peacefully widespread throughout Babylon. In all Sumer and Akkad I let no man be afraid. I concerned myself with the internal affairs of Babylon and all its cities. The dwellers in Babylon. . . I freed from yoke that ill became them. I repaired their houses, I healed their afflictions. . . I am Cyrus, king of all, the great king, the mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four corners of the earth. . .”<sup>82</sup>

A bit later in the cylinder text, Cyrus wrote,

“Sin [the moon god], the light of heaven and earth, with his favorable omens gave into my hands the four corners of the earth. I brought the gods back into their sanctuaries.”

Upon entering Babylon, Cyrus immediately had the images and shrines of the local gods set up again. Some of these had fallen into disrepair during the reign of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. Cyrus especially was concerned with the daily worship of the chief god of the city – Marduk.

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<sup>80</sup> Year 17 of the *Chronicle*

<sup>81</sup> Daniel 5:31

<sup>82</sup> Cyrus Cylinder 12-17 as quoted in Oesterley page 64

## The Monarchs of the Persian Empire

The return of the Jews to their homeland, the rebuilding of the Temple and rebuilding of Jerusalem are played out against the background of the Persian kings and the intrigue that surrounded some of them. Therefore, it is imperative that we possess knowledge of these kings and the significant events that took place in their individual reigns.

The Kings of the Persian Empire	
538-529 BC	Cyrus (the beginning date is the fall of Babylon) <sup>83</sup>
529-522 BC	Cambyses
522 BC	Gaumata
521-486 BC	Darius I
485-465 BC	Xerxes (Ahasuerus) husband of Queen Esther
465 BC	Artabanus
464-424 BC	Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) Queen Esther's step-son
424 BC	Xerxes II
424 BC	Sogdianus
423-405 BC	Darius II (Nothus)
404-358 BC	Artaxerxes II (Mnemon)
358-338 BC	Artaxerxes III (Achus)
338-335 BC	Aras
335-330 BC	Darius III (Codomannus)

With the conquering of Babylon, Cyrus ruled an empire that stretched from the distant east all the way west to the Aegean Sea. The north and south dimensions included Armenia in the north and to the south of Palestine, just short of Egypt. This was the greatest empire that the world had seen (see **MAP IX**).

Cyrus' conducted himself, both politically and religiously, in a manner totally at odds with the world-rulers who had preceded him.

- Instead of humiliating and oppressing the nations that he had conquered, he did all that he could to conciliate them and cause them to be pleased with his reign.
- Instead of forcing his subjects to surrender their religions and to worship his gods, he encouraged his subjects to continue in their traditional worship. As noted in the aforementioned Cyrus Cylinder, Cyrus, being a polytheist, wanted the various religions within his empire to pray to their respective gods for his success.
- Cyrus repatriated the Babylonian exiles to their original homes.

Cyrus found himself on incessant campaigns in the eastern parts of his empire. While on these expeditions, his son, Cambyses<sup>84</sup> was left in Babylon to oversee the empire. In 529 BC, Cyrus died fighting the Massagetae, a race that lived in the extensive plain east of the Caspian sea.<sup>85</sup> His son, Cambyses became the ruler. Not much is known about his reign, other than the

<sup>83</sup> Some authorities date the fall of Babylon 539 BC and some 538 BC. It appears that the assault began in 539, but the city was not occupied until 538. Thus, these dates are used interchangeably in these class notes.

<sup>84</sup> Named after his fraternal grandfather

<sup>85</sup> Herodotus I, 204, 207, 214, also Josephus, *Antiquities*



outstanding conquest of Egypt. Cyrus had been too busy with other campaigns to make Egypt a priority. However, if the Persian empire were to be safe on its western border, Egypt had to be subjugated. Egypt considered Syria and Palestine to belong to its sphere of influence, and at times it had been incorporated into the Egyptian empire. Thus, Egypt had to be overcome.

Before setting out on the Egyptian campaign, Cambyses had his brother, Bardiya (Smerdis) put to death. Whether Cambyses feared that in his absence Bardiya might try to usurp the throne, or perhaps Bardiya had been found to be part of some sort of a revolutionary plot, is not known. Even so, the crime was to have serious consequences.

In 525 BC Cambyses led his army through Syria down the coastal route, past Gaza to Pelusium.<sup>86</sup> After a decisive victory in this battle, Cambyses pressed on into the very heart of Egypt, overcoming Memphis, after a difficult siege. He assumed the title, King of Egypt, then penetrated further south and established a Persian outpost at the extreme southern border of Egypt – at Yeb (discussed earlier). Thus, he even exercised authority over the northern part of Ethiopia. Cambyses remained in Egypt for three years. Toward the end of that period (522 BC), a revolt broke out in Persia. A Magian, Gaumata, impersonated Cambyses' murdered brother, Bardiya, and declared himself, king.

Word reached Babylon that Cambyses had committed suicide in Egypt. According to Herodotus, such was not the case, but rather, Cambyses died of an accidental wound while leaping onto his horse. Evidently he accidentally cut himself with his own sword and died as a result. Cambyses left no children and so for a few months Gaumata possessed the throne. There must have been rather widespread discontent with Cambyses, because Gaumata's success was immediate. Persia, Media, and other provinces supported him. However, it must be realized that the Persians believed that they were supporting another son of Cyrus – one in whom they had hopes of better treatment. They were mistaken. The great hold that this pretender had gained over the empire is seen in Darius' journal,

“There was no man, Persian or Median, or one of our family, who could deprive Gaumata of the kingdom; the people feared him for his tyranny. . . no one dared to say anything against Gaumata until I came...I with a few men slew Gaumata the Magian, and what foremost men were his allies. . . in Media. . . I smote him.”<sup>87</sup>

Gaumata had reigned for seven or eight months when Darius, the son of Hystaspes, a kinsman of Cyrus,<sup>88</sup> dispatched the pretender. The killing of Gaumata did not end Darius' problems. The empire seethed with revolt. Many kings of various regions rebelled against the Persian suzerainty. The most serious of these was Babylon, which had acknowledged Gaumata and after his death made Nidintu-Bel King of Babylon. Nidintu-Bel assumed the name of Nebuchadnezzar, which was the name of one of the sons of Nabonidus. As a result, Darius launched a siege against Babylon and re-conquered the city. It took Darius a few years to stamp out the various hostile movements, but by 518 BC his position as monarch of the Persian Empire was secure. Darius I followed Cyrus' benevolence toward his subjects. He died in 486 BC.

Darius' most important work was the manner in which he organized his kingdom. He effectively divided his entire empire into satrapies. Traditionally, a conquered country was ruled by a king under Persian suzerain. The result was that when a new king of a world-empire came

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<sup>86</sup> Herodotus II, 4-9

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Oesterley, page 66

<sup>88</sup> Both Cyrus and Hystaspes were descended from the same Achaemenian family

to the throne, the petty kings sought their independence, (as noted above, this was the experience when Darius became king). By organizing his kingdom into satrapies, Darius took a major step toward doing away with this problem.

The satrap was appointed by the king and thus was a royal official, directly responsible to the king. Each satrap took up residence in one of the major cities of his satrapy and appointed minor Persian officials for the different districts. The satrap was purely a civil governor. He had no army. The military commander located in a satrapy took his orders from the king, not from the satrap. One effect of this arrangement was to make the revolt of a satrap almost impossible. Darius' governmental action brought about the solidification of the empire and many consider him to be the real founder of the Persian Empire.

The facts just stated have caused no small controversy among historians and Bible students. According to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*,<sup>89</sup> Darius was not the originator of the satrapy, but Cyrus was the first to use the plan. Herodotus contradicts Xenophon by stating that Darius was the first.<sup>90</sup> Daniel 6:2 states that Darius placed 120 satraps over the empire. Herodotus states 20. Esther 1:1 states that there were 127. Xenophon mentions 6. What are we to make of this seemingly contradiction of testimonies? There are several things to be said.

- First, the different monarchs arranged the kingdom in different ways for different purposes. For example, the 120 or 127 were geographical regions that recognized not only geography but the people groups who occupied the different areas. Different kings divided these districts differently during different eras, according to circumstances and need.
- Herodotus, on the other hand, stated that Darius divided the kingdom into 20 taxation districts, not geographical districts – and appointed tax collecting satraps over these taxation districts.
- Xenophon refers only to those satraps that Cyrus sent into newly conquered districts – those that were not a part of the original Babylonian Empire. He does not refer to the entire kingdom.

Thus, there really is no contradiction, but descriptions of different situations and different eras.<sup>91</sup> It seems that Darius I was the ruler who most efficiently organized the kingdom into satrapies and who administered this arrangement most effectively. Darius placed supervising satraps over the local satrapies. Daniel became one of these supervising satraps.<sup>92</sup>

Darius I was succeeded by his son, Xerxes who also was known as Ahasuerus.<sup>93</sup> Xerxes first task was the re-subjugation of Egypt. He had several disastrous wars with Greece. Scripture mentions two events involving Xerxes and the Jews. The first, and most significant, is his choosing of Esther as his queen (in a following section we will elaborate on this incident). Secondly, he was involved in the controversy between the expatriated Jews and their adversaries - the non-Jewish residents in and around Jerusalem. The Gentile leaders who opposed the resettlement of Judah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem sent a letter to Xerxes contending that the rebuilding of Jerusalem was a mistake. No record is given of any response from Xerxes.

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<sup>89</sup> *Cyropaedia* 6:6, P 1,7

<sup>90</sup> Herodotus III:89

<sup>91</sup> For an excellent and thorough discussion of this issue, see Keil and Delitzsch, Volume 9, pgs. 204-207

<sup>92</sup> Daniel 6:2

<sup>93</sup> In Esther he is known by his name, *Ahasuerus*

Xerxes was murdered by one of his courtiers, Artabanus, who usurped the throne. After occupying the throne for seven months, Artabanus was assassinated by Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) – the third son of Xerxes.<sup>94</sup> Artaxerxes I had a very long reign (464-424 BC). During his reign, Egypt launched a vigorous but unsuccessful campaign to gain her independence. Throughout his reign there was a long drawn out struggle with Greece in which the Persians gained nothing. The satrap of Syria, Megabyzos, revolted but he was suppressed. At first, responding to complaints, Artaxerxes I ordered the cessation of construction in Jerusalem. Later, he released his cup-bearer, Nehemiah, to travel to Jerusalem and inspire the Judeans to move forward in construction (more on this later).

Most of the remaining kings of Persia, had little direct bearing on the history of the Jews.

- Artaxerxes I was succeeded by Xerxes II who, after a few months was murdered by his half-brother, Sogdianus.
- Sogdianus was murdered by another half-brother, Darius II, Nothus.
- Darius II had a somewhat insignificant reign (423-404 BC).
- During the reigns of the next two monarchs, Artaxerxes II, Mnemon (404-358 BC) and Artaxerxes III, Ochus (358-338 BC), the struggle with Greece continued and there was intermittent warfare with Egypt. In 351 BC, during the reign of Artaxerxes III, a number of satrapies revolted, including Phoenicia and Judah who joined together to fight the Persians. The Persians initially were defeated but three years later, Artaxerxes III personally led the army and put down the rebellion.
- One of Artaxerxes III's most prominent generals, the eunuch Bogus, was an unscrupulous plotter. He instigated a plot whereby the king was poisoned, along with all of the king's elder sons. Only the youngest son, Arces was spared. Bogus thought that he could put Arces on the throne and control him. However, Arces proved to be a rather willful young man and so Bogus did away with him.
- Bogus next chose a descendent of Darius II, intending to use him as an instrument, but in this choice he also made a mistake. The new king took the name of Darius III, Codomannus. Codomannus soon realized that Bogus was a dangerous, self-seeking man. As Bogus had poisoned others, at the king's command Bogus was poisoned.

In the meantime, far to the west, Alexander had become king of Macedonia the same year that Darius III secured the throne of Persia. In 334 BC, Alexander began his advance eastward. A decisive battle was fought with the Persians at Issus in 332BC. In 331 BC the final battle was fought on the Plain of Gaugamela, followed by the fall of Babylon, shortly thereafter. Darius retreated farther and farther to the east, until Alexander came upon his body murdered by the spear thrusts of conspirators (July 330 BC) somewhere on the road to Bactria. The actual site is uncertain. The Persian Empire was a thing of the past.

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<sup>94</sup> The relationship between Esther and Artaxerxes I is a matter of intriguing speculation. Who was Artaxerxes mother? Was she Vashti, was she a concubine, or perhaps, even Esther herself. Although no certain answer can be given, we would assume that Esther, as the Queen mother, would have had an influence on Artaxerxes, which may be one reason why, for the most part, was friendly toward the Jews.

## The Jewish Restoration to Palestine

The dawning of the Persian period resulted in great hope for the Jews. The fulfillment of Isaiah's century-old prophetic declarations declaring the victory of Cyrus and the restoration of Israel loomed before them.<sup>95</sup> No doubt many, like Daniel,<sup>96</sup> conscious of Jeremiah's predicted 70 years of exile, had been counting the years. The Persians conquered Babylon sixty-seven years after the first exiles had been taken to Babylon.<sup>97</sup> If Jeremiah's prophecies truly had come from God, then within three or four years the Jews would be on their way back home. Indeed, that is what happened.

<b>Chronology of the Rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem</b>	
536 BC	50,000 Jews led by Zerubbabel return to Jerusalem <sup>98</sup>
536 BC	7 <sup>th</sup> month: they build the altar and offer sacrifices
535 BC	2 <sup>nd</sup> month: work on the Temple begins and stops
520 BC	6 <sup>th</sup> month (September) 1 <sup>st</sup> day: Haggai's call to build
	6 <sup>th</sup> month, 24 <sup>th</sup> day: building begins
	7 <sup>th</sup> month (October) 21 <sup>st</sup> day: Haggai's second appeal
	8 <sup>th</sup> month (November): Zechariah's opening address
	9 <sup>th</sup> month (December) 24 <sup>th</sup> day: Haggai's third and fourth appeals
	11 <sup>th</sup> month (February) 24 <sup>th</sup> day: Zechariah's visions
518 BC	9 <sup>th</sup> month (December) 4 <sup>th</sup> day: Zechariah's visions
516 BC	12 <sup>th</sup> month (March) 3 <sup>rd</sup> day: the Temple is completed
515 BC	1 <sup>st</sup> month (April) 14 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> days: Joyful Passover
457 BC	Ezra arrives in Jerusalem with more exiles and makes certain reforms
444 BC	Nehemiah arrives; with governmental blessing and funding, he rebuilds the Wall; the time of Malachi

The three books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther form the closing section of Old Testament history. They tell of the Jews' return from Babylon, the rebuilding of the Temple and of the city of Jerusalem, and the reestablishment of Jewish life in their homeland. Esther adds another dimension, the deliverance of the Jews from the plot of Haman. The last three of the prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi also belong to this era.

There were two distinct periods in the return of the Jews to Palestine. Ezra gives an account of both periods. Esther reports an episode that took place between the two periods.

- *ca.* 536 – 516 BC bracket the first period, when Zerubbabel, the governor and Joshua the priest led the people back to Palestine. During this period the Temple was rebuilt. Haggai and Zechariah belong to this period (Ezra Chapters 3 – 6)

<sup>95</sup> The involvement of the Medes and Elamites (13:17; 21:2; 48:14)  
Cyrus called by name (44:28; 45:1-4)  
Cyrus' conquest of the world (41:2-3)  
Cyrus to liberate the captives (45:13)  
Israel to be restored (27:12-13; 48:20; 51:14)  
Babylon's perpetual desolation (13:20-22)

<sup>96</sup> Daniel 9

<sup>97</sup> Nebuchadnezzar took the first exiles to Babylon in 605 BC, during the reign of Jehoiakim. Babylon fell to Cyrus in 539/538 BC.

<sup>98</sup> The actual number was either 49,687 or 49,897, depending on how one interprets the identity of the male and female singers – were they included in the total, or were they a separate entity? (Ezra 2:64-65)

- 478 BC Esther became Queen of Persia. 473 BC Esther saved the Jews from massacre.
- 457 – 432 BC bracket the second period, during which Ezra the priest and Nehemiah, the governor, led in the reconstruction of the Jerusalem wall. Malachi belongs to this period.

In addition to there being two periods, there were three returns:

536 BC Zerubbabel with 42,360 Jews, 7,337 servants, 200 singers, 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, 6,720 donkeys, and 5,400 gold and silver vessels.

457 BC Ezra with 1754 males, 100 talents of gold, 750 talents of silver. The record does not state whether or not women and children were a part of this company. The trip took four months.

444 BC Nehemiah, as governor, with an army escort, went to rebuild and fortify Jerusalem. Surprisingly, the Persian treasury supplied the funds for Nehemiah's project.

The first return began after Cyrus had taken up residence in Babylon. This was about two years after Babylon had fallen to the Persians. As already noted, Cyrus had a policy of repatriation of exiled peoples. However, Scripture takes the reader behind the scene to discover why Cyrus had this policy – Jehovah actively was pursuing His agenda for the Jewish people.<sup>99</sup>

*Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying:*

*"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia,*

*'Jehovah, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.*

*'Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him!*

*Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.*

*Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. "'<sup>100</sup>*

Two copies of this proclamation are preserved in Ezra. The first (Ezra 1:2-4, quoted above) is in Hebrew and was for general publication among the Jews. The second record (Ezra 6:3-5) is in Aramaic. The Aramaic version is a *diakrona*, an official Aramaic term referring to the record of an oral decree issued by a ruler.<sup>101</sup> When a ruler was deliberating issues and giving decrees, a scribe always was present to record the oral decrees. The *diakrona* served the same purpose as do present-day minutes of a business meeting. The *diakrona* instructed certain officials to undertake certain things and gave them the authority to carry out the orders, as well as describing limitations to that authority.

<sup>99</sup> As stated earlier, we cannot avoid the question as to whether or not Daniel read to Cyrus the prophecies of Isaiah that foretold Cyrus' role in the restoration of the Jews.

<sup>100</sup> Ezra 1:1-2

<sup>101</sup> Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks* (New York, Harper and Row, Publishers) 1970, pages 256-257

*Diakrona* were filed away and kept for future reference. Should there ever be a need to review what the ruler had orally decreed, the *diakrona* would be brought out of the archives and any assertions being made concerning the decree could be substantiated or dismissed. *Diakrona* were not for publication, but for verification. The *diakrona* of Cyrus' decree served this valuable purpose during the reign of Darius, when governmental officials in opposition to the Jews sought to halt the construction of the Temple.<sup>102</sup> The *diakrona* of Cyrus' decree concerning the repatriation of the Jews was stored in Ecbatana,<sup>103</sup> which was Cyrus' summer palace in 538 BC.<sup>104</sup>

### The First Return

Not only did Cyrus decree that the Jews were to be allowed to return to their homeland, he even ordered his treasurer, Mithredath, to restore to the Jews the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>105</sup> These are the vessels that Belshazzar had desecrated by drinking wine from them at his impious feast.<sup>106</sup> The sacred vessels were entrusted to the care of Shesbazzar,<sup>107</sup> a Judean prince whom Cyrus had appointed governor.<sup>108</sup>

The most sacred object of the Temple had been the Ark of the Covenant. There is no record of what happened to the Ark. Well-known items can be identified in the monuments that depict the Temple treasures being carried to Babylon, but there is no picture of the Ark. Furthermore, the Ark is conspicuous by its absence in the record of items returned to Jerusalem. What happened to the Ark has been the topic of all sorts of fanciful tales, but the general assumption is that it was lost in the destruction and dismantling of the Temple.

One item of interest in this episode is Cyrus' statement, noted earlier, "I brought the gods back into their sanctuaries." The Jews did not have a god to restore to their sanctuary. They alone, out of all of the nations, lacked a statue – an idol – to set up in their Temple.

Cyrus' magnanimity produced the rejoicing that was the basis for Psalm 126:1-6.

*A Song of Ascents.*

*When Jehovah brought back the captive ones of Zion,*

*We were like those who dream.*

*Then our mouth was filled with laughter*

*And our tongue with joyful shouting;*

*Then they said among the nations, "Jehovah has done great things for them."*

*Jehovah has done great things for us; We are glad.*

*Restore our captivity, O Jehovah, As the streams in the South.*

*Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.*

*He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed,*

*Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.*

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<sup>102</sup> Ezra 5:1- 6:12

<sup>103</sup> Ezra 6:2

<sup>104</sup> The year in which the decree was given.

<sup>105</sup> Ezra 1:7-8

<sup>106</sup> Daniel Chapter 5

<sup>107</sup> The two names, Shesbazzar and Zerubbabel are Babylonian, as would be expected of men born in Babylon. Zerubbabel (*zer-Babel*) means, "offspring of Babylon." Sheshbazzar (*Shin-ab-usur*) "O sun god, protect the father." Unger, page 304

<sup>108</sup> Ezra 1:8; 5:14-16

Interestingly, most of the Jewish exiles did not assemble for the return. Owen aptly describes the situation,

“Many who had acquired position and wealth rejoiced because of the new freedom and favor shown them, yet ‘stayed behind,’ says Josephus, ‘being unwilling to leave their possession.’ They were content in the belief that Jehovah could be worshipped in spirit and in truth, by prayer, reading the sacred record, and observance of a part of the law, without sacrifices and the mercy-seat which were associated with the solemn temple. They were willing to give of their means toward the cause of reclaiming their fatherland, but left the actual work to those who were more pious, more patriotic, and more enthusiastic. Babylon had come to be their home, and they cared not to go elsewhere.”<sup>109</sup>

In addition to this explanation, we would add that many probably felt that they were not up to the task. The journey was going to be long, arduous, and possibly even dangerous. No one knew what lay ahead in Jerusalem.

According to Ezra, and Nehemiah, the group that returned to their homeland consisted of 42,360 Jews, plus 7,337 male and female servants. Ezra adds that they had 200 (Ezra 2:65) or 245 (Nehemiah 7:67) male and female singers. Whether or not the male and female singers are included in the other totals may be open to question.<sup>110</sup>

The itemized list in Ezra 2 falls about 11,000 short of 42,360 total. Given statements made elsewhere, we would conclude that the 11,000 were exiles who descended from Israel who had re-identified themselves as “Israel.” That tribes other than Judah were among the returnees is seen from the following:

- Tradition says that Ezra wrote I & II Chronicles. The first nine chapters of I Chronicles contain genealogies that justify the distribution of land when the exiles returned from Babylon. I Chronicles 9:2 states that “Israel” had representatives among the returnees.
- I Chronicles 9:3 lists Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh
- Ezra 10:25 lists pilgrims from Israel
- The term, “all Israel” is used of the returnees (Ezra 2:70; 6:17; 8:35)
- 12 bullocks and 12 he-goats are offered for “all Israel” (Ezra 8:35)

It appears that on their homeward journey, the Judeans picked up some people from other tribes. Thus in the New Testament, the Jews still were spoken of as “the Twelve Tribes” (Luke 22:30; Acts 26:7; James 1:1).

Evidence of the prosperity that many Jews had attained in Babylon is seen in the worth of the gifts that the pilgrims donated upon their arrival in Jerusalem, as well as the large number of livestock that they had with them.

*Their horses were 736; their mules, 245; their camels, 435; their donkeys, 6,720. Some of the heads of fathers' households, when they arrived at the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to restore it on its foundation.*

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<sup>109</sup> G. Frederick Owen, page 102

<sup>110</sup> Ezra 2:64-65; Nehemiah 7:66-69

*According to their ability they gave to the treasury for the work 61,000 gold drachmas and 5,000 silver minas and 100 priestly garments.<sup>111</sup>*

Much of the wealth donated by the pilgrims came from the contributions given by those who chose to stay behind in Babylon. Cyrus had ordered those who remained behind to support those who were going to make the trip. The response was generous.

*“Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.” Then the heads of fathers' households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem. All those about them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, with cattle and with valuables, aside from all that was given as a freewill offering.<sup>112</sup>*

After extensive preparations, the journey began, probably in 537 BC. The Old Testament does not give us any information about the journey to Jerusalem, nor has any archaeological discovery produced such information. However, it is clear what course the pilgrims would have taken. Almost 800 miles would be covered in the trek from Babylon to Jerusalem. The long procession of priests, singers, porters, men, women, children, and livestock would have traveled, slowly, north along the banks of the Euphrates. They would have passed the site of ancient, Mari. After reaching the point where the Balikh river emptied into the Euphrates, they would have turned in a more northerly direction, following the route that Abram had taken 1400 years earlier. Next they would have turned south traveling along the foot of Mount Hermon to the Lake of Galilee. Not long after, they would have begun to see the brown tops of the hills of Judah and then the desolate ruins of Jerusalem. (MAP XI)

Mary Ellen Chase, an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century lecturer, made this sobering assessment of the importance of this journey,

*“The future of the world lay in this procession to Jerusalem. It rested with it whether we should have a Bible at all, as we know it – the Bible, the Jewish faith, Christianity, and many centuries of western culture. If there had been no return to Jerusalem, Judah would surely have shared by and large the fate of Israel, become intermingled with the East and eventually been lost as a united people.”<sup>113</sup>*

Ezra Chapter 3 describes the sequence of events that transpired after the Jews had arrived at their destination. At first, the pilgrims devoted themselves to setting up their dwellings. By the seventh month of the year of their return, the people were settled in sufficiently to assemble the altar of God and resume the burnt offerings as prescribed by Moses (Exodus 29:38ff). On the fifteenth day of this month they observed the Feast of Tabernacles according the requirements of the Law (Leviticus 23:34ff). After this, the other appointed feasts began to be observed. The people then provided money and produce for the masons and other workers who negotiated with the Phoenicians for building materials, all in line with what Cyrus had directed.

<sup>111</sup> Ezra 2:66-69; a later list is found in Nehemiah 7:70ff

<sup>112</sup> Ezra 1:4-6

<sup>113</sup> As quoted by Keller, page 314



Construction of the Temple began in the second month of the next year under the supervision of Zerubbabel and the priest, Joshua. Interestingly, Levites twenty years of age and older served as overseers of the work. The foundation of the Temple was laid amidst great ceremony. Priests robed in their vestments served as trumpeters. The sons of Asaph offered praises accompanied by cymbals. There seems to have been antiphonal singing, in which one choir sang, *Praise Jehovah for He is good*, and the other choir responded, *And His mercy endureth forever*. Following this response, the assembled multitude broke into triumphant praise.

Not everyone present shouted for joy. Some of the older people wept. These could still remember the glory of Solomon's Temple and the foundation being laid obviously was not going to be the foundation for a glorious structure. The older people wept bitterly and unashamedly.

When the officials in Samaria learned of the reconstruction of the Temple, they approached Zerubbabel and the other Jewish leaders and asked to be included in the project. They claimed to be worshippers of the same God as the Jews. They said that they had been faithful in that worship since the Assyrian monarch, Esarhaddon (681-668 BC) had taken them from their homelands and transplanted them in Israel.<sup>114</sup> This is not surprising since one aspect of polytheism is the belief that each geographical region is under the authority of a particular god.<sup>115</sup> As good polytheists, the immigrants whom the Assyrians had transplanted into mountains of Samaria, upon their arrival in the region had begun worshipping the one whom they assumed to be the god of that piece of real estate. When the Judeans returned to the area and began to erect the holy places, the Samaritans assumed that they were worshipping the same god.

Zerubbabel and Joshua, the priest, along with the other tribal leaders, rebuked the offer.

*But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to Jehovah God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us."<sup>116</sup>*

This rebuff caused the inhabitants of the region surrounding Jerusalem to become enemies of Judah and Benjamin. They not only intimidated the Jews to the point that construction halted, but they also hired lawyers to present in the Persian court complaints against the Jews. During the reign of Cambyses,<sup>117</sup> Cyrus' successor, the Jews' enemies sent a letter to the Persian king. The letter reported that the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem and that this was a mistake. They accused the Jews of being a rebellious people and urged the king to search the historical record and that if he did so, he would discover that Jerusalem had been a rebellious city and for this reason it had been laid waste. The king had the history of Jerusalem researched and found the accusation to be true. He issued a decree to the Samaritans and their cohorts to proceed to Jerusalem and put a stop to the construction. When the decree arrived in Samaria, the Samaritan

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<sup>114</sup> Ezra 4:1-2

<sup>115</sup> An illustration of this belief is recorded in I Kings 19:23.

<sup>116</sup> Ezra 4:3

<sup>117</sup> Cambyses is called Ahasuerus in Ezra 4:6 and Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:7, 11, 23. Such a variety of names for these kings is not unusual. Usually, when listing the Babylonian and Persian kings more than one name is listed for each individual.

leaders went to Jerusalem and by force of arms halted all construction.<sup>118</sup> Construction on the Temple was not resumed for fifteen years.

Darius I came to the throne in 521 BC. In the second year of Darius' reign (520 BC), Haggai and Zechariah, two prophets living in Jerusalem, began to urge the people to resume building the Temple. Haggai probably was an old man, and many hold the opinion that he had seen the first temple.<sup>119</sup> Zechariah must have been a young man, since he was the grandson of Iddo who 16 years earlier had returned to Jerusalem with the initial group of repatriates.<sup>120</sup> The books of Haggai and Zechariah contain the record of the prophetic ministry of these two exhorters.

After the Jews had been intimidated into suspending construction of the Temple, they settled into the routines of life. They built their houses, tilled their soil, and tried to eke out a living in a very hostile environment. It seemed that every endeavor they put forth to sustain themselves fell short of their needs. Haggai addressed their situation and its cause.

*Thus says Jehovah of hosts,*

*"This people says, 'The time has not come, even the time for the house of Jehovah to be rebuilt.'"*

*Then the word of Jehovah came by Haggai the prophet, saying,*

*"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?"*

*Now therefore, thus says Jehovah of hosts,*

*'consider your ways! You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.'*

*Thus says Jehovah of hosts,*

*'Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,' says Jehovah.*

*'You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?' declares Jehovah of hosts, 'Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house. Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands.'"*

In response to the urging of the two prophets the reconstruction was begun. Zerubbabel and Jeshua, supported by the prophets, led the people to resume the work. This caused no small stir among the Samaritans. Tattenai, Shethar-bozenai and other Gentile authorities approached the Jews and challenged them by what authority they had resumed construction. The Jews did not conceal anything, but told their opponents the names of the men who were leading the project. The Jews, emboldened by Haggai and Zechariah, were not intimidated and their kept on building, determined not to stop unless Darius issued a decree forcing them to cease construction.

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<sup>118</sup> Ezra 4:6-24

<sup>119</sup> This is based on an understanding of Haggai 2:3

<sup>120</sup> Nehemiah 12:4, 16

The Gentiles sent a letter to Darius informing him of the names of those who were guilty of leading Judah in its rebuilding projects. They also urged Darius to search the records to see if the Judean's claims that Cyrus had ordered them to build the Temple and the city were valid claims. Darius issued a decree that a search of the archives be undertaken. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, they found the *diakrona* stored at Ecbatana, Cyrus' decree instructing the Jews to return to their homeland and to reconstruct the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. The result of discovering this *diakrona* was exactly the opposite of what the Samaritan leaders had desired. Not only were the Jews' enemies unsuccessful in their attempts to halt the construction, but those who had complained were ordered by Darius to do all that they could to supply what the Jews needed to complete their projects. Ezra recorded the decree.

*Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and your colleagues, the officials of the provinces beyond the River, keep away from there. Leave this work on the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site.*

*Moreover, I issue a decree concerning what you are to do for these elders of Judah in the rebuilding of this house of God: the full cost is to be paid to these people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of the provinces beyond the River, and that without delay.*

*Whatever is needed, both young bulls, rams, and lambs for a burnt offering to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and anointing oil, as the priests in Jerusalem request, it is to be given to them daily without fail, that they may offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.*

*And I issued a decree that any man who violates this edict, a timber shall be drawn from his house and he shall be impaled on it and his house shall be made a refuse heap on account of this.*

*May the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change it, so as to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued this decree, let it be carried out with all diligence!<sup>121</sup>*

The enemies of the Jews, cowed by the severe decree of Darius, obeyed the king's orders with all due diligence. Building operations started in October/November 520 BC. They were completed by March 12, 515 BC.<sup>122</sup> A glorious dedication ceremony took place. Priests were appointed to carry out the routine duties and sacrifices as ordained by the Law of Moses.

### **Esther's role in saving the Jews from extinction**

The next event which involved the Persian monarch and the Jews was the selection of Esther to be the Queen of Persia and God's using her to save the Jews from a genocide plot. The Persian monarch of this episode is Xerxes, who in the Book of Esther is known as Ahasuerus.<sup>123</sup>

Greece was involved in a long-standing revolution against the Persians. Darius, Xerxes' father, in an attempt to subdue the Greeks had suffered a serious defeat at Marathon in 490 BC. In 482 BC, Xerxes embarked on a campaign to put down the rebels. From Persian inscriptions it has been learned that the great feast described in Esther Chapter One, was held in preparation for

<sup>121</sup> Ezra 6:6-12

<sup>122</sup> Zechariah 1:1, the eighth month of the second year of Darius = October/November, 520 BC. Ezra 6:15, the third day of the month Adar in the sixth year of Darius = March 12, 515 BC

<sup>123</sup> Xerxes is the Greek form of the Persian, *Khshayarsha*, which in Hebrew is rendered as *Ahasuerus*.

Xerxes' expedition against Greece. The banquet was held in Susa,<sup>124</sup> the winter palace of Persian monarchs. It was about 200 miles east of Babylon.

This sending-off party whereby Xerxes launched his campaign was quite an event. First there were 180 days of banqueting for all of the governmental officials of Persia, both military and civilian. Following this six-month party, Xerxes gave a seven-day banquet in the palace garden for the inhabitants of Susa – including both small and great. This twenty-five week long festivity was accompanied by extravagant display of royal opulence. Interestingly, Persian law forbade compelling anyone to drink the royal wine. Each person was to be served or not served according to his personal wishes.<sup>125</sup>

During the concluding event, the seven-day garden banquet for the men of Susa, Queen Vashti concurrently held a banquet inside the palace for the women. Vashti was a woman of striking beauty. On the seventh day of the garden party, the concluding day of the twenty-five week-long bacchanal, Xerxes, under the influence of alcohol, commanded the eunuchs to bring Vashti into the garden. She was to wear her royal crown for this command appearance. Xerxes wanted to impress everyone with his “trophy wife.” Vashti, humiliated, refused to be put on display for the run-of-the-mill citizens of Susa. The fact that she had the strength to stand up to her drunken husband posed a problem for the entire empire. Quickly Xerxes consulted his advisors, seven princes of Persia and Media, who always were close to the king. They clearly recognized the implications of Vashti's insolence.

*In the presence of the king and the princes, Memucan said,*

*"Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.' This day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's conduct will speak in the same way to all the king's princes, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger."<sup>126</sup>*

Memucan then urged Xerxes to issue a royal edict and to record it in the laws of Persia and Media, that Vashti be banished and her position be filled by another. If this were done, then all of the women of the empire would give honor to their husbands, great and small. All of the nobles liked Memucan's proposal and so the edict was issued. As already noted, following this event, Xerxes launched his Greek campaign and did not return to the palace for almost four years.

In 481 BC Xerxes massed his huge army on the eastern shore of the Hellespont. By the use of Egyptian engineering, the channel was bridged. Across this bridge tramped an army that ancients numbered in the millions but modern scholars number in the thousands. In 480, Xerxes was successful in a battle at Thermopylae, although his troops paid a great price. He went on to capture and burn Athens. However, through Greek deception and battle savvy, his navy was routed at Salamis and he was defeated at Plataea and the cape Mycale. Humiliated by these final defeats, Xerxes returned to Persia in 479 BC and gave up on his efforts to conquer Greece. After the battle of Plataea, according to Herodotus, he returned to Persia and devoted himself to his harem. Herodotus' statement fits the picture painted in Esther. Another commentator wrote,

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<sup>124</sup> Esther 1:2

<sup>125</sup> Esther 1:8

<sup>126</sup> Esther 1:16-18

“They lost their fleet at Salamis, their army at Plataea, and, as Herodotus wrote, ‘departed with altered minds.’”<sup>127</sup>

Upon his return to Susa, Xerxes began to think about Vashti and what had been decreed against her. He began to think about his need for a queen.<sup>128</sup> The royal attendants suggested a kingdom-wide search for a replacement. Government officials were appointed to travel about the empire and collect the most beautiful virgins and bring them back to Susa. These young women were put into the king’s harem where they were schooled in making themselves attractive. For six months the women were treated with oil of myrrh and then six months with spices and cosmetics. After the year of preparation, the young women were displayed before the king. Each night one of the virgins would enter the king’s quarters, and leave the next morning. Out of all of the virgins, Esther, a Jewess, was chosen by Xerxes to be his new queen.

Esther was an orphan who had been adopted by her uncle, Mordecai. Mordecai had advised her to not tell anyone that she was a Jewess. During the year of preparation of the virgins, Mordecai had walked up and down, in front of the court of the harem, doing all that he could to learn of his niece’s well-being. He also sat in the gate of the palace, picking up what news he could. While sitting at the gate, he learned of a plot against the king’s life. Quickly, he took the information to his niece, Queen Esther, who, in Mordecai’s name, forwarded the information on to the king. The plot was found to be as Mordecai had described it and the conspirators were hanged. The record of Mordecai’s role in the discovery of the plot was recorded in the King’s Chronicles.

After these events, Xerxes appointed a man named, Haman, as the supervisor of the satraps and princes. Xerxes decreed that all of the king’s servants who were at the gate should bow before Haman as he passed through the gate. Everyone did so, except Mordecai. When asked why he would not bow, Mordecai replied that he was a Jew - he could not worship a man. Haman became irate. Upon discovering that Mordecai was a Jew, Haman plotted to launch a campaign to wipe out all Jews.

Haman cast *pur* (dice) to determine the date on which the Jews should be slaughtered (Esther 3:7). By casting the *pur*, and noting the numbers that came up with each roll, Haman determined that the slaughter should take place in the month of Adar, the twelfth month. This practice is one of the archaeological evidences as to the historical accuracy of Esther. The excavator of Susa, M. Dieulafoy, recovered one of the quadrangular prisms on which were engraved the numbers one, two, five, and six. The word for “die” at Susa at this time was, *pur*, now known to be derived from Assyrian, *puru*, with the same meaning.<sup>129</sup>

After casting *pur*, Haman went to Xerxes and told him that there was a race of people in his empire who refused to abide by the king’s laws and so, for the good of the empire, they should be eliminated. Haman suggested to the king that he order the extermination of the Jews. Haman said that he would pay 10,000 talents of silver into the king’s treasury to finance this venture. Xerxes was persuaded by Haman’s argument. He gave his signet ring to Haman to use in signing the decree. So, the decree was sent out, declaring that on the thirteenth day of Adar all Jews in the empire were to be slain and their property taken as plunder. After the decree was read in Susa, the city was in an uproar.

<sup>127</sup> Leonard Cottrell, “Seeking Scenes of Grecian Glory,” in *Greece and Rome, Builders of our World*, a volume in The Story of Man Library (National Geographic Society) 1968, page 150

<sup>128</sup> Vashti was was deposed in the third year of Ahasuerus’ (Xerxes) reign (Esther 1:3), but Esther was not chosen as her replacement until the seventh year of Ahasuerus’ rule (Esther 2:16)

<sup>129</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan ) 1954, page 309

Upon hearing the news, Mordecai tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes and went into the streets wailing loudly. He came to the king's gate, but could not go further, because no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. Word of Mordecai's behaviour reached Esther. She sent garments to Mordecai, but he refused them. Esther sent a faithful eunuch to Mordecai to find out the cause of his mourning. Mordecai told him the whole story and instructed him to tell the story to Esther. He concluded the conversation by instructing the eunuch to tell Esther that Mordecai ordered her to go into the king and to plead for Xerxes to spare the Jews.

Esther sent word back to Mordecai that anyone, including the Queen, who approached the king without an invitation would be put to death, unless the king extended the golden scepter in the direction of the interloper. "Furthermore," Esther said, "I have not been invited into the king's presence for thirty days." Mordecai's reply has become a classic.

*Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"<sup>130</sup>*

Esther decided to lay it all on the line. She told the messenger to instruct Mordecai to assemble all of the Jews who lived in Susa and have them participate in a total fast for three days and nights. Esther said that she and her maidens would fast the same way and at the close of the three days, she would go into the king's presence. She closed by saying, *if I perish, I perish.*<sup>131</sup>

On the appointed day, the king was in the throne room, sitting on his throne opposite the entrance to the palace. Esther put on her royal robes and went to the inner court, just outside of the throne room. The king saw her, he extended the scepter to her and she came before him, touching the top of the scepter. Evidently, the effect of three days of fasting and Esther's demeanor caused concern on the part of the king. He asked what was troubling her and what was her request. She asked the king to come to a banquet that she had prepared and to bring Haman with him. The banquet was held and Xerxes asked Esther to reveal her request. She said that she would not reveal the request until the next day, at another banquet that she would prepare for the king and Haman. Xerxes had promised to give her anything that she wanted – even to half of the kingdom.

Haman left the banquet, bragged to his family how special he was, because the Queen had invited no one but the king and himself to her banquets. However, he said that in spite of all of the glory and prosperity that he had experienced, Mordecai's refusal to bow upset him to the point that none of the honors could bring him joy. His family suggested that he have a gallows erected and in the morning to ask Xerxes to hang Mordecai. After Mordecai had been hung, he could go with total joy to the banquet that evening. The gallows was constructed.

That night, Xerxes could not sleep, and so to occupy his mind he began reading the archives. He read the section that recorded Mordecai's reporting the assassination plot. It occurred to him that he had not honored Mordecai for this service. He determined to honor Mordecai. At this time, Haman arrived, planning to ask Xerxes to hang Mordecai. Xerxes asked Haman to come into the room and then asked him what would be a good thing to do for a man whom the king wanted to

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<sup>130</sup> Esther 4:13-14

<sup>131</sup> Esther 4:16-17

honor. Haman, thinking that Xerxes was planning to honor him, said that he thought that a great way to honor such a person would be to put the man on the king's horse, clothe him in a royal robe, and place a royal crown on his head. One of the most noble princes, shouting loudly, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor," should lead the mounted rider through the streets of Susa. Xerxes liked the idea and told Haman immediately to do this for Mordecai, who had saved the king's life. One can only imagine the frog in the throat of Haman as he carried out the king's command. Humiliated, he went home and began to complain. Suddenly, the eunuchs arrived to escort him to Esther's banquet.

At the banquet, Xerxes repeated his promise to Esther to give her whatever she wanted, even to half of the kingdom. She replied that the thing that she was asking for was for her life to be spared, as well as the lives of her people. She told him that a plot had been executed that would result in the deaths of her people, including even Esther. Xerxes was slack jawed, he asked who would presume to do such a thing. Esther said, "A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman." The episode ended with Haman's being hung on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Haman's estate was given to Esther, Mordecai became to Xerxes what Haman had been – second highest man in the kingdom.

Esther realized that even with Haman's death, the genocide was still decreed. The law of the Medes and Persians did not allow for the revocation of a decree that had been signed with the king's signet. Even the king could not revoke it. So, permission was given to Mordecai to alert the Jews to what was coming, and that they should assemble and defend themselves. The decree was sent out by couriers on the king's fastest horses. The Jews not only escaped extermination, but the decree so impressed the citizens of the empire that many among the various nations became Jews.

The day of deliverance was the fourteenth day of Adar. To this day, the *Feast of Purim* (Haman had determined the date of extinction by casting *pur*) is held to commemorate this event.<sup>132</sup>

## **The Second Return**

After tracing the history of the rebuilding of the Temple, which was completed in the closing days of 516 BC, the book of Ezra passes over almost six decades without comment. There is a lapse of fifty-seven years between the last verse of Ezra Chapter Six and the first verse of Ezra Chapter Seven. The story resumes in Ezra Chapter Seven, with the account of Ezra's being commissioned by Artaxerxes to lead a group from Babylon to Jerusalem (458/457 BC). Ezra's journey was about 80 years after the first contingency of repatriates, led by Zerubbabel, had arrived in Jerusalem.

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### **Excursus: Ezra-Nehemiah, or Nehemiah-Ezra**

The consensus of Bible scholars always has held that the Artaxerxes who commissioned Ezra was Artaxerxes I Longimanus (465-423 BC). This view fits the biblical chronology of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

Beginning early in the Twentieth Century, a few scholars, influenced by the Graf-Wellhausen humanist thinking, rejected the supernatural origin of Scripture. These scholars discounted all prophecy and declared that what appears to be prophecy actually was written after the fact – it was history portrayed as prophecy. For example, the Cyrus prophecies of Isaiah, according to

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<sup>132</sup> In 2009, Purim is March 10

this view, were composed after Cyrus had risen to power and repatriated the Jews. Interestingly, discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls do not reinforce the liberal scholars' view, but, rather, substantiate the traditional view that the Old Testament books are what they purport to be. For example, the assertion that Isaiah was not written by Isaiah, but by a series of authors, has been increasingly discounted by discoveries made in the last Century.

Some scholars with the above described radical perspective, deny the integrity of the text of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. These writers insist that the king who commissioned Ezra was Artaxerxes II Memnon (404-359 BC). Instead of adhering to the conventional view (i.e., Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 457 BC and Nehemiah arrived thirteen years later in 444 BC), these scholars contend that Nehemiah arrived first, in 444 BC, and Ezra arrived in 397 BC. In my opinion, W.O.E. Oesterley is the best and clearest spokesman for this view.<sup>133</sup>

Most of arguments that challenge the traditional view seem rather weak, such as the following objection to the Scriptural presentation that both Ezra and Nehemiah worked together in Jerusalem,

“There is an *a priori* improbability of there having been two contemporary leaders when due consideration is taken of the circumstances and conditions of the time.”<sup>134</sup>

I have to ask, “Whose *a priori* improbability?” It doesn't seem improbable to me, since Ezra was a priest and Nehemiah was a civil servant. The situation is identical to that which existed when Zerubbabel was the civil servant and Joshua was the priest (Ezra 3:2, 8), a fact that Oesterley does not challenge.

Another argument declares that because Nehemiah found a meager population upon his arrival, but a sizeable population occupied Jerusalem during Ezra's ministry, then Nehemiah must have preceded Ezra. The argument assumes that the population of Jerusalem must have grown and not decreased, therefore, Ezra would have followed Nehemiah. This argument is based on statements made in Ezra 10:1 and Nehemiah 7:4. Note the terms used in these passages.

**Ezra 10:1** *Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a **very large assembly**, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly.*

**Nehemiah 7:4** *Now the city was large and spacious, but **the people in it were few** and the houses were not built.*

We must ask, “How many people would it take to fit the description in Ezra; what number constitutes a large assembly; is it 100, or 200, or 300 – perhaps 1000?” The term is relative, depending on the situation and circumstance as to what would be described as, *a very large assembly*. For example, prior to the mega-church era, a congregation of 400 meeting in Tulsa on a Sunday morning was considered a large congregation.

Concerning Nehemiah's comment that *the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few*, we must keep in mind that when the Judeans came to Jerusalem, most of the people chose to live outside of the city.

*Now the priests and the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants lived in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.*<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Oesterley, pages 111-141

<sup>134</sup> Oesterley, page 111



Furthermore, Nehemiah's own comment on the number of citizens in Jerusalem is revealing.

*Now these are the heads of the provinces who lived in Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah each lived on his own property in their cities-- the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants. Some of the sons of Judah and some of the sons of Benjamin lived in Jerusalem...*<sup>136</sup>

Note that Nehemiah states that most of the repatriates lived outside of Jerusalem. He then gives the number of people from various families who did live in Jerusalem because they had Temple responsibilities. The total of those whom he lists is 3044.<sup>137 138</sup>

Again, we ask, "How does one define, *few*?" The *few* of Nehemiah 7:4, by Nehemiah's own testimony, seems to include at least 3044 people who had responsibilities for the Temple, plus others who were not in those roles. Thus, the *few* of Nehemiah 7:4 could be the *very large assembly* of Ezra 10:1

Once again, on closer examination, Oesterley's argument fails - because *few* and *very large* are relative terms.

The one argument that appears to have some substance is the identity of the High Priest associated with Ezra, contrasted with the High Priest associated with Nehemiah.

After Ezra condemned the priests for marrying Gentile wives and gaining a commitment to put away these wives, Ezra went into a chamber in one of the out-buildings of the temple to fast and mourn. The chamber that he entered was called, *the chamber of Jehohanan, the son of Eliashib*.

*Then Ezra rose from before the house of God and went into the **chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib**. Although he went there, he did not eat bread nor drink water, for he was mourning over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.*<sup>139</sup>

Oesterley identifies the Eliashib of Ezra 10:6 with the Eliashib of Nehemiah.

*Then **Eliashib the high priest** arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel.*<sup>140</sup>

The High Priest, Eliashib, described in Nehemiah, did have a grandson named Johanan (Nehemiah 12:10-11, 22).

<sup>135</sup> Ezra 2:70

<sup>136</sup> Nehemiah 11:3-4

<sup>137</sup> Nehemiah 11:3-4ff

<sup>138</sup> It could be argued that this number reflects the population after Nehemiah had worked to increase the population, as described in 11:1-2. However, as Kiel and Delitzsch point out, the title of the list indicates that this list is intended to be a listing of the population of the whole province of Judah in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. (Keil and Delitzsch, Volume 3, pages 258-259. Furthermore, the means whereby the lots were cast was possible through the genealogical listings found in chapters eleven and twelve, as well as those given in Chapter Seven. Therefore, the lists seem to be the basis whereby the lot was cast, rather than the result after the lot was cast. Furthermore, 10% of the entire population would have been much more than 3044, given the number who came in the first group of repatriates plus those who came with Ezra, plus the family growth that one would expect in the intervening years. The most probable conclusion therefore, is that the 3044 represent the population of Jerusalem before the population was increased.

<sup>139</sup> Ezra 10:6

<sup>140</sup> Nehemiah 3:1ff

Several things can be said in response to the contention that Ezra followed Nehemiah because Ezra was associated with a High Priest named, Jehohanan, who was the grandson of the priest associated with Nehemiah.

- First Oesterley must prove that in spite of the different spelling, the name, Jehohanan, of Ezra 10:6 is the same name as, Johonan, of Nehemiah 12:10 or the Jonathan of Nehemiah 12:22. Note the difference in the Hebrew names:

Ezra 6:10, *Jehohanan* יְהוֹחָנָן :

Nehemiah 12:11 *Jonathan* יוֹנָתָן

Nehemiah 12:22 *Johanan* יוֹחָנָן

- Next he must prove that *Jehohanan ben Eliashib* of Ezra 10:6 was a High Priest. No such claim is made in Ezra.
- The name, Eliashib is very common. It occurs in Ezra 10:6, 24, 27, 36, and in each instance the name refers to a different individual. Was the Eliashib who was the father of Jehohanan, one of these listed in verse 24, or 27, or 36, or was he an earlier priest, named in I Chronicles 24:12, or was he the High-Priest who served in that role during the ministry of Nehemiah, several years later and had a grandson named, Jehonan. We don't have a clue. Keil and Delitzsch comment,
 

“...we, with Ewald, regard the Johanan ben Eliashib here mentioned as an individual of whom nothing further is known – perhaps a priest descended from the Eliashib of I Chroicles 24:12, and who possessed in the new temple a chamber called by his name.”<sup>141</sup>

The onus is on Oesterley to prove that the biblical picture and the traditional understanding of the Ezra/Nehemiah sequence should be reversed. In order to do this, Oesterley must prove that the Eliashib of Ezra 10:6 is the Eliashib of Nehemiah 3:1; 12:10, 22, and that the Johohanan of Ezra 6:10 is the Jonathan and Johanan of Nehemiah, and that Johohanan was a High Priest. Such proof cannot be provided. Therefore we must dismiss Oersterley's argument.

The archaeological writer, Merrill Unger, who, after listing several instances in which archaeology progressively has proven the biblical text to be reliable, comments on this issue,

“Future archaeological discoveries will doubtlessly corroborate the earlier date for Ezra, which represents the present Scriptural sequence.”<sup>142</sup>

### The Man, Ezra

Ezra was a priest, whose genealogy could be traced back to Aaron.<sup>143</sup> Ezra had devoted himself to the study of the law of Jehovah and to the degree that he could do so apart from the Temple, he had been diligent to practice the Law's prescribed behaviour and ritual. Of course, the Temple was essential to certain rites and so he was limited as to how precise he could be in some practices. Ezra had a strong desire to go to Jerusalem and teach the Law's statutes and ordinances to the repatriates.

<sup>141</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Volume 3 (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1989, page 127-128

<sup>142</sup> Unger, page 309

<sup>143</sup> Ezra 1:1-5

### **The Journey to Jerusalem**

Details surrounding the events that initiated Ezra's trip are scant. It appears that he approached Artaxerxes I for permission to lead a company of Jews to Jerusalem and, because Jehovah was behind it all, the request was granted.<sup>144</sup> Another sidelight to the King's wholehearted support of Ezra's mission is the unmentioned role of Esther. Artaxerxes I was Esther's step-son and we would expect her to have had some influence on the king.<sup>145</sup>

Artaxerxes' generosity toward Ezra's mission is quite impressive. Here are the thirteen elements of the decree as recorded in Ezra Chapter Seven:

1. Ezra is sent as an emissary of Artaxerxes and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah's compliance or non-compliance with the Law of Moses. (v 14)
2. Anyone, especially priests and Levites, who are willing to go with Ezra may do so. (v13)
3. The king and his counselors freely offer silver and gold to Jehovah (the language indicates that this was from their personal fortunes) and commission Ezra to deliver it and to use it for the God who dwells in Jerusalem. (v15)
4. Offerings are to be collected from throughout the province of Babylon.(v16)
5. With this money, Ezra is to buy animals for sacrifice upon the altar in Jerusalem.(v17)
6. Should there be any money left-over, after purchasing animals for sacrifice, Ezra and his "brothers" are to decide how best to use the surplus, according to the will of God.(v18)
7. The utensils (evidently some from Nebuchadnezzar's hoard that had not been in the collection sent with Zerubbabel) are to be delivered and used in the Temple.(v19)
8. If there are needs that are not met, then the royal treasury will finance these. To this end, all of the treasurers in the provinces west of the Euphrates are commanded to give Ezra anything he asks for, as long as the sum does not exceed 100 talents of silver, 100 kors of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt as needed.(v20-23)
9. All who serve in the Temple of Jehovah, in any capacity, are exempt from all taxes.(v24)
10. Everything done for the Temple must be done with zeal, lest God be angry and have wrath against Artaxerxes and his family.(v23)
11. Ezra is to appoint magistrates and judges who will legislate and rule according to the Law of Moses.(v25)
12. Ezra is to teach everyone the Law of Moses, so no one can claim ignorance of the law.(v25)
13. Any Judean who does not abide by the Law of Moses is to be punished. Such punishment may include imprisonment, death, banishment, or confiscation of goods.(v26)

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<sup>144</sup> Ezra 1:6

<sup>145</sup> As noted earlier, some speculate that he was Esther's son, although that does seem to be improbable since we would expect some comment to that effect would be made in Scripture if it were fact.

Ezra assembled all of the volunteers *at the river that runs to Ahava*. Although the specific spot cannot be identified, this refers to a canal on the south of the city of Babylon.<sup>146</sup> The heads of twelve Jewish clans and many of their followers were in the assembly. According to the Hebrew text, there were 1460 males, led by fifteen heads of clans. The text does not state whether or not women and children were in the group. This assembly was convened on the first day of the first month of the seventh year of Artaxerxes reign.<sup>147</sup>

When Ezra looked over the assembled company, he noticed that no Levites were present – none of them had volunteered for the trip. Ezra called together eleven of the most influential men of the assembly and sent them to a place called, *Casiphia*, to talk to Iddo, the chief Levite of the region. The delegation's mission was to persuade Iddo to influence Levites to join the traveling band with a view toward their becoming future ministers in the Jerusalem Temple. The venture was successful and some impressive Levites, along with some of their servants joined the band of pilgrims.

Ezra had boasted to Artaxerxes that because Jehovah was the Jews' protector, a military escort was not needed for their journey. However, when the group assembled for the journey, Ezra realized the gravity of the assertion that he had made.

*For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him."<sup>148</sup>*

So, the group spent time fasting and praying for God's protection.

As his final act before departure, Ezra set apart twelve of the leading priests and put under their charge the silver, the gold, and the other offerings, including the utensils to be used in the Temple. These men were reminded that they were holy and that all of these material gifts were holy and dedicated for use in the Temple.

The group finally left the Ahava campsite on the twelfth day of the first month, having spent twelve days assembling, persuading Levites to join them, spending some days in fasting and prayer for God's protection, and then delivering the donated treasure to the care of the Levites. No details of their journey are reported, except that the hand of God was over them, delivering them from the hand of the enemy and any ambushes along the way.<sup>149</sup> The trip took four months (including the twelve days at Ahava) – they arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month.<sup>150</sup>

After arriving in Jerusalem, the new arrivals spent four days settling in and then on the fourth day, the treasures that had been brought from Babylon were delivered to the priests. Great care and accountability were displayed in the transfer. Everything was numbered and weighed and this data was recorded.

The exiles delivered a significant number of livestock to be offered to God. These were offered for burnt offerings, an expression of gratitude for His hand of protection and the blessing of being in Jerusalem.

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<sup>146</sup> Carl G. Rasmussen, *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible*(Grand Rapids, Zondervan) 1989, page 225

<sup>147</sup> Ezra 7:9

<sup>148</sup> Ezra 8:22

<sup>149</sup> Ezra 8:31

<sup>150</sup> Ezra 7:9

Ezra completed his assignment by delivering Artaxerxes' edict to the satraps and governors of surrounding provinces. It must have taken several weeks to complete the distribution of the edict. In obedience to the edict, all of the provinces west of the Euphrates supported the activities of Ezra in Jerusalem.

### **Ezra's Call for Repentance**

After the distribution of the edict had been completed, Ezra then embarked on the primary purpose of the mission as defined by Artaxerxes, i.e., to determine the degree of the Judeans' compliance or non-compliance with the Law of Moses.

*Forasmuch as you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God which is in your hand,*<sup>151</sup>

Sadly, Ezra immediately was confronted with widespread of disobedience.

*Now when these things had been completed, the princes approached me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites.*

*For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness."*<sup>152</sup>

In the Law of Moses, Jehovah had prohibited intermarriage with the surrounding idolatrous nations because the consequences of such marriages inevitably would be apostasy.<sup>153</sup> The experience of Solomon proved this to be true.<sup>154</sup>

We are not told the identity of the princes who conveyed this information to Ezra. Obviously, they were leaders who were concerned about the casual manner in which even the leading men of Judah had ignored the Law and had taken wives from the surrounding Gentile tribes.

Deeply moved by this information, Ezra sat astonished until the time of the evening sacrifice. All Judeans in the immediate area, touched by Ezra's mourning, gathered around him. At the time of the evening sacrifice, he fell on his knees and prayed a moving confession of sin in the name of the congregation. Many of those gathered around him began weeping. Shecaniah, came forward and acknowledged the transgressions of the people and declared that they would make a covenant with God to put away their foreign wives. Shecaniah then challenged Ezra,

*Arise! For this matter is your responsibility, but we will be with you; be courageous and act.*<sup>155</sup>

In response, Ezra took authority and compelled the leading priests and the Levites to take an oath that they would not marry foreign women and that they would put away their foreign wives. An assembly was proclaimed and all exiles, out of their cities, were commanded to come to the assembly, which was to be held three days after the issuance of the proclamation. Anyone who failed to attend the assembly was threatened with a heavy penalty.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ezra 7:14

<sup>152</sup> Ezra 9:1-2

<sup>153</sup> Exodus 34:14-16; Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Joshua 23:11-13

<sup>154</sup> I Kings 11:1-4

<sup>155</sup> Ezra 10:4

<sup>156</sup> Ezra 10:5, 7-8

The assembly was held on the twelfth day of the ninth month – four months and twelve days after Ezra had arrived in Jerusalem. It was a miserable rainy day, but everyone sat down in the open square before the Temple. The people trembled from the cold rain, but also trembled because of the matter to be presented. Ezra reproved the people for their serious transgression of the Law and called upon them to confess their sin. He then challenged them to act according to their confession, by separating themselves from the people of the land and to put away their foreign wives.<sup>157</sup>

The response was both positive and realistic.

*Then all the assembly replied with a loud voice,*

*"That's right! As you have said, so it is our duty to do.*

*But there are many people; it is the rainy season and we are not able to stand in the open. Nor can the task be done in one or two days, for we have transgressed greatly in this matter.*

*Let our leaders represent the whole assembly and let all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of each city, until the fierce anger of our God on account of this matter is turned away from us."<sup>158</sup>*

Four leaders are mentioned as opposing the idea, but they were overruled and the commission was appointed to investigate and decide individual cases.<sup>159</sup> The commission fulfilled its assigned duties, beginning its task on the first day of the following month and completing the task by the close of the year, three months later.

A list of those who had married foreign women is given in Ezra 10:18-43. All of these found guilty of the charge pledged to put away their wives and each one offered a ram of the flock for their offense. Some of these had children by their foreign wives.

The Book of Ezra concludes with this account.

### **Nehemiah's Journey and his first season in Jerusalem**

Nehemiah occupied a very important role in the life of the Persian king, Artaxerxes I Longimanus. He was the cupbearer<sup>160</sup> who had the responsibility of making certain that no one poisoned the king via his wine. As cupbearer, Nehemiah was in custody of the cup, and when a cup of wine was poured for the king, Nehemiah took the first drink from the cup, to make certain that the wine was not poisoned. If Nehemiah survived his drink, then the king could drink the rest of the wine in the cup. In this role, Nehemiah would have been one of those who was closest to the king and most trusted by him. The only other information given concerning Nehemiah's identity is that he was the son of Hachaliah, a Jew.<sup>161</sup>

In the twentieth of year of the reign of Artaxerxes, in the month of Chisleu (the ninth month of the Jewish religious calendar, corresponding to our December), Nehemiah was serving the king in Susa. One of his brothers, Hanani, along with some other men, came from Judah to the capital in Susa. Nehemiah learned from these men that the Jews in Judah were in a tough place. The

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<sup>157</sup> Ezra 10:10-11

<sup>158</sup> Ezra 10:12-14

<sup>159</sup> Ezra 10:15-17

<sup>160</sup> Nehemiah 1:11

<sup>161</sup> Nehemiah 1:1

walls of Jerusalem had not been rebuilt and the Gentiles who lived in the vicinity gave the Jews a lot of misery.

When he received this report, Nehemiah was driven to mourning. For four days he fasted and prayed in behalf of the Jews in Jerusalem. He confessed that he and his ancestors had sinned, in disobeying the Law of Moses. In his prayer, he quoted God's promise to scatter the Jews among the nations, if they were unfaithful to the true God. He then quoted God's promise to restore the Jews to their promised land if they would repent. He then pled with God to hear his prayer and give him favor with the king. Obviously, Nehemiah was stirred to ask the king to allow him to go to Jerusalem and assist the people living there.<sup>162</sup>

It was not until three months had passed that Nehemiah had opportunity to speak to Artaxerxes about what was on his heart.<sup>163</sup> It seems that Nehemiah had waited for God to provide the opening. Nehemiah always had been cheerful in the king's presence, but the grief over the state of Jerusalem did not leave him and it was evident in his demeanor. When Artaxerxes asked him why he looked so sad, Nehemiah initially was afraid. Artaxerxes earlier had ordered the end of construction in Jerusalem.<sup>164</sup> As one writer has said, "Nehemiah therefore takes his life in his hands by championing a city which has been represented to the king as a hotbed of rebellion."<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, Nehemiah feared that he had displeased the king by his mien. Nehemiah then boldly revealed the source of his sorrow.

*I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?"<sup>166</sup>*

Artaxerxes' affection for Nehemiah is evident in exchange between them. The king asked Nehemiah what he would request. Nehemiah quickly threw up a short prayer, and then asked Artaxerxes to send him to Judah so that he might rebuild Jerusalem. The queen was sitting beside Artaxerxes during the exchange. Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah how long he would be gone, if the request were granted. In reply, Nehemiah gave a definite time for his return and Artaxerxes granted the request.

Nehemiah then asked that the king would give him letters for the governors of the provinces through which he should pass, so that no official could hinder the trip. He also asked for a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, instructing him to provide timbers that could be used in making beams for the gates of the Jerusalem citadel. All of this was granted to Nehemiah.

A military escort, including cavalry, accompanied Nehemiah. The letters were given to each governor of the various provinces beyond the Euphrates and so all knew that Nehemiah was traveling on orders of the king and was not one with whom they should trifle. Two of the officials, Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite were upset that someone had come from the king to seek the welfare of the Jews.

Nehemiah kept his plans to himself, because he knew that there would be opposition to building the wall. Not only would opposition come from the Gentiles, but some of the Jewish leaders

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<sup>162</sup> Nehemiah 1:4-11

<sup>163</sup> Nehemiah 2:1

<sup>164</sup> Ezra 4:6-24

<sup>165</sup> *Eerdman's Handbook to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company)1973, page 309,

<sup>166</sup> Nehemiah 2:3

would oppose building the wall because they thought that it would antagonize the Samaritans. After being in Jerusalem for three days, Nehemiah made his move. After dark, so that he would not be seen, he mounted a horse, and taking a few men on foot with him, rode around the outside of Jerusalem, surveying the condition of the walls. (MAP XII)

The next day, he called a meeting of the leading men of the city and told them of what he had seen and then challenged them to rebuild the wall so that they no longer could be threatened and mocked by the Samaritans. He told them of how God had made the trip possible and then challenged them, *Let us rise up and build*. Nehemiah's fervor inspired the leaders and construction was begun immediately.

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they mocked the Jews and sarcastically asked, *are you rebelling against the king?* Nehemiah tersely replied that the God of heaven would give them success but that these Gentiles had no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem. Of course, this irritated them and they set about to harass the Jews.

People of all sorts joined together in the work of rebuilding. The list mentions priests and perfumers, goldsmiths and merchants, rulers, even women. Some ambitiously undertook to rebuild a double section. Nehemiah demonstrated his wisdom in having the people work on sections near their own homes, for which they would have a special interest. The leaders named in the project are those who were longstanding citizens of Jerusalem. Neither Ezra nor the men who came with him are mentioned in the list.<sup>167</sup>

The people had a heart to work and a dynamic leader to inspire them. Nevertheless, the harassment of the surrounding Gentiles made work difficult. Initially, the harassment consisted of mockery.

*Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?" Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, "Even what they are building-- if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!"<sup>168</sup>*

Evidently a report of this mockery reached the ears of the Jews because Nehemiah implored God to bring punishment on the mockers because they had demoralized the builders.<sup>169</sup>

The Jews persevered and the wall was joined together, but only half of its proposed height. This angered the Samaritans to the point that they determined to take up arms and attack the Jews. They planned a sneak attack. Those who lived around the Samaritans and heard of their plans, reported the scheme to Nehemiah. Nehemiah then deployed all of the Jews to defend strategic locations. The Jews were afraid, but Nehemiah gave a rousing speech, reminding the Jews of the greatness of their God and then urged them to fight for their brothers, sons, daughters, wives, and houses.<sup>170</sup> When Sanballat and his cohorts learned that the Jews knew of their plot and had prepared to fight back they did not attack; they had lost the advantage of surprise.

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<sup>167</sup> Nehemiah Chapter three

<sup>168</sup> Nehemiah 4:1-3

<sup>169</sup> Nehemiah 4:4-5

<sup>170</sup> Nehemiah 4:14



Nehemiah then changed the *modus operandi*. From that time onward, one-half of the people would work and the other half took care of the armament, ready to distribute it as soon as danger presented itself. Moreover, those doing tasks that could be done with one hand, such as carrying something on one's shoulder, always carried a weapon in one hand. Those doing work that required two hands, worked with a sword strapped to his side. Trumpeters were stationed at various points along the wall, so that if the enemy attacked, the trumpeter at the point of attack could signal all to come to that point and fight the enemy. Moreover, the workers did not leave Jerusalem at night, but slept in the city, fully clad, ready for battle. They never were without their weapons.

In the midst of all of this activity, a problem arose among the Jews themselves. It seems that the Jewish aristocracy had taken advantage of the common folk in times of famine or other times of financial distress. The wealthy nobles had lent money, at heavy interest, and because the loans could not be repaid, the lenders had taken title to the creditor's land, even putting into bondage the children of the creditors. These prosperous Jews were practicing what they had learned to do in Babylon. This was in direct disobedience to the Law of Moses.

*'Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Do not take usurious interest from him, but revere your God, that your countryman may live with you. You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain. I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.'*<sup>171</sup>

Nehemiah called a meeting of the nobles and rebuked them strongly. None of them could put forth any defense and so they agreed to give back all that they had gained through usury. Not only that, Nehemiah called attention to his example. He had not taken from the people that which he had a legal authority to take, but had supplied his table from his own pocket. Not only that he had fed 150 Jews and other leaders at his own table and had not taxed anyone to pay for it. So, he got his point across to the greedy nobles.

When the Jews' enemies realized that the wall had been completed, and all that remained to be completed was the installation of the gates, they sent an invitation to Nehemiah to come and meet with them. Nehemiah knew their hearts and that they were plotting to kill him. So, he replied, *"I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"*<sup>172</sup>

Other schemes were attempted, first to assassinate Nehemiah, then to discourage him and the workers, then to defame Nehemiah. All of these schemes failed, chiefly because Nehemiah saw through them. Sadly, some of the perpetrators were Jewish nobles, a prophetess named, Noadiah, a prophet named, Shemaiah, and other unnamed prophets.<sup>173</sup> Those involved in these plots had ties to the Samaritan, Tobiah. Tobiah had married into a prominent Jewish family and his son had done the same. The marriages were secured by an oath.<sup>174</sup> Even the High Priest was

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<sup>171</sup> Leviticus 25:35-38; Deuteronomy 15:7ff; in the verses following, the situation is addressed in which a Jew, in deep poverty, would sell himself into service of another Jew – kindness and respect is ordered in such cases.

<sup>172</sup> Nehemiah 6:3

<sup>173</sup> Nehemiah 6:10-14

<sup>174</sup> Nehemiah 6:17-19

related in some way to Tobiah.<sup>175</sup> So, Tobiah was a part of the good-old-boys club that had had its way with the inhabitants of the area until Nehemiah put a stop to it.

None of the plots succeeded. The wall was built, the gates installed, and the city was secure.<sup>176</sup>

Nehemiah put his brother, Hananai, and Hananiah, the commander of the fortress, in charge of the city. Nehemiah instructed them about when to open the gates, how to protect the city when the gates were open, etc.<sup>177</sup>

Because the number of people who actually lived in Jerusalem was not large enough to defend the city adequately, Nehemiah planned to enlarge Jerusalem's population, but that was not done immediately.

The wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul (the sixth month). Construction had taken 52 days. Jerusalem once again was a walled city, 142 years after its destruction in 586 BC.

### **Tishri and the Reading of the Law**

A few days after the completion of the wall, the new moon signaled the beginning of the seventh month, Tishri. The new moon of Tishri was to be celebrated as the Feast of Trumpets. The feast was to be celebrated as a high festival by a solemn assembly, a cessation of labor, and offering sacrifices upon the altar.<sup>178</sup> Tishri also was the month in which the Jews were commanded to observe the Day of Atonement and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Because of the sacred events that Jehovah had commanded for this month, it was the most intense spiritual month of the year for the Jews.

Jews from all of the surrounding cities came to Jerusalem for the Feast of Trumpets. The congregation wanted to hear the Law of Moses and so, to enable this to be done effectively, a raised podium was erected in the square in front of the Fish Gate.<sup>179</sup> Ezra stood on the podium, flanked on six people on his right (probably priests) and flanked by seven on his left.<sup>180</sup>

Ezra opened the book and everyone stood up for the reading. He began by blessing Jehovah and all of the people responded, *Amen, Amen*, lifting their hands in praise. Then, without any prompting the congregation bowed to the ground and worshipped. When the reading began, Ezra read a portion, and then the Levites expounded to the people what had just been read. Whether the Levites did this one at a time, or perhaps they all did it at once, each one being with a group of people, cannot be determined from the text. This activity went on from sunrise to mid-day, about six hours – reading, explanation and exhortation, reading, explanation and exhortation, etc.

Given the description of the congregation's response, we would assume that Ezra read from a portion of the Law that addressed the transgressions of which the people had been guilty and the

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<sup>175</sup> Nehemiah 13:4

<sup>176</sup> Nehemiah 6:10-19

<sup>177</sup> Nehemiah 7:1-3

<sup>178</sup> Leviticus 23:23-43; Numbers 29:1-39

<sup>179</sup> Nehemiah 7:73- 8:4

<sup>180</sup> Nehemiah 8:4 I Esdras (the Greek Ezra) states that there were seven on each side. The name, Azariah is inserted between Anaiah and Urijah. Some scholars are of the opinion that a copyist along the way omitted this name from the Hebrew text, since it is improbable that there would have been more Levites on his left than would have been on his right.

punishments to which they had exposed themselves. At one point, the people began to weep. Seeing the repentant hearts, Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites began to encourage the people,

*Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to Jehovah your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength."<sup>181</sup>*

The people responded to this exhortation. They celebrated the day as a holy day of feasting unto God, even as the Feast of Trumpets was designed to be.

The next morning the Jews assembled again, and the procedure of the previous day was repeated. A portion of the Law that Ezra read described the Feast of Tabernacles, which was to be celebrated in Tishri, fourteen days hence. Everyone paid attention as Ezra read the specifics as to how this event was to be conducted. This feast had been neglected since the days of Joshua. When Ezra finished reading, the congregation was determined to celebrate this feast according to the Law of Moses.<sup>182</sup> A proclamation was made, instructing everyone to go out into the country and collect the things needed to make brush arbors. The collected items were brought back and the people made brush arbors throughout the city.

For the following seven days, the people lived in brush arbors and listened each day to the further reading of the Law. On the eighth day, as commanded by the Law, there was a solemn assembly, which included the presentation to Jehovah of an offering by fire.<sup>183</sup>

On the twenty-fourth day of the month, two days after the termination of the Feast of Tabernacles, the congregation reassembled before the Temple. The Levites read from the Law for three hours, then the people spent the next three hours confessing their sins and the sins of their ancestors. A general confession was made, in which the Levites reminded the people of God's graces to them, from the time of Abraham onward, followed by a recitation of all of the ways in which the nation had departed from the Law. They acknowledged that because of their sin, all of the hardships that they had been through had been of their own choosing.<sup>184</sup>

The time of prayer, fasting, and confession was followed by an act designed to give lasting influence to what had happened in the month of Tishri. With the agreement of the congregation, the princes, Levites, and priests, a document was prepared which was a covenantal contract between the people and God. In the document the people pledged to be separate from the Gentile nations around them, to keep the Sabbath, to supply the needs for the Temple, and other matters related to full devotion to Jehovah. Then, the document was "sealed" by Nehemiah, the governor, and all of the princes, priests, and nobles.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Nehemiah 8:9-10

<sup>182</sup> Leviticus 23:39-43

<sup>183</sup> Leviticus 23:36

<sup>184</sup> Nehemiah 9

<sup>185</sup> "Sealed" does not refer to sealing as one seal an envelope. It referred to the icon on a person's ring (this was the individual's "seal"), which was pressed into wax on a document. It was similar to a Notary Public's seal that is placed on a document today. Each of the eighty-four leaders listed in Nehemiah 10:1-27 affixed their seal to the document.

It seems that this is the time when Nehemiah moved to increase the population of Jerusalem. Each clan living in the villages was to cast lots and one in ten of each family (the person chosen by lot) was instructed to move into Jerusalem. These “volunteers” were blessed by all who remained behind in the villages.

It now was time to dedicate the wall. Levites, singers, trumpeters, all sorts of musicians, were brought to Jerusalem for this event. There was a grand parade and much pageantry, including celebrants’ walking on the wall. The congregation was divided into two groups, with one group, led by a choir, proceeding on steps to the top of the wall from one direction and another group, led by a choir, proceed on steps to the top of the wall from another direction. Both groups then descended and came together in the Temple. At the temple the choirs sang, trumpets blared and musicians played on their instruments. There were great sacrifices offered upon the altar and appointments were made for the maintenance of the Temple. It was a day to be remembered.<sup>186</sup> ,

### **Nehemiah’s second season in Jerusalem**

When Artaxerxes had granted Nehemiah permission to travel to Jerusalem, he asked him how long he would be gone from the king’s presence, and Nehemiah gave him a specific time period. It appears that he was in Jerusalem for about 12 years. True to his word, Nehemiah returned to Babylon and re-entered the king’s service. While Nehemiah was in Babylon, things deteriorated in Jerusalem.

At some unspecified time, during a public reading of the Law, which seems to have become an habitual exercise, the portion of Deuteronomy was read which stipulated that no Ammonite or Moabite should come into the congregation of God.

*...because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. Nevertheless, Jehovah your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but Jehovah your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because Jehovah your God loves you. You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days.<sup>187</sup>*

In their thinking, the people transferred this prohibition to all heathen nationalities that lived in and around the Judeans. So, the Judeans acted to exclude all foreigners from Israel. Ignoring this taboo, the High Priest, Eliashib, had provided a large apartment in the Temple for his relative, Tobiah, the Ammonite. Tobiah used the chamber as a residence during his frequent visits to Jerusalem. The apartment was a chamber that formerly had been used as a place of storage for offerings, food, utensils, and other things pertaining to the needs of the Temple and those who served in it.

After a season of service to Artaxerxes, Nehemiah asked for permission to return to Jerusalem. The king granted his request. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and learned of what Eliashib had done, Nehemiah violently threw all of Tobiah’s belongings and furniture into the street. He ordered that the room be ceremonially cleansed. He then returned the room to its former use – a Temple storage room.

Nehemiah learned that horrible laxity had developed in his absence. The tithes had not been given by the people, and as a result the Levites and singers had left the Temple and gone back to the villages in order to survive. Nehemiah reprimanded the officials, gathered the

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<sup>186</sup> Nehemiah 12:27

<sup>187</sup> Deuteronomy 23:4-6

Levites and other Temple servants together and restored them to their roles. His actions inspired the people to bring their tithes to the Temple. The tithes of grain and other produce were put into the Temple storehouses, for the use of those who served therein.

Nehemiah next noticed that some people were working at the winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing sacks of grain, wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads on donkeys to be sold in Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Gentile merchants had set up shop in Jerusalem and were selling their wares on the Sabbath. Nehemiah called the leaders together and reminded them they had suffered the wrath of God because their forefathers had forsaken the Sabbath. Nehemiah commanded that the gates of the city be locked at sunset on Friday night and not opened until after the Sabbath. Some Gentile merchants stayed just outside of the wall on the Sabbath, hoping that Jews would come out and buy their merchandise. Nehemiah told them to leave or he would use force against them.

In Nehemiah's absence, in total disregard of the sealed oath made on his first visit, Jews had intermarried with the Gentile women from Ammon, Ashdod, and Moab. Many of the children resulting from these marriages spoke the language of their mothers and none were able to speak the language of the Judeans. Nehemiah was appalled that even the High Priest's grandson had married a daughter of Judah's enemy, Sanballat. Nehemiah's response was violent,

*So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves."<sup>188</sup>*

Nehemiah reminded the people of the manner in which even the great King Solomon had been led astray by his foreign wives. He prayed an imprecatory prayer against the priests and Levites who had defiled their office and role. Following this, Nehemiah set everything straight and prayed for God to remember all that he had done.

The ministry of both Ezra and Nehemiah took place during the reign of Artaxerxes.

### **The Ministry of Malachi**

We have waited until the close of the Persian period to consider the ministry of Malachi because it is not possible to determine the exact year in which his ministry took place. Several things do limit the options available for us in determining the years of his ministry. The earlier limitation is provided by the existence of the Temple. It is obvious from the things said in Malachi that the Temple had been restored for several years – so long that the priests were becoming weary of their duties and had become half-hearted in fulfilling their priestly roles. The content of the rebukes found in Malachi fit either the period just prior to the oath taken by the Jews in Nehemiah 9:38ff, or the period just prior to Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem, described in Nehemiah 13. Because Malachi is not mentioned in the episode of described in the earlier event, and we assume that he would have been if he had been involved, it seems that this is not when his ministry took place. The Book of Nehemiah contains no record of the activities that took place in Nehemiah's absence. Neither does it contain the names of individuals who were active in that period. The spiritual condition of the people that he found upon his return does fit the picture painted in Malachi. Therefore, it seems probably that Malachi's ministry took place just prior to Nehemiah's return. The statement made in Malachi 3:16, concerning the group who

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<sup>188</sup> Nehemiah 13:25

determined to return to faithfulness to God, could be a terse description of the result's of Nehemiah's ministry pictured in Nehemiah 13.

Malachi brings five charges against the people of Jerusalem and Judah:

1. They were presenting blind, lame, and sick animals for sacrifice. They even brought stolen animals to the altar. They vowed to bring a healthy male sheep to the altar, but when they brought the offering they brought a blemished animal. In essence, what they were bringing to the altar were things that it cost them nothing to lose – animals that could not be sold, or animals that were not theirs in the first place.
2. The priesthood had become lax in teaching the truth. By word and deed they led people astray, when they should have been leading people in the clearly prescribed way of God.
3. Older men were divorcing their older wives in order to marry young Gentile women. The marriage covenant was not honored.
4. They looked about and saw evil people prospering. This caused them to mock God.  
*You have wearied Jehovah with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"<sup>189</sup>  
"You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before Jehovah of hosts? 'So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape."<sup>190</sup>*
5. They quit tithing. The tithe was God's property. By not tithing, they were stealing from God.

Malachi addressed each of these but an over-arching comment is made at the beginning of the book.

*The oracle of the word of Jehovah to Israel through Malachi.*

*"I have loved you," says Jehovah. But you say, "How have You loved us?"*

*"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares Jehovah. "Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."*

*Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says Jehovah of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom Jehovah is indignant forever."*

*Your eyes will see this and you will say, "Jehovah be magnified beyond the border of Israel!"<sup>191</sup>*

In other words, of all of the surrounding nations that had been beaten down and destroyed, only Judah and Jerusalem had been restored and this was because Jehovah had a special love for the Jews, His Chosen People.

Throughout the prophecies of Malachi, Jehovah promises retribution for disobedience, and ultimate blessing on those who honor the covenant. The prophecy also looks to the future when

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<sup>189</sup> Malachi 2:17

<sup>190</sup> Malachi 3:14-15

<sup>191</sup> Malachi 1:1-5

Jehovah will send His messenger to prepare the way before the Him, and the Messiah will come; but who may abide the day of His coming, for His coming will purge the nation.

*"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And Jehovah, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says Jehovah of hosts.*

*"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.*

*"He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to Jehovah offerings in righteousness.*

*"Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to Jehovah as in the days of old and as in former years.*

*"Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says Jehovah of hosts.<sup>192</sup>*

This is followed by a very assuring promise:

*For I, Jehovah, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.<sup>193</sup>*

When the Day of the Lord comes, there will be a distinction between the righteous and the wicked.<sup>194</sup>

The book closes with a grand leap forward to the time of Christ.

*"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of Jehovah. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."<sup>195</sup>*

Indeed, the predicted Elijah did come in the person of John the Immerser, followed by the Messiah of whom John was the forerunner.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Malachi 3:1-5

<sup>193</sup> Malachi 3:6

<sup>194</sup> Malachi 3:16-4:3

<sup>195</sup> Malachi 4:5-6

<sup>196</sup> Mark 1:1ff; 9:11ff; Luke 1:13ff

## **PART THREE**

### **THE GREEK PERIOD**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **Philip Of Macedonia**

No one could have predicted the world altering events that would grow from the seeds planted by the ambition of the Macedonian King, Philip II. Philip ruled Macedonia from 359 to 336 BC. During his reign the Greek states were united into an Hellenic League, thus stepping away from their commitment to the historic Greek city-state paradigm.

Philip, born in 382 BC, was the third son of the Macedonian King, Amyntas III. The Macedonians were (and are) an ethnic group that is not Greek, yet historically had lived in a region that was surrounded by various Greek states (see **MAP XIV**). The Greeks viewed the Macedonians as unsophisticated barbarians whom they could dominate and control. Thebes, the strongest Greek military power, constantly interfered in Macedonian internal affairs.

The ancient historian, Arrian of Nicomedia, quoted Alexander's words describing Macedonia before Philip became king, "wandering about without resources, many of them clothed in sheepskins and pasturing small flocks in the mountains, defending them with difficulty against the Illyrians, Triballians and neighboring Thracians."<sup>197</sup> This is exaggerated, but it is true that king Amyntas III, Philip's father, found it difficult to defend his country against its neighbors, and more or less had to lease his own kingdom from the Illyrians.

Amyntas died in 370, and was succeeded by Alexander II, who was forced to send his eight year-old brother, Philip, as a hostage to the Illyrians. Later, when Alexander II tried to expand his influence in Thessaly, he became entangled in a war with Thebes. The only way to obtain peace was to send Philip as hostage to the house of the Theban politician Pammenes. For about three years (368-365 BC), Philip lived in Thebes as a Greek hostage. Philip, by this time a teenager, was able to grasp the importance of the things that he saw at Thebes. Pammenes was a friend of the famous general Epaminodas, and as a result, Philip was able to study the military techniques that made the army at Thebes so effective. He also learned of the power of Persia, a Theban ally.

Meanwhile, Philip's oldest brother, King Alexander II, was assassinated by a man named Ptolemaeus of Aloros (perhaps the lover of the queen-mother Eurydice). Next in line for the throne was Perdiccas III, Amyntas' second son. Perdiccas was one year older than Philip, but he was considered to be too young to be a ruler, so his brother's assassin, Ptolemaeus, became his regent. At the age of eighteen, in 365 BC, Perdiccas took the Macedonian throne and he immediately killed Ptolemaeus, thus avenging the assassination of his brother, Alexander II.

Shortly thereafter, seventeen year-old Philip returned to Macedonia, determined to reorganize the Macedonian army along the lines of what he had seen in Thebes. One of the additions that Philip made to the Macedonian army was an improved phalanx, equipped with *sarissa*, spears 18 feet in length. When the *sarisa* were held upright by the back row of the phalanx (there usually were eight rows of soldiers in a phalanx), the maneuvers going on behind the phalanx were largely

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<sup>197</sup> Arrian of Nicomedia, *Anabasis*



hidden. The front rows of the phalanx held the spears horizontally and could run through an enemy almost 20 feet away (see **ADDENDUM G**).<sup>198</sup>

In 359, Perdiccas led the reformed Macedonian army against the Illyrian Greeks, who for many years had occupied northwestern Macedonia. The Macedonians suffered a disastrous defeat. The Illyrians slew 4000 Macedonian soldiers, including King Perdiccas. The Illyrian hold on northwestern Macedonia was made even more secure.

Perdiccas' heir was a very young son, Amyntas IV. Because the boy was so young, Philip initially became the regent but he quickly moved to establish himself on the Macedonian throne. He was twenty-two years old and he could not have become king at a worst time. The country was on the verge of collapse, because of the intimidation from the surrounding Greek states. There was internal political turmoil; various Greek states supported those who challenged Philip for the Macedonian throne. The true goal of the Greek states was to destroy the Macedonian kingdom and to divide it up among themselves.

The story of Philip's reign and amazing success is quite involved and not pertinent to our study (see **ADDENDUM I**). What is pertinent is his success in creating the Hellenic League. He did this by first uniting Macedonia. By striking military success, by marrying women who were daughters and sisters of Greek rulers, by bribing various Greek rulers, and by using his amazing gift of diplomacy, he was able to create an Hellenic League – a union of all of the Greek states except Sparta.<sup>199</sup> Even though a number of Greeks were uncomfortable with the arrangement, Macedonia was included in the League. The thing that all members of the league had in common, the one thing that united them, was language. Greek was the language of all of the states, including Macedonia.<sup>200</sup>

Pertinent to our study is Philip's practice of diplomacy by marriage. Some have said that he took more pride in his diplomatic maneuvers, including his many marriages, than he did of his many military victories. In 357, the year in which he began to achieve many of his goals, he married three women. Olympias was the daughter of the king of the Molossians, a nation situated in Epirus, between the Macedonians and the Illyrians; Phila of Elymiotis, a district to the west; and Audata of Illyria. These three marriages secured Macedonia's western border. By winter, Olympias was pregnant with the baby who would become Alexander the Great.

A number of years passed and Philip's place as head of the Hellenic League was secure. He began preparing for the invasion of Persia. During this time, he did what most ancient historians consider to be the greatest mistake of his career. Having been married six times, he now married a girl named, Cleopatra. She came from a family of high Macedonian nobility. The ancients said that he married her "out of love." At the wedding banquet, Cleopatra's uncle, general Attalus, made a remark to the effect that now Philip could father a legitimate heir – one that was of pure Macedonian blood. Alexander threw his cup at the man and verbally attacked him for

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<sup>198</sup> When going into battle, the traditional phalanx (φάλαγξ) looked like a turtle. The side columns held their shields on their left or right sides; the center rows held their shields overhead, thus providing a protection from the hail of enemy arrows with which a battle usually began.

<sup>199</sup> The Greek word for Greece is *Hellas* Ἑλλάς

<sup>200</sup> This fact played an important role in Alexander the Great's philosophy when he began to establish his world empire.

calling him a “bastard child.” Philip jumped up and threw his sword at Alexander and then charged at him. In his drunken state, Philip tripped and fell on his face. Alexander then shouted,

“Here is the man who was making ready to cross from Europe to Asia, and he can’t even cross from one table to another without losing his balance.”

Alexander took his mother and fled to Epirus, Olympus’ home region. Later they were allowed to return to Macedonia, although Alexander did not feel secure in that environment. In the meantime, Philip and his newest wife, Cleopatra, had a son whom they named Caranus.

336 BC was a watershed year. Philip sent generals Attalus and Parmenio to Asia minor with a force of 10,000 Macedonian troops to pave the way for the larger army that would follow. Back in Macedonia, a grand celebration was in progress for the marriage of Philip’ daughter, Cleopatra (this was a common and popular name that crops up often in Philip’ family for many generations). Cleopatra was being married to Philip’s brother-in-law, Olympus’ brother, prince Alexander of Epirus. On the second day of the celebrations, while entering the theatre and passing between his son, Alexander, and his new son-in-law, Alexander of Epirus, Philip was stabbed to death by an assassin. The killer was a young Macedonian noble, Pausanias. Pausanias attempted to escape but close friends of Philip’s son, Alexander, tripped him and killed him. Some speculate that Olympus and her son, Alexander, were behind the assassination, and that Alexander’s friends quickly killed Pausanias so that the truth could not be known.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **Alexander the Great**

With the help of two powerful leaders, Antipater and Parmenio, Alexander succeeded his father on the Macedonian throne and by doing so, he inherited the Persian war.<sup>201</sup> During the first year of his reign, Alexander devoted himself to organizing his kingdom; Antipater served as his viceroy while Alexander spent time in the field.

In the spring of 344 BC, Alexander and general Parmenio began what was to become a world-conquering campaign. They followed the same route that Xerxes had followed in 481/480 BC, only they traveled in the opposite direction. They crossed the Hellespont with 35,000 troops, crossed the Dardanelles at Ellus, and attacked the local Persian army. The Persian army was defeated soundly near the Granicus River (now northwest Turkey). Through recruits and Persian soldiers defecting to Alexander, the Macedonian/Greek army grew. Parmenio, with reinforced troops, was commissioned to secure the treasury at Dascylium. Alexander proceeded on with the campaign, leading a picked force of about 32,000 infantry and 5000 cavalry, accompanied off-shore by a fleet of 160 ships.<sup>202</sup>

Alexander’s immediate goal was Egypt, but along the way he fought and won many battles and captured many cities. At one point, the Persian, Darius, with a very large army that included Greek mercenaries, arrived at Issus, through which Alexander’s troops had passed several days before. Alexander turned back and by a daring cavalry attack the Persians were defeated. Darius fled the battlefield and escaped with his life, but in doing so, he lost his family and treasury to Alexander.

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<sup>201</sup> Livius.org/aj-al/alexander

<sup>202</sup> Keller, page 320

Alexander did not pursue the fleeing king, but continued his advance on Egypt. Twice he was held up on the coast of Syria and Palestine. The first serious hold up was at Tyre. This heavily fortified Phoenician city was built on a small island, guarding the coastline. Because of its high, stout walls, and the separation from the land by several yards of ocean, Tyre was another one of those cities that considered itself impregnable. Alexander was more than a match for the impregnable defenses.<sup>203</sup>

Alexander had his troops build a 2000 foot causeway out to the island. From the top of the walls an incessant hail of missiles poured down upon the builders of the causeway. To safeguard the builders, Alexander had constructed mobile protective canopies, called, “tortoises.” Those working on the causeway had to do their work under these canopies, which greatly slowed their progress, but they relentlessly plodded forward. On shore, Alexander’s engineers built *Helepoleis*. These were mobile towers many stories high, which held detachments of bowmen and light artillery. A drawbridge on the front of the towers enabled infantry in the towers to jump onto the walls and invade the city. These were the highest siege towers ever used in the history of war – each was twenty stories tall; the top platform was 160 feet above the ground, far taller than the highest city walls. After seven months of construction, these monsters slowly lumbered toward Tyre and the fate of the city was sealed (see **ADDENDUM H**)

The second delay in Alexander’s campaign to conquer Egypt occurred at the ancient Philistine city of Gaza. This siege lasted only two months and then the road to Egypt was open.

Even though the Judeans must have been aware of all of this military activity that was taking place on the coast, the biblical record contains no information concerning any involvement with Judah. Flavius Josephus, near the end of the First Century AD, for the benefit of the Romans, wrote about Jewish history. Josephus described Alexander’s campaign in Palestine, recording a legend about Alexander’s visit to Jerusalem, after the siege of Gaza. According to Josephus, Alexander visited Jerusalem and was received with great ceremony by the High Priest, Jaddua and the citizens of the city. In this narrative, Alexander is described as offering sacrifices in the Temple and granting favors to the citizens of Jerusalem.<sup>204</sup> This tale is hard to believe. As Keller has written,

“Alexander can hardly have found time for a trip to Jerusalem, since he had already been held up for nine months by the resistance of Tyre and Gaza. After the fall of Gaza he hurried on by the quickest road to Egypt, leaving the conquest of the territory inland to his general, Parmenio, who had no difficulty in subduing the country. Only Samaria, the seat of the governor of the province, had to be forcibly brought to heel. As a punishment it had a colony of Macedonians [military veterans] settled in it.”<sup>205</sup>

The Egyptians welcomed Alexander as a liberator. He remained in Egypt during the winter of 332-331 BC. On the outermost tip of the Nile delta he founded the city of Alexandria, which became one of the world’s most significant cities (we will discuss Alexandria’s important role in the history of the Jews in a later section).

When Alexander left Egypt, he began to view himself as a God. He believed that he was the son of the supreme god, Zeus, manifested as the Egyptian god, Ammon. Not everyone accepted this idea, but as the years went by Alexander increasingly considered himself to be divine, as did

<sup>203</sup> This was in fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah 23:1, 8, 15, 17

<sup>204</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XI, Chapter VIII, sections 4-6

<sup>205</sup> Keller, page 332

many of those whom he conquered. He led his armies all the way to India, which he considered to be the end of the world. After penetrating deeper into India, his troops refused to go on. Alexander was furious. It was his thirtieth birthday. Finally, a trusted general, and some who interpreted the omens, convinced Alexander that he should begin his journey back to the west. It was important that everyone know that it was the gods, and not his soldiers, who had convinced him to return. Otherwise he would have lost his authority.

The plan was to divide his army into three groups and for all to make Babylon their destination. On the way back, Alexander fought a number of battles and in one encounter he was severely wounded and all assumed that he would die. However, almost miraculously, he recovered and continued to lead the army to Babylon. In Carmania, in a drinking party, Alexander presented himself as the god, Dionysus, and was so recognized by the other celebrants. Early in 324, he and his troops arrived in the Persian capitals of Persopolis and Susa. In the spring of 324 BC, at Susa, he ordered his officers to marry Iranian brides. He was determined to fuse the peoples of his empire, "as in a loving cup." He came up with the idea of these marriages as a means of accomplishing this. During the mass wedding, 8,000 Macedonian officers wed Persian noblewomen; 10,000 troops wed Persians of lesser status. Alexander himself, donning Persian attire, married two princesses, one of them was Darius' daughter, Barsine.

Alexander was bisexual. In October of 324 his lover, Hephaestion died in Ecbatana. As a result, Alexander ordered his subjects to sacrifice to Hephaestion as if he were a demigod. The implication was that Alexander was the greatest of two lovers – a god indeed.

Alexander planned to invade Arabia and then to proceed to the western reaches of the Mediterranean. He wanted to return to Babylon where his fleet and army were gathering for the anticipated Arabian expedition. The Babylonian astronomers warned him not to enter Babylon, because if he did so, he would die. Alexander ignored the warning, and at the end of May he fell ill and died on June 11, 323 AD.

Alexander himself had little impact on the Jews, except for the insertion of the Greek language into every country that he conquered. He sought to duplicate throughout the world what his father had done in the Hellenic League. The thing that made the league possible was a common language. Thus, Alexander sought to make the entire world, Greek and he thought that making Greek the international language would be the best means of achieving this goal. Those who came to power after his death brought that dream to greater reality than Alexander himself had been able to achieve. Within a few years after Alexander's death, one could travel anywhere from India to Rome and communicate in Greek. It became the universal language of literature, commerce, and government.

## **SECTION THREE**

### **The Empire divided**

When Alexander died, he was immediately, but briefly, succeeded by his brother, Arridaeus. A few weeks later, Alexander's wife, Roxane, gave birth to a son who was named Alexander. Alexander's powerful generals quickly dispatched his dynastic heirs.

His successors, the *Diadochi*, fought each other for power. After about seven years of various leaders struggling to get the upper hand, four outstanding leaders emerged:

- Antigonus, who aspired to become the true successor to Alexander, was the most prominent. His ambition was to keep the empire intact. He held all the country from the Mediterranean to Central Asia.
- Cassander, the son of General Antipater, ruled Macedonia
- Ptolemy Lagi possessed Egypt and southern Syria.
- Seleucus Nicator, was the governor of Babylon. When Antigonus' armies approached Babylon in an effort to bring the entire empire under his rule, Seleucus fled to Egypt and became the leading general in Ptolemy's army. Ere much time had passed, Seleucus left the service of Ptolemy and became a fourth contender for a portion of the empire.

Over the next several years, these four battled back and forth for pieces of the empire. The original antagonists died and were succeeded by their heirs. Finally, by 276 BC, three great powers were firmly established in their respective lands:

- The house of Ptolemy in Egypt
- The house of Seleucus in Asia
- The house of Antigonus in Macedonia.

The Seleucids founded the city of Antioch in Syria. From that time onward, *Antioch*, was a frequent part of each Seleucid's name. Antigonus had no impact on the Jews. The Ptolemies and Seleucids had a major impact.

<b>The Greek Kings of Egypt</b>	<b>The Seleucids</b>
323-285 BC Ptolemy I	312-280 BC Seleucus Nicator
285-247 BC Ptolemy II	280-261 BC Antiochus I
247-222 BC Ptolemy III	261-246 BC Antiochus II
222-205 BC Ptolemy IV	246-226 BC Seleucus II
205-182 BC Ptolemy V	226-223 BC Seleucus III
182-146 BC Ptolemy VI	222-187 BC Antiochus III
146- 117 BC Ptolemy VII	187-175 BC Seleucus IV
	175-164 BC Antiochus IV Epiphanes
	163-161 BC Antiochus V
	161-146 BC Alexander Balas
	146-143 BC Antiochus VI
	143-139 BC Tryphon
	139-130 BC Antiochus VII

In 312 BC, after a victory over the forces of Antigonus at Gaza, Ptolemy pressed forward into Syria and conquered all of the important cities, including Jerusalem. Ptolemy carried back to Egypt more than 100,000 Jews. Agatharchides, who gives an account of Ptolemy's entrance and presence in Jerusalem, wrote,

“There are a people called Jews, and they dwell in a city which is the strongest of all cities, and which the inhabitants call Jerusalem. And they are accustomed to rest on every seventh day; at these times they do not take up arms, nor do they follow agricultural pursuits, nor do they occupy themselves with the affairs of (daily) life; but they lift up their hands in their holy places, and pray until the evening. Now it came to pass that when Ptolemy, the son of Lagi, entered into this city with his army, that these people, in observing their foolish custom, instead of guarding their city, suffered their country to submit to a cruel master; and their law was thus clearly proved to command a foolish practice.”<sup>206</sup>

After taking the prisoners to Egypt, Ptolemy settled them in various regions of his kingdom. He armed about 30,000 of them and established them in fortresses throughout the country. Of greatest importance to the future history of the Jews is the Jewish colony that Ptolemy established in Alexandria. The Alexandrian Jewish colony was given a charter and enjoyed great privileges in the city.

Little information exists concerning the Jewish experience in Palestine under the Ptolemaic rule. For the most part, it seems the Jews lived peaceful lives. Some scholars consider this to be the period in which significant literary activity took place, although others would date the documents cited as being from another period.

Ptolemy I and his son, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, developed their capital city, Alexandria, into a fountain of Hellenistic culture and learning. Alexandria's reputation in this regard was wide-spread, causing immigrants from all nations to settle there. The rising generations of Jews throughout the world no longer knew Hebrew. No longer were they able to follow the sacred text as it was read in the synagogue. All Jews in every nation knew Greek. As a result of this condition one of the most significant events involving the Bible took place in Alexandria.

According to tradition, Philadelphus (Ptolemy II) took great pride in the fact that he possessed the world's finest collection of books. One day, the librarian told the monarch that he had brought together in the 995 books in his library the very best literature in the world, but the greatest books of all, the five books of Moses, were not included among them. In response to this report, Ptolemy II sent envoys to the High Priest in Jerusalem to ask for copies of these five books. He also asked the High Priest to send along with the books men who could read Hebrew and translate the books into Greek. The High Priest complied. He sent a copy of the Torah in the company of 72 learned and wise scribes. Great celebrations were held in honor of these august visitors from Jerusalem. The king and his courtiers were greatly astonished at the wisdom of their visitors. After the festivities, the scribes were sent to the Island of Pharos, off the coast of Alexandria. Each man worked alone in an assigned cell. Evidently each man translated the entire Torah, because after each man had completed his work, the translations were compared with one another and all seventy-two translations were in perfect word for word agreement. Accordingly, the Greek version of the Old Testament is called the *Septuagint*, meaning, “seventy.” In time, the rest of the Old Testament was translated into Greek and added to the work done by the seventy (seventy-two) scribes. Most scholars consider this tale to be far-fetched, but the basic outline is true.

The Septuagint became the Bible for all Jews in every nation. It was the only Bible that most Jews knew. It is the version that is quoted by Jesus and the apostles throughout the New Testament. Since the Old Testament of our modern Bibles are renderings of the Hebrew text, some of the quotes of Jesus and the apostles are not in word for word agreement with the text in our Old Testament.

Judah's attachment to the Ptolemies lasted for more than 100 years. In time, the Seleucids of Antioch once again coveted Palestine and began to force their way southward. After a victorious battle against Ptolemy V, at the sources of the Jordan, Antiochus III (called, “the Great,”) took over Palestine. Thus, in 195 BC, Judah once again came under a new sovereignty.

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<sup>206</sup> Quoted by Josephus, *Contra Apion*, I, 22

## SECTION FOUR

### Palestine under Seleucid control

The seed of Greek culture had been seeping into Judah for many generations. After Alexander's campaigns, the enduring influence of Greek thinking became more and more apparent. The Seleucid rulers began establishing Greek cities throughout the region and populating them with Greek colonists and Hellenized Jews.

Antiochus III promised the Jews that his dynasty would respect the Jews' religious autonomy and he fulfilled his promise. The Jews fared well under his rule. In 190 AD, Antiochus III faced off against the Romans at Magnesia (in modern Turkey). Antiochus had a vastly superior force, twice the size of the Romans. He also had scythed chariots, elephants (commanded by his friend, Hannibal), and a veteran cavalry, which he personally led. The Romans routed the Greeks. From this time onward, Antiochus III and his two sons, Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV, realized that they needed to prepare for the unavoidable future conflict with Rome.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes came to the Seleucid throne as a man of long range vision. He decided that the best way to strengthen his empire was to go beyond what Alexander had attempted. Something more than a common language was needed as a cohesive element. He decided that religion would be a stronger common denominator. He decided to integrate all of the gods of all of the people in the empire. The Olympian Zeus would be at the top of the theological pyramid. Of course, this was destined to cause severe problems among the Jews.

As suzerain, Antiochus believed that he had the legal right to install, remove, and replace anyone in any position of authority in his subject provinces. Political expediency and monetary gain were his only considerations. To Antiochus, the Jewish High Priesthood was no more than the local governor of a district in his realm. The Jews regarded the High Priesthood to be a matter of Divine appointment, with which no human power, however exalted, had any right to interfere.

Three parties existed among the Jews at this time. There was the always present Egyptian party, favoring alliances with Egypt. The Hellenist (Syrian) party favored Greek influence and customs among the Jews. The Orthodox party stood against both of these.

When Antiochus IV came to the throne, Onias III was the High Priest. Onias was attached to the orthodox, the old faith, but he also had leanings toward the Egyptian party. The leader of the party that favored the Greeks was his own brother, Jason. Jason contacted Antiochus and promised him a great sum of money if he would remove Onias from the High Priesthood and install Jason in that position. Jason also asked Antiochus permission to erect a gymnasium and an ephebeion,<sup>207</sup> and to allow the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be enrolled as Antiochans, i.e., to grant them the title and privileges of citizens of Antioch. Antiochus was quite ready to do what Jason asked and Onias was removed and Jason was installed as the High Priest. The Hellenizing process proceeded to be carried on with great energy.

A gymnasium (more or less a stadium) was erected in the valley below the Temple.<sup>208</sup> The young men began to exercise themselves in the gymnastic arts of the Greeks. Even the priests forsook their service at the altar and began to spend their time in the gymnasium. The priests became quite involved in distributing the daily oil with which the athletes covered their bodies.<sup>209</sup>

Several things were disturbing about the gymnasium but the most disturbing to orthodox Jews was the fact that all athletes exercised and competed in the nude. The word, *gymnasium*, is from the Greek word meaning,

<sup>207</sup> A center for the physical training of young men, especially for military service. In some sense, the activity in the ephebeion was initiation into manhood. The term comes from the Greek word for pubic hair.

<sup>208</sup> Josephus calls the valley, the *Tyropoeon* i.e., "(Valley) of the cheesemakers"

<sup>209</sup> II Maccabees 4:7-14 describes the initiation of these schemes.

*naked.*<sup>210</sup> The body could be covered only with a thin coat of oil. Naked discus throwing became an obsession with the young men of Jerusalem. All of this took place in full view of the Temple, only a few steps from the Holy of Holies. Keller aptly states how this public display of nakedness went against orthodox Jewish culture.

“Modesty pervaded every act and movement in the Hebrew physical life. They not only observed it with jealous care, but considered public nudity an incentive to vice.”<sup>211</sup>

One of the elements that created this view was Jehovah’s statements concerning the reason for not having any ascending steps to the altar as well as His design for the attire of the priests.

*And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it.*<sup>212</sup>

*You shall make for them linen breeches to cover their bare flesh; they shall reach from the loins even to the thighs*<sup>213</sup>.

Nakedness was not the end of the scandal. The male human body was at the center of the Greek conception of beauty. The phallus was an important element in the ideal male figure. Greek statues of important figures always enhanced that portion of the male form. When the Jewish athletes displayed in full view to the public eye the fact that they were circumcised, they became the object of pointed figures and laughing mockery. They had mutilated an important part of the male form. The resulting scorn, ridicule, and expressions of aversion became so intense that the Jewish athletes began to undergo a surgery to restore the natural state. Younger Hellenized Jewish parents ceased circumcising their sons.

Another serious aspect to this obsession with Greek athletics was the religious element attached to the games. All athletic activity was deemed to be religious exercise dedicated to the Greek gods, Zeus and Apollo.<sup>214</sup> On one occasion, the High Priest Jason sent a contribution to the sacrificial festival of Hercules at the games which were celebrated every fourth year at Tyre. The Jews who were entrusted with delivering the gift were so offended by this assignment that they implored the Tyranians to spend the money on the building of ships.<sup>215</sup>

Jason continued down this path for three years (174-171 BC). Another member of the family, Menelaus, coveted the High Priesthood. He contacted Antiochus and promised to give him a larger sum of money than Jason had given. So, Antiochus removed Jason and made Menelaus High Priest. Menelaus roused bitter animosity against himself by abusing his role. He appropriated the treasures from the Temple, some for himself and some to use as a bribe given to Antiochus. He also was the instigator behind the murder of Onias III, whom orthodox Jews considered the true High Priest.

Jason was not content to be set aside. In 170 BC, when Antiochus was engaged in an expedition against Egypt, Jason came with force against Menelaus, and Menelaus was forced to take refuge in the castle. Jason declared himself the High Priest. Antiochus considered this to be a slight upon himself, since he had made Menelaus the High Priest. Toward the end of 170 BC, Antiochus returned from Egypt and marched against Jerusalem. He led the troops himself. He directed a terrible massacre. With the assistance of Menelaus, he plundered the treasures of the Temple, taking all of the valuable articles, including the altar of incense, the seven-branched candlestick, and the table of showbread.

Two years later, 168 BC, Antiochus undertook another campaign against Egypt. This time, the Romans took the field against him. The Roman general, Popilius Laenas, under a flag of truce, presented him with a decree

<sup>210</sup> γυμνός (*gymos*) - naked; γυμνάζω (*gymnazo*) - to exercise naked

<sup>211</sup> Keller, page 115

<sup>212</sup> Exodus 20:26

<sup>213</sup> Exodus 28:42

<sup>214</sup> I Maccabees 1:5; Keller page 328-329; Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* Volume I (Hendrickson Publishers – a reprinting of T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1890) 2008, pages 202-203

<sup>215</sup> Schurer, pages 203-204



from the Roman senate, stating that if he wanted to avoid being regarded as an enemy of Rome that he should abandon all efforts to conquer Egypt. Antiochus said that he would like to take a bit of time to think about his response. Popilius took his walking stick and drew a circle around Antiochus and told him, “think in that circle.” Antiochus realized that he had no choice but to yield to the demand of the Romans.

Antiochus left Egypt, frustrated, and took out that frustration on Judah. First he sent a chief collector, Apollonius, with orders to Hellenize Judah – thoroughly. Any of the Jewish population that did not cooperate was treated with barbarity. The men were slaughtered, and the women and children were sold into slavery. All orthodox Jews who could do so escaped from the city. Greek colonists were brought into Jerusalem where they joined the Hellenized Jews. Jerusalem was to become a Greek city. The walls of the city were thrown down, except for the old city of David, which was fortified anew and turned into a powerful stronghold for the Greek garrison.

Throughout the whole land the Jewish religion was to be stamped out. The observance of all Jewish rites, especially keeping the Sabbath and circumcision were forbidden and were declared capital crimes. In all cities of Judah, sacrifices were to be made to Greek deities. Whenever anyone showed any reluctance, obedience was enforced with violence. Once each month officers went through every village to seek out those who were disobeying Antiochus’ decree. If anyone were found to possess a copy of the Torah, he was executed; or if a recently circumcised child were found, those responsible for the circumcision were executed.

On December 15, 168 BC, a pagan altar was built on the Hebrew altar of burnt offering. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, swine’s flesh and unclean animals were sacrificed upon the altar.<sup>216</sup> The offering was to the Olympic Zeus to which the Jerusalem Temple had been dedicated by Antiochus. The Jews were compelled to keep the Dionysiac festival, in which the celebrants marched in a procession, crowned with ivy, as devotees of Bacchus.

Many Jews refused to abandon the faith of their fathers. Wonderful stories of brave martyrdom are found in Jewish literature. II Maccabees records a number of these accounts. In time, passive resistance was succeeded by open revolt – that is the topic of the next section.

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<sup>216</sup> Daniel had prophesied that this desecration was to take place (Daniel 11:31; 12:11)

## **PART FOUR**

### **THE MACCABEAN PERIOD**

In the process of carrying out Antiochus' determination to destroy Judaism and to replace it with an Hellenized culture, military teams were sent into every town and village. When they arrived at the village of Modin, they met their match in the person of an aged priest named, Mattathias. Mattathias was a priest of the order of Joarib. He was descended from Asamoneus and was a citizen of Jerusalem.<sup>217</sup> For unknown reasons, Mattathias left Jerusalem and settled in the remote village of Modin. I Maccabees records the grief that Mattathias was experiencing over the horrors that were taking place in Judah.<sup>218</sup> Perhaps this is why he left the city and moved to the remote village. Modin is about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem, half-way between Jerusalem and Joppa, in the hill country near Lydda.<sup>219</sup> Modin must have been some sort of ancestral home, because it was the location of the family tomb.<sup>220</sup>

#### **Jewish leaders and rulers during the Maccabean Period**

167 – 166 BC Mattathias  
166 – 160 BC Judas Maccabaeus  
160 – 142 BC Jonathan  
142 – 133 BC Simon  
133 – 104 BC John Hyrcanus  
104 – 103 BC Aristobulus I  
103 – 76 BC Alexander Jannaeus  
76 – 67 BC Alexandra (Salome)  
67 – 63 BC Aristobulus II

### **Section One: The Beginning of the Revolt**

#### **Gentile Rulers: Antiochus IV Epiphanes**

When the emissaries from the king arrived in Modin, they set up a heathen altar and then called the villagers to assemble before it. I Maccabees describes the scene,

“Mattathias and his sons stood in a group. The king’s officers spoke to Mattathias: ‘You are a leader here,’ they said, ‘a man of mark and influence in this town, with your sons and your brothers at your back. You be the first, now, to come forward and carry out the king’s order....Then you and your sons will be enrolled among the King’s Friends; you will receive high honors, rich rewards of silver and gold, and many further benefits’”<sup>221</sup>

They told Mattathias that all the nations, as well as the leading men in Judea and the people left in Jerusalem, had complied with the king’s decree.

They had chosen the wrong man to lead the parade. Mattathias bellowed out,

<sup>217</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, XII, vi, 1; I Maccabees 2:1

<sup>218</sup> I Maccabees 2:1

<sup>219</sup> Today the village is the merchant town of El-Medieh

<sup>220</sup> I Maccabees 2:70

<sup>221</sup> I Maccabees 2:15-18 NEB

“Though all the nations within the king’s dominions obey him and forsake their ancestral worship, though they have chosen to submit to his commands, yet I and my sons and brothers will follow the covenant of our fathers. Heaven forbid we should ever abandon the law and its statutes. We will not obey the command of the king, nor will we deviate one step from our forms of worship.”<sup>222</sup>

Just as soon as Mattathias made his declaration, a Jew from the village stepped forward to offer the heathen sacrifice – he was going to lead the parade. Filled with anger, Mattathias immediately slew the man; without a moment’s notice he also slew King’s commissioner<sup>223</sup> and tore down the altar.<sup>224</sup>

Mattathias then called for the people to rebel against the edict of the king.

“Follow me,” he shouted through the town, “every one of you who is zealous for the law and strives to maintain the covenant.” He and his sons took to the hills, leaving their belongings behind in the town.”<sup>225</sup>

Another group of Judeans, wanting to maintain the Law and to worship the only True God, left their villages and went into the wilds. They lived in the caves of the region. They took their families and their cattle with them, thinking that in the wilds they would be so isolated that no one would bother them. However, through some means, word of the fugitives’ action reached Antiochus’ officers in Jerusalem. The officers quickly organized a sizeable force and proceeded into the wilderness. When they arrived opposite the cave where the people were assembled on the Sabbath, the officers shouted across the valley to the Judeans that if they would come out of the caves and submit to the king’s command that they would be spared. The Jews replied that they would not obey the king’s command, nor would they profane the Sabbath. Immediately, the attack was launched. Because it was the Sabbath, the Jews would not defend themselves.

“They neither hurled stones, nor barricaded their caves. ‘Let us meet death with a clear conscience’ they said. ‘We call heaven and earth to testify that there is no justice in slaughter.’ So, they were attacked and massacred on the Sabbath, men, women, and children, up to a thousand in all and their cattle with them.”<sup>226</sup>

When word of the slaughter reached Mattathias and his company, they grieved deeply, and then made a decision that if they were attacked on the Sabbath they would fight. To do otherwise, they concluded, would mean that all who were faithful to the Law would be killed. Many faithful Jews joined Mattathias’ band.

A significant company of *Chasidim* joined the group. They were “stalwarts of Israel, everyone of them a volunteer in the cause of the Law.”<sup>227</sup>

### Excursus – Chasidim

Chasidim<sup>228</sup>, (the pious, or puritans), was a name assumed by orthodox Jews to distinguish them from the Hellenizing faction in Judea (whom they called “the impious,” “the lawless”). They held very strict and seriously honest views on religion. They already existed as a party before

<sup>222</sup> I Maccabees 2:19-22 NEB

<sup>223</sup> Interestingly, the record (I Maccabees 2:15) states that the “king’s officers” (plural) came to the town of Modin to see that the sacrifice was offered. However, the record also states that Mattathias “killed the officer” sent by the king to enforce the sacrifice. One can speculate as to the explanation for this seemingly difference in terminology. It is possible that only the one commissioner was present for the sacrifice, or that other officers were so intimidated by Mattathias’ action that they did not interfere with the destruction of the altar.

<sup>224</sup> I Maccabees 2:23-25

<sup>225</sup> I Maccabees 2:27-28 NEB

<sup>226</sup> I Maccabees 2:36-38 NEB

<sup>227</sup> I Maccabees 2:42 NEB

<sup>228</sup> Often referred to as the Hasidaeans

the revolution led by Mattathias. They cared little for politics and had no sympathy with those who cared for national aspirations, except when these affected their religion. They only joined the Maccabeans in order to secure the right to follow their own religious practices. Thus, they had no problem in abandoning Judas Maccabeus when an opposing group came along that had in their company a priest who was of the seed of Aaron.<sup>229</sup>

The company of rebels now had substantial numbers and they organized themselves into an effective fighting force. Their first action was to sweep through the country, pulling down the heathen altars, forcibly circumcising all of the uncircumcised boys that they found in their path, and hunting down all who had been promoting the heathen religion. The religious renegades who escaped their wrath “took refuge among the Gentiles.”<sup>230</sup>

Mattathias was an old man when he began the revolution. He died in 166 BC, not long after beginning the revolt. As he lay dying, surrounded by his sons, he instructed them on how to proceed. Mattathias had five sons: Judas, John, Simon, Jonathan, and Eleazar. His son, Simon, he said was a wise man and so they should listen to him in the same way that they would listen to a father. He said that Judas Maccabaeus had been strong and brave from boyhood, therefore he should be the commander in the field. He urged them to bring together all of the people that they could find who observed the Law, and then with fury relentlessly avenge the wrongs done by Antiochus and his followers. His closing words were, “Repay the Gentiles in their own coin, and always heed the Laws commands.” His sons took his body to Modin where they buried it in the family tomb. (MAP XV)

## **Section Two: The Leadership of Judas Maccabaeus**

### **166/5- April 160 BC**

#### **Gentile Rulers: Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Lysias, Antiochus V Eupator, Demetrius I**

Thus, Judas Maccabaeus<sup>231</sup> became the military commander of the company. Although the term, *Maccabaeus*, applies appropriately only to Judas, the group and movement has been called by that term from ancient times. The family also is known as Hasmonaeans, because Mattathias was of the Asmonean family.

Judas Maccabaeus proved to be a very clever and gifted military commander. He was “a hero of chivalry, bold and powerful, not waiting to ask about the possibility of success, but enthusiastically sacrificing his good and his blood in a noble cause.”<sup>232</sup> In its earliest stage, the movement had amazing success. In one battle after another Judas won brilliant victories which ultimately restored proper worship in Jerusalem.

The first battle of record took place between the Maccabees and a force led by Apollonius, probably the same man mentioned earlier as Antiochus’ chief enforcer of the odious decree. When Judas learned that Apollonius had put together a large Gentile army, including forces from Samaria, the Maccabean did not hesitate for a moment. Judas took the initiative and went out to meet his enemy. Many Gentiles were slain, including Apollonius; the rest fled the scene. Judas took Apollonius’ sword and used it as his personal weapon for the rest of his life. (MAP XV)

The second notable encounter was against a Syrian army led by Seron. Seron heard that Judas had gathered a large army and of his success in battle. He thought that he could make a great name for himself if he defeated

<sup>229</sup> See J. Hutchison, “Hasidaeans,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Volume II (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1952, page 1342

<sup>230</sup> I Maccabees 2:44-48

<sup>231</sup> The name, *Maccabaeus*, generally is considered to mean, “hammer.” However, a minority of scholars, challenging the current form the Hebrew name, argue that it means, “exterminator,” i.e., the exterminator of his enemies.

<sup>232</sup> Schurer, Volume I, page 213

Judas. He had a large contingent of Hellenized Jews who were eager to take vengeance on Judas and his followers. So, he led a large army into Judea. When he reached the pass of Beth-horon, northwest of Jerusalem, Judas advanced to meet him with but a handful of men.

Judas' small army began to question whether or not they should engage the superior force. They also were exhausted from not having taken time to eat on the hurried march to meet the enemy. Judas replied,

“Many can easily be overpowered by a few; it makes no difference to Heaven to save by many or by few. Victory does not depend on numbers; strength comes from Heaven alone. Our enemies come filled with insolence and lawlessness to plunder and kill us and our wives and our children. But we are fighting for our lives and our religion. Heaven will crush them before our eyes. You need not be afraid of them.”<sup>233</sup>

The Syrian army was routed. Eight hundred of the Syrian army were slain and the rest fled to Philistia. (**MAP XVI**)

The revolution under Matthias had begun when Antiochus was on an expedition against the Partians. He had appointed a man named Lysias to remain in Antioch as the Imperial Chancellor to oversee matters in the king's absence. One of Lysias' main responsibilities was protect the heir to the throne, Antiochus V. Eupator. When Antiochus learned of the rebellion in Judah, he sent a message to Lysias, ordering him to fit out a large army and move to quell the Judean rebels. Lysias dispatched to Judea a large body of troops under the command of three generals, Ptolemy, Nicanor, and Gorgias. The defeat of the Jews seemed so certain that foreign merchants accompanied the army, planning to purchase as slaves the anticipated Jewish captives.

Even though the Judean army had grown in organization and experience, they were numerically inferior to the large Syrian army. Judas prepared for the future by praying and fasting.

In 166 BC, the two armies met west of Jerusalem, in the hill country near Emmaus. While the main body of the Syrian army remained encamped at Emmaus, Gorgias led a strong detachment out into the field expecting to engage the Judeans. When Judas' spies brought news of this to Judas, he led troops by a circuitous route that placed them behind Gorgias. Thus, the Judeans were between Gorgias and the main body bivouacked at Emmaus. Judas inspired his troops with a rousing speech and they zealously swept down upon the unsuspecting Syrian troops at ease in camp. The Syrians were overwhelmed. Unable to find the Judeans, Gorgias returned to camp, only to find it in flames and the Jews ready to do battle. Gorgias and his troops immediately fled from the scene and took refuge in Philistia. This victory of the Jew was complete. (**MAP XVII**)

In the autumn of 165 BC, Lysias assembled a larger army and personally led it in combat against the Jews. Instead of coming at Judea directly from the northwest (the immediate route from Antioch to Jerusalem), he marched his troops south through Philistia and then approached Jerusalem from the south. The two armies met at Beth-zur, south of Jerusalem on the road to Hebron. Although the Judeans once again faced a vastly superior force, Judas' inspirational speeches, plus his military skill, gave the Judeans the victory. For well over a year the Syrians withdrew from the struggle. Internal political infighting took their attention away from their concerns with Judea. (**MAP XVIII**)

In the meantime, Judas' army had wrested control of Jerusalem from the heathens. Judas gathered his men in Mizpah, which had been the stronghold of Israel in the times of the judges. The exact location of Mizpah is not known, except that it is not far from Jerusalem.

Judas and the orthodox Jews were able to accomplish the original goal of the rebellion – to restore proper worship in Jerusalem and to make the Temple the center of national worship. All of the damage to the Temple was repaired. The walls were rebuilt. All heathen pollution was removed, the heathen altar was destroyed and a new holy altar was constructed. The rededication of the Temple took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Chisleu (December), 164 BC, the third anniversary of the day on which a heathen sacrifice had been offered upon the

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<sup>233</sup> I Maccabees 3:18-22 NEB

holy altar,<sup>234</sup> The only Syrian presence left in Jerusalem was the *Akra*, the Syrian fortress located in the “second quarter” of Jerusalem, where Syrian troops were billeted. However, Judas was able to keep these forces in check and they did not interfere with the activity of the Jews in the city. Religious freedom had been won for Judah.

Not long after this, Jews in Galilee and Gilead sent word to Judas, asking for help. Their Gentile neighbors were oppressing them and making it difficult to remain faithful to their religion. Judas and Simon led a force to Gilead and Simon led a force to Galilee. Both successfully brought their compatriots back to Jerusalem and settled them there.

As previously stated, political struggles had occupied the Syrians for more than a year and they had not had time to deal with the rebellion in the relatively small province of Judah. The struggle for control of the empire revolved around two powerful Syrians, Lysias and Philip. Lysias had been appointed as Imperial Chancellor during the minority of the young heir, Antiochus V Eupator. However, when Antiochus died on the road back from an unsuccessful campaign in the east (164 BC), on his death bed he appointed one of his closest generals, Philip, to the role of Imperial Chancellor. The problem for Philip was the fact that back in Antioch, Lysias had the boy in his possession. Lysias quickly grabbed absolute sovereign power in the empire. Back and forth struggles between Lysias and Philip continued for some time.

Judas meanwhile undertook campaigns in Edom (Idumea) to the south, and west in the Philistine coastland, and then in the land immediately east of Jordan. Scholars disagree about his motives. Some (such as Oesterly<sup>235</sup>) contend that Judas had expansionist motives; others (such as Schurer<sup>236</sup>) view his actions as consolidating and concentrating his holdings, not expansion. In the opinion of most students of the period, the Jews probably would have been left in peace, without further interference, had it not been for Judas’ growing aggression.

In Jerusalem, Judas decided to oust the Syrian troops from the Syrian fortress. He laid siege to the citadel. Through some means, a few soldiers escaped and along with some Hellenized Jews made their way to Antioch and urged the king to act against Judas. Once again, Lysias led a powerful army against Judah. The young king, Antiochus V Eupator, accompanied him. As in his earlier attempt to defeat Judas, Lysias attacked from the south. Judas had to abandon the siege of the citadel in Jerusalem and lead his troops against Lysias and Eupator. It soon became apparent that even though the Jews were courageous and fearless, the Syrian forces were so large that the Jews would not be able to achieve a decisive victory. Judas’ brother, Eleazar, thought that he had discovered the elephant on which the young king, Antiochus Eupator was riding. He crept forward and with his sword stabbed the elephant from below. The animal fell on Eleazar, crushing him to death. The Jewish army was beaten and the Syrians then proceeded to Jerusalem and laid siege to the Temple mount. **(MAP XIX)**

The siege of Jerusalem brought much suffering to the Jews. Because they were in the second half of a Sabbatical year (the fields in the winter and spring had not been sown), food was in short supply before the siege began. It was the spring of 163 BC. The misery and hunger on Jerusalem seemed to make defeat and destruction certain. However, a surprising turn of events moved in the Jews’ favor. While Lysias and Antiochus Eupator were in Judah, Philip, Lysias’ contender, had marched against Antioch. He intended, by military force, to secure sovereign power for himself. In order to have a free hand in contending with Philip, Lysias had to end the rebellion in Judah. He called a halt to the siege and sought a peace treaty with Judas. Lysias granted to the Jews the liberty to celebrate their religious ceremonies without interference. The reason for the Jewish revolt was over.

<sup>234</sup> In memory of this event, *Chanukah* (“dedication”) festival has been observed by Jews ever since. Its celebration has points of contact with the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkoth*) which, like *Chanukah*, lasts eight days and at which lights always have been a prominent feature. According to Josephus, the proper name of the festival was φωτα (festival of lights). It also goes by the name, “The Feast of the Asmonaeans.” In John 10:22, it is called, “the feast of dedicaton.”

<sup>235</sup> Oesterly, page 233

<sup>236</sup> Schurer, page 221

The future Antiochan kings honored the agreement made between Judah, Lysias, and Antiochus V Eupator. This is a point that needs to be remembered, when studying the next series of events. In the future, the war would not be over the preservation of religion, but which Jewish party would have the upper hand in Judah: the Hellenists or the national party. Future wars were internecine wars. The only way that the Syrians interfered was by placing at the head of the provincial government sometimes a Hellenist and sometimes a person who represented the orthodox. Because the Hellenists were always striving to move away from orthodoxy and the conservatives were striving to restore orthodoxy, religion still was an element, but no longer the dispute that aroused the king.

After the treaty with Lysias, Judas stood as the head of the Jewish people and the Hellenists were driven out of positions of influence.

Lysias and Antiochus V had succeeded in putting down Philip, but a new contender for the throne shortly thereafter displaced them. The new contender was Demetrius I, who later was known as Soter. He was the nephew of Antiochus Epiphanes and thus the cousin of Antiochus Eupator. Demetrius had been in Rome as a hostage. He had tried to get the Roman senate to release him and send him back to Antioch, but the senate refused. So, he escaped and landed at Tripolis on the Phoenician coast. Demetrius began to gather around him a considerable number of followers. One of those who joined his company was the bodyguard of King Antiochus V. Demetrius ordered the assassination of both Antiochus V and Lysias, then Demetrius proclaimed himself king in 162 BC. At first, the Roman senate would not recognize him because he was a fugitive hostage, but in time Demetrius was able to persuade the Romans to recognize him as the King of Syria.

Not long after Demetrius took the throne, a group of Hellenized Jews approached the king. They were led by a man named, Alcimus (his Hebrew name was Jakim). The delegation told the king how difficult life was for them under Judas' regime. Demetrius was persuaded by their presentation and made Alcimus the High Priest. A Syrian army under the command of Bacchides accompanied Alcimus back to Jerusalem, in order to install Alcimus into the office of High Priest – using force if necessary.

At this point, a rather strange thing happened. The *Chasidim*, who had been among the earliest and most zealous supporters of the Maccabean revolt, abandoned Judas and aligned with the new High Priest and his associates. Their reasoning was that Alcimus was a descendent from Aaron and thus, how could they oppose him! Judas and his followers opposed Alcimus, stating that religious interests could be secured only if they kept the government in their own hands. Judas proved to be correct. As soon as Alcimus had secured his position, one of his first acts was the execution of sixty *Chasidim*.

Bacchides thought that all was secure and so he headed back to Antioch, leaving a military force behind to protect Alcimus. Almost immediately, the Maccabeans and the supporters of Alcimus began to have severe conflicts. Realizing that he was losing control, Alcimus sent word to Demetrius and asked for more help.

Demetrius responded to their plea by sending a large army led by general Nicanor. At first, Nicanor tried by intrigue to capture Judas. Judas learned of the plot and so the scheme miscarried. Next, Nicanor and Judas engaged in combat at Capharsalama, resulting in the defeat of the Syrian army. Nicanor in anger returned to Jerusalem and told the priests that if they did not deliver up Judas that he was going to burn the temple. Nicanor's troops bivouacked northwest of Jerusalem, waiting for reinforcements. When the reinforcements arrived, the battle with the Jews was joined, resulting in the utter defeat of the Syrians. Nicanor was slain, his troops began to flee but were overtaken and his entire army was slaughtered. This became the occasion for another annual feast – *Nicanor's Day*, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar – roughly our March.

As the head of the Jewish commonwealth, Judas felt that the only way to keep this position was to be completely free from the Syrian yoke. Political independence became his goal. In order to achieve this, Judas appealed to the Romans for help. Rome was the ruler of the Western Empire, whereas Antioch was the ruler of the Eastern Empire. Rome frequently had interfered with affairs in Syria and had hopes of adding the region to its empire. Judah sent to Rome two ambassadors, Eupolemus and Jason. The Roman senate granted them an audience and a treaty of friendship was executed. The treaty stipulated that in times of war, the Jews would

help the Romans and the Romans would help the Jews. However, the stipulation was that in every case help would be given according to circumstances. This meant that the Romans could decide in each situation to what degree they were bound by the agreement.

The Romans issued a letter to Demetrius ordering him to cease any sort of hostile proceedings against the Jews, who now were allies of the Romans. The letter arrived too late. Demetrius had moved swiftly after the death of Nicanor. In April, 161 BC, he sent a huge army under Bacchides to avenge Nicanor's death. When the huge Syrian army appeared, even the courageous ranks of Judas felt that there was no hope of victory. His followers deserted in large numbers. Judas and a few men threw themselves into the fray. All of the Jewish combatants, including Judas, were slain. After the battle, the Syrians allowed his two brothers, Jonathan and Simon, the privilege of carrying his body to the family tomb in Modin. (MAP XX)

### **Section Three: The Leadership of Jonathan** 160-142/141 BC

**Gentile Rulers: Demetrius I, General Bacchides, Alexander Balas, Ptolemy Philometer, Demetrius II, Tryphon**

After the death of Judas, the rebellion was quelled for a season. Bacchides ruled the country. He was supported by the High Priest, Alcimus, and the Jewish Hellenist party. Bacchides took several measures to keep the revolt from being resurrected:

- He kept a garrison of Syrian troops in the *Akra*, in Jerusalem.
- He divided the land into districts over which he placed men who were given the task of finding those who were sympathetic to the rebels and in opposition to Bacchides. These were brought before the governor and were punished severely.
- He fortified a number of cities and placed Syrian garrisons in them.

In spite of his best efforts he was not able to extract the rebel spirit from Judah.

*The friends of Judas then all united in saying to Jonathan, "Since your brother Judas died, there has been no one like him to head the resistance against our enemies, people like Bacchides and others who hate our nation. Accordingly, we have today chosen you to take his place as our ruler and leader and to fight our campaigns." Whereupon, Jonathan took command, in succession to his brother Judas.*<sup>237</sup>

We should note that this popular election of Jonathan as leader of the revolution did not include election to the High Priesthood. In the view of the orthodox, a man of war was unfit for the spiritual office. Later, that did change.

Under Bacchides' firm rule, there was little opportunity for more than guerilla warfare. During the early period of Jonathan's leadership, another of the Maccabean brothers was killed. John had been put in charge of all of the moveable possessions that the rebel band could call their own. John decided to take these belongings to their friends, the Nabataeans, where they would leave them for safekeeping. John's small caravan was attacked by "the sons of Jambri." All of the Maccabean's belongings were lost and John was executed by the brigands. Jonathan and Simon quickly moved to avenge their brother's death, but in so doing they encountered Bacchides with a contingent of soldiers. The guerillas barely escaped with their lives by swimming back across the Jordan.

In Jerusalem, the Hellenistic High Priest, Alcimus, tore down the wall that separated the Court of Gentiles from the inner court. By so doing, he gave Gentiles access into the sanctuary. This, of course enraged the orthodox Jews. Alcimus died shortly after this (May 159 BC) and the orthodox interpreted this as Divine retribution. The office of High Priest remained vacant for seven years.

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<sup>237</sup> 1Maccabees 9:28-31 NJB



Bacchides, thinking that he had pacified the country, returned to Antioch and reported his success to the king (Demetrius I, Soter). For two years, things remained quiet in Judah. Jonathan and Simon used this period to reassemble an army and to strengthen their position among the populace. The Hellenistic Jews feeling threatened by the growing strength of these Jewish nationalists, sent word to Bacchides to come and help them.

Bacchides returned to Judah with a large army. He soon found that the Maccabees had become so strong that he did not want to confront them in battle. Instead, he vented his anger on the Judean officials who had allowed things to get out of hand. He added to the number of fortified posts in the land and then planned to wash his hands of the Judean matter and return to Antioch for good. Jonathan, hearing that Bacchides was about to leave Judah, sought him out and took the wise step of making peace with him. The result was that although the Hellenists were the nominal rulers in Jerusalem, Jonathan was the leader of the Hasmonaeans and the actual ruler of Judah.

A strange turn of events took place that impacted the Syrian throne. Demetrius had made enemies of the kings of Pergamon, Cappadocia, and Egypt. These kings, plus Rome, wanted to see someone less capable on the Syrian throne. The king of Pergamum, Attalus II, found just the right man. While in Smyrna, Attalus met a young man named, Balas, who had a striking resemblance to the late, Antiochus Epiphanes. Attalus immediately declared Balas to be the son of Antiochus and gave him the name, "Alexander." He established the young man in a post near the Syrian frontier in Cilicia, where he could be a threat to Demetrius. Heracleides, who had been the finance minister under Antiochus, was a refugee in Asia Minor. Knowing that Heracleides had important contacts in the government, Attalus recruited him to become a temporary mentor of Balas. Heracleides was an experienced politician who knew how to bribe senators and so he took Alexander to Rome to meet with the Senate intending to sell him as the son of Antiochus. The Senate, eager to unseat Demetrius, accepted Alexander as Antiochus' son and this set the stage for further controversy. Ptolemy (Philometor, king of Egypt) also gave his support to Alexander.

Demetrius found himself in a precarious position. The orthodox Jews never had been his allies and he knew that if the Jews threw their support toward Balas, then he did not have much hope of retaining his throne. He was forced to make overtures to Jonathan who was the most powerful man in Palestine. Using the opportunity thus afforded him, Jonathan negotiated the release of all Jewish hostages and received the authority to assemble an army, which could be used to support Demetrius. Jonathan took formal possession of Jerusalem, fortified the city and evacuated the Syrian troops from the various strongholds that Demetrius had set up around the country. The two places of influence where Syrians remained were Bethsura, a town in which Hellenizing Jews were allowed to take refuge, and the *Akra*, where a Syrian garrison remained.

The one thing that Demetrius could have done, and failed to do, was appoint Jonathan to the office of High Priest. Alexander Balas saw this as an opportunity to outbid Demetrius for Jonathan's support. He quickly appointed Jonathan as High Priest, sent him a purple robe and a crown wreath of gold, and honored him with the title of the "King's Friend." This played on Jonathan's ambition and he quickly accepted the role and the gifts. At the Feast of the Tabernacles in October 152 BC, Jonathan put on the holy garments of the High Priest and officiated in that role. Immediately thereafter, he began to assemble a sizeable army.

The orthodox party had been given no say in selecting Jonathan to be the High Priest. In their eyes, one who wielded the sword was not fit to be a High Priest. Jonathan's indiscriminate mixing the roles of High Priest and military commander was the first hint of the degradation of the priesthood which became a characteristic of the Hasmonaean High Priests. It also was the beginning of the rift that developed between those who took Judaism seriously and the Hasmonaean priests.

In 150 BC, the armies of Demetrius and Alexander met in battle and Demetrius was slain. Alexander Balas became the undisputed king of Syria and Babylon. Alexander and Jonathan became close friends. When

Alexander married Cleopatra Thea, the daughter of Ptolemy Philometor (150 BC in Ptolemais), Jonathan was a honored guest who was loaded with honors.<sup>238</sup>

During the next few years, Jonathan ruled without interference. The Hellenistic Jews were silenced and Alexander was too busy living a hedonistic life to care about anything else. Demetrius' young son, Demetrius II, appeared in Syria with an army in 147 BC. He was determined to get rid of Alexander and to claim the throne to which he was the rightful heir. All of Alexander's supporters except Jonathan deserted him. Apollonius, who had been one of Alexander's chief governors, threw his support to Demetrius II. Demetrius assigned to Apollonius the responsibility for controlling Palestine. This placed upon Apollonius' shoulders the responsibility for dealing with Jonathan. In the ensuing battles, Jonathan was victorious. As a result of Jonathan's victories Alexander retained the throne. Realizing the great debt that he owed to Jonathan, he rewarded him by adding Ekron and the surrounding district to Jonathan's realm.

Once again, the unpredictable shifting of political fortunes is illustrated by the next series of events. The Egyptian ruler, Ptolemy Philometor, unhappy with his son-in-law, Alexander, marched up the coast toward Antioch. Jonathan met him at Joppa and instead of a battle they affirmed their friendship. Alexander fled to Cilicia, when he learned of Ptolemy's advancing army. Ptolemy declared his daughter's marriage to Alexander void and he gave her in marriage to Demetrius II.

No one knows why Ptolemy chose to displace Alexander, but it is the opinion of many that he felt that with a young inexperienced Demetrius on the throne, he could keep Syria/Palestine under his thumb.

Alexander returned in 145 BC to fight for his kingdom. The combined forces of Demetrius II and Ptolemy met Alexander in battle. Alexander was defeated and fled the battlefield to take refuge among the Arabs. Zabdiel, a prominent Arabian, decapitated Alexander and sent his head to Ptolemy. Ptolemy had been wounded in the battle with Alexander and he died from those wounds three days after receiving the "gift."

Jonathan now felt stronger than ever and was determined to get rid of the last vestige of Syrian control in Palestine. He began by attempting to expel the Syrian troops from the *Akra*. The Hellenistic Jews' appealed to Demetrius, asking him to control Jonathan. Demetrius sent word to Jonathan to come to Ptolemais (where Demetrius had taken up residence) and explain his conduct.

Jonathan won Demetrius' favor and instead of being chastised he was confirmed in his role as High Priest. In addition, Judea was to be free from all tribute, the three districts of Samaria were to be added to his province and these also were to be free from tribute. All that Jonathan offered for these districts was three hundred talents. Realistically, Demetrius could not afford to refuse Jonathan. On the one hand, the Jewish leader had become a force to be reckoned with and on the other hand, the Seleucid empire was weakening.

Next on the scene was the military adventurer, Diodotus, who assumed the name, Tryphon. Alexander Balas had an infant son whom Tryphon put forth as a claimant for the Seleucid throne. Tryphon, with some troops who had deserted Demetrius, occupied Antioch (Demetrius continued to make Ptolemais his home). Demetrius looked to Jonathan for support. Jonathan agreed to come to Demetrius' aid, on the condition that the Syrians would vacate the *Akra* and also give to Jonathan several Syrian strongholds in Judea. Demetrius was not in a position to refuse anything and so these concessions were given. Jonathan dispatched 3000 troops which successfully dislodged Tryphon. For the time being Demetrius was saved, but as soon as the threat was removed, Demetrius broke faith with Jonathan.

Disillusioned with Demetrius, Jonathan transferred his allegiance to Tryphon. Jonathan's brother, Simon, was made captain of the coastline provinces from Tyre to the borders of Egypt. Realizing that he had to unseat Jonathan, Demetrius mounted an attack against the Jewish leader. In the ensuing battle at Hazor, Jonathan's forces won the day. Demetrius gathered further troops and attacked Jonathan at Hamath. When Jonathan's troops obviously were winning, Demetrius fled the battlefield, leaving his troops to suffer whatever fate awaited them.

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<sup>238</sup> 1Maccabees 10:59-66)

At this point, Jonathan renewed an alliance with Rome. Tryphon began to fear the rising strength of Jonathan. It became apparent that unless Jonathan were restrained, Judea could be freed from Seleucid rule. Tryphon led an army in Judea intending to do battle with Jonathan. However, when Tryphon saw the size of Jonathan's army, he realized that military conquest was not the best way to achieve his goals. He called off the battle, received Jonathan with honor, and commanded all of his forces to be obedient to Jonathan. He invited Jonathan to travel with him to Ptolemais, promising to give the city to Jonathan as a gift. Jonathan fell into the trap. When they arrived in Ptolemais, the gates were closed, Jonathan's body guard was slain and Jonathan became a prisoner.

Simon immediately succeeded Jonathan as the Jewish leader. He refortified Jerusalem, and sent an army to seize Joppa. That successful venture gave the Jews a seaport. Before long, Tryphon appeared at the head of an army with Jonathan as prisoner. Tryphon, once again wanting to avoid a battle, sent word to Simon that the only reason that he held Jonathan prisoner was because the Jews owed money to the royal treasury. Simon knew that this was not true, but he sent the money so that no one could accuse him of missing an opportunity to free his brother. As Simon suspected, Jonathan was not released and Tryphon attempted to advance upon Jerusalem. A snow storm prevented him from fulfilling his plan. As he retreated to the Syrian capital, he executed Jonathan at Baskama. Simon sought out his brother's bones, found them, and buried them at Modein.

## **Section Four: The Leadership of Simon** **142-134 BC**

### **Gentile Rulers: Tryphon, Demetrius II, Antiochus VII Sodetes**

When Simon became the leader of the Maccabean revolt, there were two claimants for the Syrian throne: Demetrius II and the child Antiochus VI, under the guardianship of Tryphon. Tryphon murdered Antiochus and then assumed the crown for himself. Simon cast his lot with Demetrius and was rewarded by being granted full immunity from all taxation. The Jews understood this as meaning that they had achieved complete independence. Simon next sought to rid Jerusalem of the Syrian troops garrisoned in the *Akra*, by blocking their supply and thus starving them into submission. He also established important garrison cities, the most vital being Gezer, where he placed his son, John, as commander.

For quite some time the Jews were left in peace; the two Syrian rulers had their hands busy in battling with one another. During Simon's rule, an history-changing event took place. The High Priestly office was hereditary. The last man to occupy this office, legitimately, was Onias. When Antiochus made Jason High Priest, even though he was of the right family and the brother of Onias, the Jews never accepted him because the legitimate High Priest, Onias, was still living and also because Jason had been appointed by a Gentile king. Jason therefore was viewed as a usurper. Menelaus was a further affront, because he did not even belong to a priestly family. Alcimus belonged to the High Priestly family but because he was appointed by a Gentile ruler he also was viewed as a usurper. When Jonathan was appointed High Priest by Balas, there still were objections because, even though he belonged to a priestly family, it was not the High Priestly family, and besides he had been appointed by a Gentile ruler. Thus, the same thing was true of Simon.

The situation changed in 140 BC. The Jews legitimized the Hasmonaeans as the new High Priestly family. I Maccabees records the event.

*When these events were reported to our people, they said, 'What mark of appreciation shall we give to Simon and his sons? He stood firm, he and his brothers and his father's house: he fought off the enemies of Israel and secured its freedom.' So they recorded an inscription on bronze tablets and set it up on pillars on Mount Zion...*

Then follows a long account of the inscription, the salient points of which are these,

*the people, aware of Simon's loyalty and of the glory which he was determined to win for his nation, have made him their ethnarch and high priest, for all his services and for the integrity and loyalty*

*which he has shown towards his nation, and for having by every means sought to enhance his people's power...*

*that the Jews and priests are happy that Simon should, pending the advent of a genuine prophet, be their ethnarch and high priest for life ...*

*with the right to appoint officials to oversee the fabric of the sanctuary and to administer the country, munitions and fortresses; he is to have personal charge of the sanctuary...*

*And since the people have unanimously agreed to grant Simon the right to act as aforesaid, and since Simon, for his part, has given his assent, and has consented to assume the high-priestly office and to be commander-in-chief and ethnarch of the Jews and their priests, and to preside over all: So, be it now enacted: that this record be inscribed on bronze tablets and be erected at some conspicuous place within the precincts of the Temple, and that copies be deposited in the Treasury for Simon and his descendants.<sup>239</sup>*

Thus the Hasmonaeans became both a new High Priestly dynasty, as well as a new princely dynasty. This was a watershed event in the life of the Jews. Neither Judas nor Jonathan had been elected to the High Priestly office by the people because of scruples against both the sword and the spiritual power being wielded by the same person. The change of the Jewish conscience concerning the High Priesthood could be explained by the younger generation's experience; Jonathan had been in that role for seven years and Simon had endeared himself to the Jewish people. Even so, there was an undercurrent of dissent that did not look favorably on the Hasmonaean High Priesthood. This especially was true among the orthodox and anti-Hellenistic Jews.

In 139 BC Demetrius was taken prisoner in a losing battle with the Parthians. Tryphon became the sole ruler of the Seleucid empire. Next on the scene was Demetrius brother, Antiochus VII Sodes who came against Tryphon with a sizeable army. Tryphon was defeated and imprisoned. As a prisoner, Tryphon was forced to commit suicide.

Antiochus did not recognize the independence of the Jewish state and demanded that Simon return all of the territory outside of Judea that the Maccabeans had gained, either by military force or by concessions from previous rulers. Simon refused these demands and so Antiochus sent an army under the command of Kenedebaeus to unseat Simon. By now, Simon was an old man and so he assigned to his two sons, Judas and John, the responsibility for leading the army against Kenedebaeus. The Jews overwhelmingly defeated the Syrians. As long as Simon was alive (for the next three years), Antiochus made no further attempt to assert his suzerainty.

In 135 BC, Simon toured his military outposts. His son-in-law, Ptolemy, the son of Abubus, was the commander of the Jewish army stationed at Jericho. When Simon visited Jericho, Ptolemy invited Simon and his sons to a banquet. After they had banqueted and imbibed rather heavily, Ptolemy and his guards killed Simon and two of his sons. Ptolemy quickly moved to gain power in Judea. He sent letters to the captains of the army, promising them silver and gold if they would support him. The Hellenists strongly supported him.

Ptolemy knew that he had to eliminate John Hyrcanus, the natural heir to the High Priesthood. John, at the time, was the captain over the stronghold of Gazara. Some unknown person hurried to Gazara with the news that Ptolemy was sending men to Gazra to kill John. John and his forces prepared for the attack and in the ensuing battle, Ptolemy's men were slain. John and Ptolemy both raced toward Jerusalem. John arrived first. When Ptolemy tried to enter the city through another gate, the people of Jerusalem drove him away. John Hyrcanus immediately was recognized as the High Priest. Ptolemy sought refuge in the city of Philadelphia, which was ruled by the tyrant, Zeno.

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<sup>239</sup> 1 Maccabees 14:25-49

## Section Five: The Leadership of John Hyrcanus 134-104 BC

### Gentile Rulers: Antiochus VII

The Syrian monarch, Antiochus VII, was determined to prevent Judea from becoming an independent state. He led an army into Palestine and ultimately put Jerusalem under siege. As the siege progressed and conditions became severe, John sent all non-combatants out of the city. Jerusalem still was under siege when the time arrived for the Feast of Tabernacles. Hyrcanus sent messengers to Antiochus asking for a respite so that those still in Jerusalem could observe this important feast. Surprisingly, Antiochus not only agreed to the request but sent into Jerusalem animals to be used for the required sacrifices. Not long thereafter, John and Antiochus entered into a treaty that required John to surrender Jewish hostages and to pay 500 talents of silver as compensation for the Gentile cities that the Jews had subdued. It was thus made clear that Judea still was a Syrian vassal state.

Antiochus turned his attention to the eastern parts of his empire. In the spring of 129 BC, he undertook a campaign against the Parthians. Hyrcanus, for unknown reasons, accompanied Antiochus on this campaign. As described earlier, Demetrius II had been taken prisoner in 141 BC by the Parthian king, Mithridates I. When Antiochus launched his attack against the Parthians, the present king, Arsaces, released Demetrius and together they attacked Antiochus. The Parthians won the battle and Antiochus was killed.

With the death of Antiochus, Demetrius II became the sole ruler of Syria. Because of difficulties which he immediately faced in the empire, Demetrius was distracted from dealing with Hyrcanus. Hyrcanus took advantage of this and launched a campaign to enlarge the borders of Judea. He captured Medaba on the east of Jordan; he took Shechem and Gerizim, where he destroyed the temple of the Samaritans. He turned south and conquered Idumea and forced the inhabitants to accept Judaism, with all of its rites and customs, including circumcision. He built a new fort northwest of the Temple in Jerusalem.

In 108 BC, Hyrcanus led an expedition against the city of Samaria. He committed the conduct of the siege to two of his sons, Antigonus and Aristobulus. The Samaritans appealed to one of the contenders for the Syrian throne, Antiochus Kyzikenos. He tried to come to the aid of the Samaritans but was driven off by the Jews. He tried a second time with help from Egyptian troops, but failed a second time. After one year, Samaria capitulated and Hyrcanus razed the city.

Shortly after these successes, sedition broke out in Jerusalem. The conflict arose from the problems that the orthodox Jews had with Hyrcanus. In spite of all of the internal religious and political problems that he faced, when he died in 104 BC, he still was in full control of the Judean government.

In his many military campaigns, Hyrcanus not only endeavored to enlarge the borders of Judea, but he also conducted the campaigns as a religious champion. Hyrcanus was the first of the Hasmonaean princes to issue coins in his own name. The coins which have been discovered from this period have the one of the following inscriptions:

- *John the High Priest, and the Community of the Jews*
- *John the High Priest, head of the community of the Jews*

Thus, it is clear that Hyrcanus considered himself to be the head of a religious community.

Of great importance for the subsequent history of Judaism was the development of religious parties during the reign of John Hyrcanus. The priesthood had become increasingly divided into two opposing groups:

- Priests who were politicians who would do anything to further their ambition
- Priests who were orthodox, who would allow nothing to come between them and their religious duties

The priestly aristocracy ruled the land and its members were brought into frequent contact with the Syrian court. They increasingly became inclined toward Hellenism. As the head of state, the High Priest, was busy with

governmental affairs and religious activities became a minor part of his activities. These priestly aristocrats came to be called, *the sons of Zadok* or *Sadducees*.

The orthodox priests were the spiritual heirs of the *Chasidim* who played such an important role in the early days of Judas Maccabaeus' revolt. Two groups were born out of the *Chasidim*. One group, disgusted with the way affairs were going, withdrew from society and lived in isolated communities, taking no interest in political or societal issues. They came to be called, *Essenes*.

The other orthodox group felt that it had a responsibility for the religious survival of the Jews. They chose to remain among the people and to oppose any sort of religious compromise. They came to be known as, *Pharisees* or *The Separated Ones*.

With the Pharisees, the pendulum swung from the liberal apogee of the Sadducees to an extreme legal apogee. They developed traditions that specified how the Law was to be observed. Some of these traditions, such as how much weight a person could carry on the Sabbath or how far one could walk on the Sabbath, without breaking the Sabbath, had no biblical basis. These matters were decided by the leaders of the party and they were set in concrete. Little wonder that the Sadducees and Pharisees often were the bitterest of enemies.

Early on, Hyrcanus was friendly with the Pharisees (he was described as a disciple of the Pharisees), but broke with them when they objected to acknowledging him as king. They did not think that it was proper for the High Priest also to be the king.

## **Section Six: The Leadership of Aristobulus**

### **103 BC**

#### **Gentile Rulers: None of the Gentile Rulers had any impact on Aristobulus**

When John Hyrcanus died, the High Priesthood was assumed by his eldest son, Judas Aristobulus. Aristobulus had a zeal for the traditions of the Jewish faith combined with a love of Greek culture. Hyrcanus left the government of the state in the hands of his widow. Never before had a woman headed the Jewish state and Aristobulus resented the fact that he was not king. According to Josephus, Aristobulus imprisoned his mother and starved her to death in prison<sup>240</sup> (many doubt this tale). He took the title, "King of the Jews." Fearful that his brothers might challenge him for the throne, Aristobulus imprisoned all of his brothers except Antigonus. Aristobulus had a special affection for his younger brother, Antigonus, and he was given a place of honor. Aristobulus was not a healthy man and during a bout of some unspecified illness, politicians who wanted Antigonus out of the way convinced Aristobulus that his brother planned to unseat him and take the throne for himself. At first, Aristobulus would not believe the charge, but since his suspicions had been aroused, he requested that his brother visit him unarmed. Should Antigonus appear armed, he was to be killed. The plotters then told Antigonus that Aristobulus wanted to see his brother in the glory of the new armor that he had just purchased. Suspecting nothing, he donned his armor and headed for the palace. In a secret passageway, he was murdered.

Aristobulus was stricken with grief over his brother's death and he died a few months later from a hemorrhage. He had been the ruler for only one year. He left no heir.

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<sup>240</sup> Antiquities XIII: 302ff

## Section Seven: The Leadership of Alexander Jannaeus

102– 76 BC

### Gentile Rulers: Ptolemy Lathyros, Cleopatra III

Aristobulus, widow, Salome (called, Alexandra, by the Greeks) released his three brothers from prison. She declared the eldest of the three, Alexander Jannaeus, to be the king. Alexander naturally also assumed the High Priesthood. Shortly after donning the crown, Alexander married his sister-in-law, Salome, thus blocking any claims that she might have to the throne.

Once again, the contenders for the Syrian throne were fighting with one another and so, Alexander was left alone. Although the complicated intrigues among the Seleucids are not pertinent to our topic, one episode is important. Alexander invited the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra III to come to his aid in a conflict that developed between Alexander's troops and Ptolemy Lathyros, one of the contenders for the Syrian throne. Ptolemy Lathyros was Cleopatra's son and, strangely, they were one another's enemies. The Egyptian queen responded to Alexander's plea by leading a sizeable army into Judea under the command of two Jewish generals who were sons of Onias the late High Priest. Cleopatra's troops were victorious and she probably would have annexed Judea to her kingdom, were it not for the words of one of her Jewish generals, Ananias,

“you would do an unjust action if you deprived a man that was her ally (Alexander Jannaeus) of that authority that belonged to him; this man, moreover, is related to us; for, I would not have you ignorant of this, that any injustice that you would do to him will make us all that are Jews to be your enemies.”<sup>241</sup>

Cleopatra followed Ananias' advice and so she withdrew her army and returned to Egypt.

The conflict between the Sadducees and Pharisees began to have an influence on Alexander's relationship with the Jewish populace. Especially odious to the Pharisees was Alexander's marriage to Salome. According to the Pharisees' understanding of Ezekiel 44:22, a High Priest could not marry a widow. Furthermore, they were offended by the fact that he seemed to have more interest in military conquests than he did in his religious role. Judas Maccabeus had been a warrior out of necessity. Jannaeus was a warrior by choice.

Early in his reign, while officiating at the Feast of Tabernacles, Jannaeus poured the water at his feet instead of pouring the water on the altar as a symbol of fruitfulness. The crowd was incensed and they began to pelt him with fruit and hurl insults at him. In anger, he ordered his mercenaries to slaughter the crowd. Six hundred Pharisees were slain before the Temple court was cleared. Throughout his life, Alexander Jannaeus was in conflict with the Pharisees.

Some Jews who had been in the army of Demetrius engaged in a prolonged battle with Alexander. When a number of these had been captured, a gruesome event took place. While Alexander was eating with his concubines, he had about 800 of the Pharisees and their supporters crucified in full view of all the city. While they hung on their crosses and were still alive, he ordered that the throats of their children and wives be cut before their eyes. This barbaric act caused many Jewish soldiers to be Jannaeus' enemies for the rest of his life.<sup>242</sup>

Alexander Jannaeus' reign was marked by one military battle after another. Throughout his tenure, Alexander had hired great numbers of Gentile mercenaries rather than relying on Jewish troops. He died while besieging the fortress of Ragaba, east of the Jordan (76 BC).

A very interesting development took place as Alexander faced death. When he saw that death was near, he advised his wife, Alexandra, to put some of her authority into the hands of the Pharisees, for they had sufficient

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<sup>241</sup> *Antiquities*, XIII 354

<sup>242</sup> *Antiquities* XIII 379-383

power among the Jews to hurt those whom they hated and to bring advantage to those whom they favored. He also urged her to assure them that she would not do anything without their cooperation.

## **Section Eight: The Leadership of Alexandra (Salome)** **75-67 BC**

### **Gentile rulers: No Gentiles Rulers had an impact on Alexandra's rule**

Upon his death, Alexander Jannaeus committed the rule of Judea to his wife, Alexandra (Salome). In turn, she appointed her eldest son, Hyrcanus, to the High Priesthood. Not only did Alexandra appoint him because he was the eldest, but also because he was a quiet retiring individual who had no interest in politics. He would not be inclined to interfere with his mother's rule. Hyrcanus also identified with the Pharisees.

In many ways, Alexandra displayed the traits of a pious woman. She was strongly attached to the Pharisees. To a degree this must have been in response to her late husband's advice. However, throughout Alexander's reign, Alexandra had opposed her husband's harsh treatment of the Pharisees. Greatly influenced by Rabbi Simon ben Shetach, she worked to promote peace in the kingdom. During her reign, almost everything was carried on according to Mosaic Law. Judaism was practiced without any hindrance.

She worked with the Pharisees to the degree that even though she had the title of regent, the real authority lay with the Pharisees. A lasting result of this arrangement was the inclusion of the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin. Originally, the *Gerousia*, the "Elders of the People," consisted exclusively of the aristocracy but from Alexandra onward, both groups were represented. Sadly, as a result of their gaining political power, the Pharisees became arrogant and tyrannous.

The conflict between the two parties slipped into the background when Tigranes, the king of Armenia, prepared to invade Judea. The queen and all Jews were terrified. However, the Roman general Lucullus began a conquest of Armenia and Tigranes had to hurry back to his own country to defend his kingdom against the Romans.

Alexandra's second son, Aristobulus, was of a different stripe than his brother. Aristobulus became the head of the Sadducees. He was very ambitious and wanted to unseat his mother as the ruler of the Jews. When Alexandra became quite ill, he saw his chance to proceed with his plans. Alexandra died in 67 BC and Aristobulus declared himself to be the king. Others had proclaimed Hyrcanus, king. The two brothers gathered their armies at Jericho and Aristobulus emerged the victor. Many of Hyrcanus soldiers, recognizing a superior officer in Aristobulus, deserted Hyrcanus and joined his brother's forces.

## **Section Nine: The Leadership of Aristobulus II**

**66-63 BC**

### **Gentile Rulers: Roman generals, Pompey and Scarus**

After the battle at Jericho, an agreement was reached whereby Hyrcanus was permitted to retire into private life while Aristobulus became both king and High Priest.

This arrangement was pleasing to Hyrcanus, who really had no interest in public affairs. However, he was not to enjoy his retirement for very long. The governor of Idumea, known by two names, either, *Antipater* or *Antipas*, was an intense enemy of Aristobulus. He made it his business to stir up strife between the brothers. He worked to convince Hyrcanus that his life was not safe as long as Aristobulus was in power. Antipater and a powerful Arabian ruler, Aretas III, informed Hyrcanus that they would back him if he would try to regain his position. Initially, Hyrcanus was totally against any such action. However, the two plotters finally persuaded Hyrcanus to join them in trying to unseat Aristobulus. In an ensuing battle, Aretas and Hyrcanus soundly defeated Aristobulus, who fled to Jerusalem for protection. The combined armies of Hyrcanus and Aretas then besieged Jerusalem.

While these hostilities were taking place, the Roman general, Pompey, had been advancing victoriously into Asia. In 64 BC, he set up headquarters in Antioch and sent a military force under Scarus into Palestine.



Scaurus had barely set foot in Judea when delegations from both brothers approached him, asking for his support.<sup>243</sup> Both groups offered him 400 talents. Upon learning that their offers were equal, Aristobulus' envoys offered an additional 300 talents. The Roman reasoned that since Aristobulus was the ruler and also the High Priest, he probably was in a better position to pay what he promised. So, Scaurus ordered Hyrcanus and Aretas to withdraw from the siege of Jerusalem.

Pompey himself came to Damascus shortly thereafter and ordered the two brothers to appear before him and explain their quarrel. He patiently listened their wrangling back and forth and then told them that he had to undertake a mission to punish Aretas and that when he had completed that task that he would return to Judea and settle the dispute.

After Pompey departed for Arabia, Aristobulus began to behave in a manner that made Pompey suspicious. He suspended his southern campaign and returned to Judea. Along with Hyrcanus, Pompey besieged Jerusalem where Aristobulus was holed up. Jerusalem fell after three months. A dreadful slaughter took place -12,000 Jews were put to the sword. Pompey and his officers were curious about the inside of the Temple. They wondered if it were as the Jews had told them. They entered the Holy of Holies, looked around, and then left, realizing that the Jews' description had been accurate. They took nothing of value from the Temple. The Jews were allowed to continue their worship unhindered. Jerusalem, however, became a tributary to the Romans.

Aristobulus and his family were taken to Rome as prisoners. Pompey confirmed Hyrcanus as the High Priest as well as the overseer of the region, but he was not to take the title, *king*. No longer would the Jews have a king. With Judea as a vassal state of Rome, a new era began.

## **PART FIVE**

### **THE ROMAN PERIOD**

Following his October 10, 63 BC victory at Jerusalem, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey) returned to Rome where he was honored with a triumphal parade. As was the custom, captured booty and prisoners from conquered nations and cities were displayed in the parade. Aristobulus and his family, with the exception of one son,<sup>244</sup> were among these paraded prizes. For more than a century following Pompey's victory, Judah was in turmoil as various Jewish leaders raised the standard of revolt and suffered defeat.

Not only did confusion seem to be the order of the day in Jewish leadership, but strife and shifting political fortunes were the order of the day in Rome. Whereas formal magistrates and the Senate had ruled Rome, ambitious leaders supplanted the authority of the traditional structure. For a period of time, the nation was ruled by *triumvirates*. A triumvirate is the term used for a rule that consists of three men.

#### **Section One: The Shifting Leadership in Rome**

The so-called, First Triumvirate was an informal political alliance consisting the extremely wealthy businessman, Marcus Licinius Crassus, in league with two rival generals, Gaius Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus.<sup>245</sup> This league was formed in 60 BC and lasted until Crassus's death in 53 BC.

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<sup>243</sup> A third group also appeared. This group was a delegation of citizens that didn't support either Hyrcanus or Aristobulus, but Pompey didn't pay any attention to their plea.

<sup>244</sup> One of the sons of Aristobulus II, Alexander, escaped from the ship which was taking the family to Rome. He was able to assemble an army of at least 10,000 infantry and became one of the contenders for power in Judea.

<sup>245</sup> Pompey represented the senate party

The First Triumvirate had no official status. For some time, the alliance was kept secret by the Triumvirs themselves. The overwhelming power of the Triumvirate partly was the result of the secret alliance; working behind the scenes together, the three powerful figures were able to accomplish things that could not have been accomplished had they been done in the open.

Crassus and Pompey had been colleges in the consulate in 70 BC. Together they legislated the full restoration of the Tribune of the People. The dictator, Lucius Cornelius Sulla had stripped all powers from the office of these who represented the people, except for the *ius auxilii* – the right to rescue a plebeian from the clutches of a patrician magistrate. After they had worked together to restore this voice of the people, they became suspicious of one another. Each one thought that the other one was using the situation to increase his own reputation at the other's expense.

Julius Caesar cleverly reconciled the two men and then combined their clout with his to gain his election as Consul in 59 BC. Caesar and Crassus already were very close friends. Caesar solidified his relationship with Pompey by giving his daughter, Julia, in marriage to the general. The alliance brought together (1) Caesar's enormous popularity with (2) Crassus' fantastic wealth and (3) Pompey's great wealth and military reputation. It was a formidable alliance, but because of the ambitions of the three, it was not destined to last forever.

Pompey always disliked Crassus. When Caesar became increasingly popular through his spectacular achievements in the Gallic wars Pompey became jealous. In 53 BC, Crassus was slain at Carrhae in a battle with the Parthians. The alliance between Pompey and Caesar was weakened when Pompey's wife, Julia (Caesar's daughter), died in childbirth. He eventually married the daughter of one of Caesar's most steadfast opponents. Through politicking while Caesar was busy in Gaul, Pompey gained the position of sole consul in 52 BC (usually, there were two consuls). Pompey's actions ultimately led to civil war. The civil war began in 49 BC when Caesar crossed the Rubicon and it became clear that he was bringing his troops to Rome. In the ensuing conflict, Caesar defeated Pompey and those who backed him. After being defeated, Pompey went to Egypt and tried to unseat Caesar, through political intrigue. Not only did he fail in this attempt, but he was murdered and Caesar became the master of the Roman world.

Caesar initiated many reforms which were resented and resisted by Senate politicians. When some began to say that Caesar planned to become the King of Rome, plots developed that ultimately led to his being murdered by a group of senators on March 15, 44 BC.

Within a year, in 43 BC, the Triumvirate became the legal replacement for the traditional two-consul leadership model. Historians label this as the "Second Triumvirate" (as contrasted with the First Triumvirate, described above). The *Triumviri Rei Publicae Constituendae Consulari Potestate* (Triumvirs for Confirming the Republic with Consular Power), came to be abbreviated as III VIR RPC. The plan set forth stipulated that a Triumvirate was to be elected for a five year term. The Second Triumvirate consisted of Mark Anthony and Octavian, who were the real rivals for power, and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. Anthony and Octavian were bound to one another by marriage: Anthony was married to Octavian's sister, and Octavian was married to Anthony's step-daughter.

Octavian was a clever politician who began to gain greater prominence, but for a time, Mark Anthony seemed to be the stronger of the three. Events and circumstances ultimately elevated Octavian and eliminated the other two members of the Triumvirate. When Lepidus tried to take control of troops that had been under Octavian's command, Octavian expelled him from Triumvirate.

In the midst of the political infighting, Anthony became enamored with the Egyptian Queen, Cleopatra. Cleopatra traveled to Tarsus to meet with the Roman ruler. She sailed down the river Cydnus in a ship whose sails were made of purple silk and its oars were made of silver. While incense burned on board, Cleopatra in full view of Anthony waiting on shore, reclined on a couch spangled with stars of gold. The rowers kept time to the sound of flutes and cymbals.

Cleopatra's beauty, coupled with her charming personality and the unusual exhibition at their first meeting, so captivated Anthony that he followed her to Egypt and lived in an open adulterous relationship, fathering children by the Egyptian Queen. A civil war developed between Octavian and Anthony, in which Octavian emerged as the victor. Both Anthony and Cleopatra committed suicide after their defeat in 30 BC. Octavian had become the sole ruler of Rome. In 27 BC, the Roman Republic came to an end and the Roman Empire was born with Octavian, who came to be known as, Augustus, as the first Roman Emperor.

During all of this intrigue and leadership change in Rome, Judah found itself under the domain of four different rulers. Crassus, of the First Triumvirate, plundered the Jerusalem Temple twice. After Crassus' death, a revolt broke out in Judea and Roman legions under General Cassius came against the Jews and suppressed the revolt. After quelling the revolution, 30,000 Jewish captives were delivered to the slave market.

In the midst of the changing Roman political scene, Antipater, the Idumean friend of the High Priest, Hyrcanus, became a growing influence in the region. He did a number of things to ingratiate himself to the Romans and they began to turn to him for advice in matters relating to the region. In 48 BC, when Caesar found himself in an unanticipated war with the Egyptians, Antipater sent men and money to assist Caesar. Rome rewarded Antipater by making him a Roman citizen, exempting him from all taxes, and making him the governor of Judea.

Antipater's wife was Kyros, the daughter of the powerful King of Arabia. The couple had two sons, Phasael and Herod. In 44 BC, Phasael was appointed as the military governor of Jerusalem and Herod, who was 25 years old, was made governor of Galilee.

Most of the Jews were not happy with Antipater's being governor because he was an Idumean, an Edomite. The High Priest Hyrcanus, however, was satisfied with the arrangement. They were longtime friends and, as described earlier, Antipater had been instrumental in restoring Hyrcanus to the role of High Priest. The two of them worked together in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and they spent extensive periods of leisure time together. In 43 BC, four years after being appointed governor, Antipater was killed by a cup of poison given to him during a banquet with Hyrcanus. Malichos, a politically ambitious man who aspired to becoming the ruler of Idumea, paid a butler to put poison into Antipater's wine. When the role of Malichos was revealed, Herod immediately dispatched assassins who slew Malichos.

## **Section Two: The Reign of Herod the Great**

### **25 – 4 BC**

For a number of years, Galilee had been infested with a group of men who called themselves, "patriots;" they who really were robbers. They lived off the spoils obtained from robbing government officials and governmental caravans. These brigands lived securely in a cluster of well-known caves in the high cliffs near the Sea of Galilee. Herod was determined to get rid of the bandits. He had three-sided iron cages built and delivered to the cliffs above the caves. He placed soldiers in the cages, and had them lowered from the precipice to the caves. When the cages reached the mouths of the caves, the soldiers rushed forward and killed or captured the culprits. This action had two opposing results. Herod's esteem was raised with the Romans. The Jews, on the other hand, were angered. The Galilean "Robin Hoods" were popular with the Jewish Nationalists and the general population, since they preyed on government property. Also, Herod, an Idumean, had killed Jews.

Another issue for the Jews was the view that Jews could not be put to death, lawfully, unless the execution had been sanctioned by the Sanhedrin. Fired with the fiercest indignation, the Sanhedrin demanded that Herod be summoned to Jerusalem to give answer to the charge of executing men without a warrant from the Sanhedrin. Herod came to the Sanhedrin, but he brought with him a band of soldiers ready to do his bidding. He spoke to the trembling Sanhedrin as one would speak to abject subjects, rather than as a criminal on trial. He left Jerusalem and returned to Galilee without waiting for the verdict. Increasingly, the Jews came to dislike, and even to hate Herod because a descendent of Esau had disregarded the wishes of the Jewish establishment.

Shortly after the incident with the Galilean bandits, Caesar promoted Herod to the governorship of Coele-Syria, the long fertile strip of territory lying between the Lebanon mountains. When Caesar was murdered, Cassius, one of the chief plotters and assassins, came to the region as ruler. Ever the winsome politician, Herod was able to gain Cassius' friendship and remained as governor. In 42 BC, at Philippi, Cassius and Brutus fought against Octavian and Anthony. Supposedly, Cassius and Brutus had been condemned for killing Caesar. Octavian and Anthony were victorious. Mark Anthony became the dominant figure in the region, exercising his authority from Egypt. Because Herod had been the friend and supporter of Cassius, he realized that he needed to do something to win the favor of Anthony. He hastened to Egypt to meet with Anthony, taking along a substantial gift of gold. Not only did Herod become Mark Anthony's friend, but he returned from Egypt with a new title. He was elevated from being the governor of Galilee to being the governor of all of Judea. He now was the ruler of those who had accused him and had sought his life for executing the Galilean outlaws.

Herod did not remain in Jerusalem for very long. Since Anthony was distracted by amorous adventures in Egypt, the various contenders for regional power felt emboldened by his absence. The Parthians invaded Syria and in Palestine they were received with open arms as deliverers. At this time, Antigonus, a son of Aristobulus II, who had been taken to Rome as a prisoner after Pompey's victory in Jerusalem, returned to Judea. He intended to vie for the Judean throne and saw the Parthians as a group that he could use to obtain his goal. Antigonus promised the Parthians 1000 talents and five hundred women if they would remove Hyrcanus, kill Herod, and enthrone Antigonus as King of Judea.

The bulk of the Jews saw Antigonus as a legitimate option – he was a Jew and he possibly could deliver them from the Romans. Antigonus raised an army of supporters and with his Parthian allies entered Jerusalem without any difficulty. Herod managed to escape, but Phasael and Hyrcanus fell into his hands. Phasael committed suicide by dashing his head against a rock.

Hyrcanus was brought, bound, before Antigonus. The High Priest had to be a man without blemish and so as Hyrcanus stood before him, Antigonus grabbed him and bit off both of Hyrcanus' ears. Never again could Hyrcanus be the High Priest. Hyrcanus was taken to Babylon where he spent the rest of his days in comfortable captivity.

Antigonus, as ruler of Judea, declared himself to be the High Priest. As such, he issued coins and on the Greek side of the coin he is described as, *King Antigonus*; on the Hebrew side he is described as, *Mattathiah the High Priest* (his Hebrew name was, Mattathiah).

After escaping from Jerusalem, Herod left his family at Masada, then went through Arabia to Egypt, and thence to Rome. He laid his case before Anthony and Octavian. Both Roman rulers decided that Herod was just the man to hold Palestine for Rome. They acclaimed him, *The King of the Jews*. A strange scene followed; Herod, the Idumean, accompanied by Anthony and Octavian, proceeded to the Temple of Jupiter on Capitoline hill to offer sacrifices in thankfulness for Herod's being named King of the Jews.

Herod returned to Palestine with Roman legions. He conquered the surrounding country and then laid siege to Jerusalem in 37 BC. He made his headquarters the acropolis of Samaria. For five years he had waited to marry the love of his life, the beautiful Hasmonean princess, Mariamne. Even though his motive was romantic, it was a political master stroke. Mariamne was a direct descendent of Mattathias, who had launched the Maccabean revolt. Jewish hatred for Herod was modified, slightly, by this marriage. Yet, the marriage was not motivated politically; Herod loved Mariamne with all of the passion that a man can feel for a woman.

Leaving his beautiful bride in the palace at Samaria, Herod returned to his army, and in a few hours Jerusalem fell. Antigonus, the last of the Maccabean rulers was captured, the Roman legions slaughtered the citizens and destroyed property until Herod called a halt, saying, "Will the Romans deprive the city of all of its inhabitants and possessions and leave me the king of the wilderness?"

Mariamne had a seventeen year old brother to whom she was quite devoted. These two were the last of the royal priestly line of the Maccabees. In order to ingratiate himself to his beloved, Herod made her brother the High Priest. When the Jews saw this new High Priest for the first time, they shouted with the joy of gratitude.

Here was a Jew who was the last of the family of Maccabean heroes and who now was the High Priest. The young man's popularity made Herod jealous.

A bit later, Herod invited the young man to his gorgeous winter palace in Jericho. As he bathed in the royal pool, he was drowned – accidentally it was reported to Mariamne, but the queen knew better. Her love for Herod cooled.

Mariamne's mother, Alexandria, sent word to Cleopatra, denouncing the murder of the High Priest. Cleopatra hated Herod who was her constant rival. She denounced Herod to Mark Anthony and Herod was summoned to Rome to answer for the assassination of the High Priest. When Herod left Judea, he left the government in the hands of his uncle Joseph, who also was the husband of Herod's sister, Salome. Salome was one of history's most wicked female intriguers. One author stated, "As Mariamne was Herod's good angel, so Salome was the devil's efficient agent to drag her brother to the blackest depths of crime."<sup>246</sup> Salome and Mariamne had nothing in common, agreed on nothing, yet they had to live together in the same palace.

When Herod left for Rome, he struggled with what might happen to Mariamne if he died on the way or were executed in Rome. He could not bear to think of her in another man's arms. So, he ordered Joseph to execute Mariamne if he, Herod, did not return. Salome learned from her uncle-husband what Herod had commanded and she told Mariamne.

Herod won his case in Rome and returned to his lovely Mariamne, anticipating a romantic welcome. He got just the opposite. Mariamne blasted him for the instructions that he had given to Joseph. In a fit of rage, Herod ordered Joseph's immediate execution.

After Anthony's downfall, Herod appointed Soemus as his deputy and moved his family to Samaria. He called out his royal galleys and sailed to meet Octavian at Rhodes. He bowed before the Roman conqueror, reminded him of his faithfulness to Anthony, and pledged to support him with the same intensity that he had given to Anthony. Octavian was won over and gave Herod an enlarged district, almost as large as that which had been ruled by King David.

Herod hurried back home with youthful enthusiasm, eager to tell Mariamne of his great success. Arriving at the castle, he flung himself on the couch and ordered his servants to bring Mariamne to him. She came as cold and proud as a marble statue. She scorned his caresses, groaned at his ardent demonstration of love and refused all of his requests. Once again, she had learned of his secret orders given before his departure. He had given Soemus the same instructions that he had given to Joseph before his earlier trip to Rome. Mariamne denounced Herod for the orders that had been given, for the murders of her brother, her uncle, and her aged grandfather.

At first Herod was troubled, then he became angry. He went about raving like a maniac, fell ill, and seemed to lose all reason. During this period, his sinister sister, Salome, gained his trust and she convinced him that Mariamne had committed adultery with Soemus, in Herod's absence. In a rage, Herod ordered the immediate execution of Soemus and the arrest and trial of Mariamne. At the trial, Mariamne bravely faced all of her accusers with scorn, and claimed her innocence. The court did as it was expected to do – it pronounced her guilty. However, her purity and innocence were such that Herod stayed the hand of the executioner for many days. Mariamne met her fate with calmness, as befitted a queen, seemingly accepting death as a relief.

Soon after the execution of his beloved queen, Herod began to demonstrate increased insane behaviour, vacillating between deep remorse and fits. The longing for the touch of Mariamne's hand tormented him. He walked throughout the palace and among the gardens, calling out piteously, "Mariamne, Mariamne." He had his servants call for her and to listen for her response as they went down long halls and through the gardens, summoning the presence of the dead queen.

In time, Herod seemed to rally from his demented grief and launched into a building program that has few parallels in modern history. On the seacoast, he built a Roman seaport and named it, Caesarea. Samaria was

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<sup>246</sup> As quoted in Owen, page 140

rebuilt with strong walls, graceful gates, elegant buildings and a magnificent boulevard. He renamed the city, *Sebaste*, the Greek word for *Augustus*. At Jericho, he built a theater, a circus, and a hippodrome. Near the famous hot springs of Machaerus, he erected a fort with rooms of marvelous beauty, beneath which were dungeons and abundant cisterns cut into solid rock.

Sixteen years before the birth of Christ, Herod began his beautification of Jerusalem. He planned to convert the Temple into a modern magnificent edifice. The Jews were not happy with his plans for the Temple. It appeared to them that the anticipated construction would interfere with their use of the Temple for the ceremonies demanded by the Law of Moses. Herod assured them that the old Temple would stand until all of the workmen and materials were on hand to begin construction. A thousand carts for carrying quarry stone and marble were assembled. Ten thousand skilled workmen showed up for the task ahead and the work began. The Temple area was greatly enlarged, arches and pillars were erected, creating a pleasant promenade and lounging place for the people. This became the site for the rabbis' schools.

The building was begun in 20 BC, the eighteenth year of Herod's reign. In eighteen months, the inner part of the Temple was completed and services were resumed. The building of the outer walls, courts, and galleries occupied a period of eight years and the completion of the total edifice took forty-six years. The Temple was a magnificent structure and the pride of the Jews.

In addition to the above described architectural activity, Herod built a number of palaces and residences throughout the land, some of them quite magnificent.

The Jews saw Herod as an irreligious Idumean-Arab, backed by Roman authority. Even though Herod as very efficient in state affairs and enjoyed the applause of Rome, he received little praise from the Jews – even though he craved it. His later years were years of misery. Mariamne left him five children, two daughters and three sons. The boys were educated at Rome where they could be near Octavian, now known as Augustus Caesar. One of the boys died in Rome, but the other two were looked upon as crown princes who would succeed their father.

When the boys returned from Rome, they were tall, noble-looking men, conscious of their royal blood. The Jewish population seemed to love these young men. One of Herod's sons by a wife other than Mariamne (over his lifetime he had several wives), began to plot against Mariamne's sons. Salome became involved and accusations of plotting against their father were brought against them. They were taken to Rome for trial and conducted themselves in such a manner, including showing much affection for their father, that Augustus himself warmly commended them. The intrigue, pushed along by Salome and the half-brother, resulted in Herod's having them tried again, before a Roman court at Beirut. As a result, the two men, Alexander and Aristobulus, the last of the Maccabeans, were executed by strangulation at Samaria. In his remaining years, Herod continually was melancholy over what had happened in his family.

In Herod's thirty-fourth year as king, while Augustus was still the Roman Emperor, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Herod first heard of this Bethlehem birth through the Magi, probably a month or two after the baby was born. Matthew Chapter Two describes the scene. The Jews believed that the Messiah would be a military prince who would rule in regal power. Herod, therefore, had the same belief. Feigning religious interest in the babe, he attempted to learn the child's identity. He was foiled by an angel's intervention and so, in an attempt to make certain that he slew the child, he sent soldiers to Bethlehem where all male babies under two years of age were slain. An angel had warned Joseph to take Mary and the baby to Egypt and to remain there until Herod had died. They already had departed by the time that Herod's soldiers arrived in Bethlehem.

The same year in which Jesus was born, Herod went to his dwelling at Machaerus, where he took hot mineral baths. He was wracked in pain with an incurable cancer. No relief came to him. He left Machaerus for his castle in Jericho. He called his oldest son, Antipater, to him, intending to turn the kingdom over to this son, but before he died he discovered how this son had deceived him into slaying Mariamne's two sons. He also discovered that Antipater currently was plotting to destroy the reputation of two other of his half-brothers,

Archelaus and Philip. To top it all off, Herod learned that Antipater was plotting to poison Herod and hasten his death, so that he could claim the throne. Herod had this son arrested and brought to trial. He was executed.

Herod feared that no one would be in mourning when he died. So, he ordered that “the most illustrious men in every village in all Judea” be imprisoned at Jericho, where Herod spent his last weary days in his beautiful home. He told Salome that when he died he wanted all of these men put to death, then, he said, all Judea would be in mourning. The men were collected and confined, but when Herod died, they were released. A wave of rejoicing went up, rather than the wails of mourning.

Four miles southeast of Bethlehem, Herod had erected an artificial peak and crowned it with a *Herodium* – one of the most spectacular tombs known to man. At his death, the royal hearse left Jericho, passed through Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and then to Herodium. The hearse was accompanied by hired mourners.

One writer summed up Herod’s career with these words, “he stole along to the throne like a fox, he ruled like a tiger, and he died like a dog.”<sup>247</sup>

### **Excursus: The census and the birth of Christ**

*Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.*<sup>248</sup>

For quite some time, those who challenge the accuracy of Scripture argued from this passage that Luke made a mistake. Here is the background.

The census, as Romans called it, took place every fourteenth year. It included not only the citizens of Rome, but Spain, Gaul, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. The purpose of the census was to enable the government to determine the taxes available in a given district.

From Roman documents, we know that Cyrenius, the governor mentioned by Luke, was the Roman Senator P. Sulpicius Quirinius. He was born in modest circumstances near Tusculum in the Alban hills, a place that was one of the favorite resorts of Roman nobility. Both as an outstanding soldier and an administrator, he had ascended through the ranks of society, ultimately becoming a Senator. Emperor Augustus held him in high esteem because of his demonstrated exceptional ability to rule.

In 6 AD, Quirinius was sent as a legate to Syria. Coponius was sent with him to be the first procurator of Judea (more information on this below). Between 6 and 7 AD they carried out a census, but this cannot be the one to which Luke refers. According to the biblical narrative the census to which Luke refers took place in the year that Christ was born – 4 BC, the year in which Herod the Great died.

These facts gave credence to the claim that Luke’s account of the birth of Christ could not be trusted.

Archaeologists came to rescue once again. Papyri were found at Antioch that state that Quirinius was the Emperor’s legate in Syria once before, during the days of the Proconsul, Saturninus. His assignment at that time was military. He led a campaign against the Homanadenses, a tribe in the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor. He established his seat of government as well as his headquarters in Syria in 6 or 7 BC and remained there for a few years while completing his

<sup>247</sup> Owen, page 147

<sup>248</sup> Luke 2:1-5

mission. Evidently a census was taken while Quirinius was at this post – *the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria*. The date fits perfectly with the date of Christ’s birth presented in Luke.

### **Section Three: Judaea under Herod’s Heirs<sup>249</sup>**

The Roman name for the Mediterranean Sea was *Mare Nostrum*. In the wide circle of countries that surround Mare Nostrum, from North Africa and Spain, to the shores of Asia Minor, the will of Rome prevailed. The Roman Empire was bounded on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. On the north it was bounded by the Danube and Rhine, and on the east by the Euphrates. Its southern boundary was the Sahara desert.

In many ways, the Roman Empire was a “New World.” The great Semitic empires were gone. The various dialects and languages, although spoken in some localities, were superseded by the Greek language, which was spoken and written in every nation of the empire. The culture of all nations, including Rome itself, was Greek. Romans wore Greek attire – the tunic and toga. In Palestine, Greek cities existed and on the east side of the Jordan lay the Decapolis – a province consisting of ten Greek cities. Even the Roman Gods were Greek gods with Roman names.<sup>250</sup> One cultural element that was not Greek was Latin, which became the second-second language of the Empire.

Significant cities existed throughout the empire, each one having its walls, gates, colonnaded streets, baths, libraries, and temples. When people traveled either for pleasure or business, they traveled over a network of substantial roads, all the way from Hadrian’s Wall in Britain to the “White City” of Damascus, and to the cataracts of the Nile. Because of the garrisons of soldiers stationed throughout the empire, travel was safe. occasionally bands of robbers would form, but the military usually put a quick end to their activities.

The empire entered into a lengthy period of stability, after Octavian became Augustus Caesar. Because of Roman law and the certainty of imperial discipline, the occupants of the empire were exceptionally safe. There was an element of informality in the empire, which made it possible for a commoner of ability and ambition to rise in the ranks of society.

#### **The Division of Herod’s Kingdom**

Although most of Herod’s marriage history revolves around his beloved Mariamne, the king had ten wives and fifteen children. The following is a list of the wives in the order in which Herod married them, and their respective children.

<b>WIFE</b>	<b>OFFSPRING</b>
Doris	Son – Antipater
Mariamne I (his favorite wife)	Son – unknown name who died in Rome while still a boy
	Son – Alexander
	Son - Aristobulus
	Daughter -Salampsio
	Daughter – Kypros
Mariamne II	Son – Herod
Malthake (a Samaritan)	Son – Archelaus
	Son – Antipas

<sup>249</sup> The sources for this section are Schurer, Volume II, pages 1-191; Oesterly, pages 379-399; Owen, pages 148-169; Morrow, pages 339-344. I will not cite particular pages in this section of the study because I am summarizing the content of the materials.

<sup>250</sup> For example, Zeus became Jupiter, Hermes became Mercury, etc.



	Daughter – Olympias
Cleopatra of Jerusalem	Son – Herod Son – Philip
Pallas	Son – Phasael
Phaedra	Daughter – Roxana
Elpis	Daughter – Salome
An unnamed Cousin	No children
An unnamed niece	No children

Toward the end of his life, Herod became concerned about the future of his kingdom. He composed three different wills, each succeeding one changed the primary heir. Since he had executed his eldest son, Antipater (previously described), he designated as his heirs three of his sons: Archelaus and Herod Antipas, who were sons of Malthake, and Herod Philip, who was the son of Cleopatra of Jerusalem. In his final will, Herod designated Archelaus as his successor, as King of the Jews. The will had to be ratified by Augustus before it could be implemented and that required Archelaus to make a trip to Rome.

A number of outbreaks among the Jews caused Archelaus to delay this important trip. The details of these are somewhat complicated, involving Jewish zealots, the intervention of Roman troops, and various Roman officials. We pass over these details to summarize the more relevant matters concerning the government that ultimately oversaw the Jews.

In time, Archelaus did make the trip to Rome, leaving Philip in charge of Judea in his absence. Antipas, Archelaus' half-brother, also traveled to Rome and claimed that the throne should be his.

- In Herod's first will, Herod, the son of Cleopatra was named as his father's successor.
- In Herod's second will, Antipas had been named as his successor.
- In the third and last will, Archelaus was designated to succeed Herod.

Each of these three sons laid claim to the throne, on the basis of being so named in one of the wills. Various relatives showed up in Rome to support one or the other of the claimants. In the midst of all of this, a committee of Jewish citizens arrived, urging Caesar to abolish the kingship in Judea and to place the Jewish people under the direct rule of Rome, allowing them to continue their religious practices without interference (many Jews felt that being ruled by Rome was preferable to being ruled by an Idumean). Finally, Philip showed up in order to lend his support for the claims of Archelaus.

Caesar scheduled a formal meeting in which he was to hear all sides. He deliberately convened the hearing in the Temple of Apollo. First, he heard from the Jewish citizens' delegation, then the other principals were allowed to speak. After hearing all sides, he declared a recess and then a few days later reconvened the group to hear his decision. He reviewed Herod's various wills, thought about the various personalities involved, then made the following decision (**MAP XXI**):

- Archelaus was designated as Herod's successor. He was made ethnarch of Judaea Samaria, and Idumea.<sup>251</sup> The understanding was that if he acquitted himself well, he later would be given the title, "King."
- Antipas was made tetrarch of Galilee and Perea
- Philip was made tetrarch of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanaea, Auranitis, and Panias.

<sup>251</sup> Ethnarch (ἔθναρχης) seems to signify a rank somewhat higher than tetrarch (τετραρχης). The title, ethnarch, was given to Hyrcanus II, but otherwise it is a rare title, and its place in the hierarchy is not clear.

- Herod's will also included, his sister, Salome. Augustus slightly modified the will at this point but Salome was given the cities of Jamnia, Ashdod, and Phasaelis, 500,000 pieces of silver and the palace at Ascalon.

Archelaus was to receive an annual income from his territories in the amount of 600 talents. Antipas from his territory, 200 talents, and Philip from his territory, 100 talents. Each of the sons began to add the family name, *Herod*, to their respective names. Thus, they became Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Herod Philip.

## **Herod Philip** **4 BC – 34 AD**

Of all Herod's sons followed the ways of their father, except Philip. By all reports, Philip was an honorable man. The other sons were ambitious, harsh, tyrannical, and self-seeking. By contrast, Philip's reign was mild, just, and peaceful. He did have his father's passion for constructing buildings. Because the region given to Philip was beyond the area in which Judaism flourished, he does not play a role in the Gospels, and had only a minor role in the history of the Jews.

Philip rebuilt the ancient city of Pnias, north of the Lake of Galilee.<sup>252</sup> This had been the ancient site of the worship of the nature god, Pan, and was built on a base of solid rock. He made the city much larger than the original and named the city, "Caesarea," in honor of the emperor. To distinguish this city from the well-known Caesarea on the coast, Philip's city became known as "Caesarea Philippi." It is the site at which Peter made the great confession.

*Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>253</sup>*

The other city that he rebuilt was Bethsaida, situated at the point where the Jordan River enters Lake Galilee. In honor of Augustus' daughter, he renamed this city, "Julia." The location of the city on the north of the lake does not fit the site of the Bethsaida that is mentioned in the New Testament. Therefore, we conclude that they are not the same Bethsaidas.

Philip constantly lived among the people. He did not take trips abroad, unless necessary. He always traveled around with a tribunal so that if anyone needing assistance or judicial action met him along the way, he had the tribunal sit down immediately and hear the complaint. Judgment was immediate. Philip was the first Jewish ruler to mint coins with his likeness on them. All of the predecessors who minted coins did not have any physical representations of themselves on the coins, for fear of making a "graven image."

There is some confusion concerning Philip's marriage. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all state that Herodias was Philip's wife.<sup>254</sup> Josephus, on the other hand, in recounting the family story, states that Philip was married to Salome, Herodias' daughter.<sup>255</sup> If Philip had been married to Salome, he would have been 30 years older than his wife. Much has been written on this topic, but since only Josephus presents this data (there is no other source), and some of his data has been shown to be flawed, and since challenges to Scripture consistently have been discredited as more information is gathered, and since all three Gospel accounts independently state that Herodias was Philip's wife, we will assume that the Gospel record is correct.

<sup>252</sup> The Sea of Galilee, also is known as the Sea or Lake of Gennesaret, because the town of Gennesaret was a prominent settlement on the northwest shore.

<sup>253</sup> Matthew 16:13-16; Mark 8:27-29

<sup>254</sup> Matthew 14:3; Mark 6:17; Luke 3:19

<sup>255</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVIII 5: 4

## Herod Antipas 4 BC – 39 AD

A larger slice of Herod the Great's kingdom was given to Antipas than was given to Philip. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea during the ministry of Christ. Both on the coins that he minted and in Scripture he is referred to as simply, "Herod." His territory was divided into two parts, with the Decapolis separating them (see **MAP XXI**). Herod Antipas was his father's son in every way, although he was not his equal. He was sly, ambitious, and enjoyed the luxurious life. Jesus, on one occasion, referred to his sly nature by calling him, *that fox*.<sup>256</sup>

Like his father, he was a builder, but not on the scale of his father's architectural achievements. His most notable project was the building of a capital. He selected as the site the most beautiful spot in Galilee, the western bank of the lake, near the warm springs of Emmaus. He built a significant city on this spot and named it, "Tiberius," in honor of the emperor. The buildings were beautiful, it had a *στᾶδιον* (race course), and a royal palace.

The government of the city was modeled on the Hellenistic pattern. It had a council of 600 members, with a ruler and a committee of the "ten first men." The city also had other officials representing various groups within the populace.

Two things about this new capital were odious to the Jews. First, the city had been built on the site of an ancient cemetery. Observant Jews could not live in the city because contact with a grave made them ceremonially unclean for seven days. The second thing that offended them was the décor of the palace; there were the figures of animals on the walls. This was seen by observant Jews as violating the commandment against making images. The fact that the city did not have a house of prayer also caused the Jews serious concern.

Because religious Jews would not live in the city, Herod forced foreigners, adventurers, and beggars to make Tiberius their home. Consequently, the city had a very mixed population. Jesus fed the 5000 on the shore near Tiberius.<sup>257</sup> Tiberius also was the site where the resurrected Christ revealed Himself to a group of his disciples.<sup>258</sup>

In spite of these departures from Judaism, Herod did not fully depart. This is seen in that he did not put his image on the coins that he minted. It also is seen in an episode in which he and his brother (probably Philip, although the brother's identity is not clear) made a charge against Pilate who had set up an offensive votive shield in the Jerusalem palace – something offensive to observant Jews. Herod did keep the Jewish feasts as is seen in Luke's report that he "went up to the feast at Jerusalem,"<sup>259</sup>

Two important New Testament episodes in which Herod was a key player are the execution of John the Baptist and the examination of Jesus, prior to his crucifixion. The execution of John the Baptist occurred first. Antipas was married to the daughter of the Arabian king, Aretas. Aretas and Antipas had been friends and allies. On a trip to Rome, Antipas stopped by the home of his brother, Philip, and met Herodias, Philip's wife. He became fascinated with the woman and proposed that she leave Philip and marry him. Herodias, being a very ambitious woman, saw that her fortunes might be greater with Antipas than with Philip and so she readily accepted the proposal. Antipas told her that when he returned from Rome he would divorce his wife and marry Herodias. Given the fact that Antipas' father had ten wives, and some of them from substantial families, it is a point of interest that Antipas felt the need to divorce his wife before taking on Herodias.

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<sup>256</sup> Luke 13:32

<sup>257</sup> John 6:1ff

<sup>258</sup> John 21:1

<sup>259</sup> Luke 23:7

Antipas' wife learned of her husband's plans and so when he returned from Rome, without revealing that she knew anything, she asked if she could pay a visit to Macharus,<sup>260</sup> the strong fortress east of the Dead Sea that belonged to her father. Antipas, not wanting to tip his hand granted her wish. As soon as the woman reached the fort, she fled to her father and told him the whole story. From that time onward, Aretas became Herod's enemy.

Antipas, totally infatuated with Herodias, proceeded with his plans and married his brother's wife. Not long thereafter, John the Baptist began his ministry. He began his preaching in Perea, which was Antipas' territory. According to Josephus, Herod Antipas began to fear John's power over the people. He realized that the people would do just about anything that the prophet asked them to do and he easily could have launched a rebellion. The Gospels, on the other hand, state that the motivation for the arrest was John's condemnation of Herod's taking Herodias from Philip.<sup>261</sup> Both motives probably were intermingled in Herod's action. Although the Gospels do not name the location of the prison, Josephus states that it was Macharus, which had become the possession of Antipas.

Herod realized that he had imprisoned more than a mere man. Herodias pressured Herod Antipas to execute John, but he did not do so for two reasons: (1) he feared the people who considered John to be a prophet;<sup>262</sup> (2) Herod feared John himself, and had him preach before him from time.<sup>263</sup> During her first marriage, Herodias had given birth to a daughter, Salome, who by this time was about eighteen years old.<sup>264</sup> At a birthday party for Herod, Herodias had her daughter entertain the crowd by dancing. Herod was so taken with her dancing that he promised her anything that she wished. She didn't know what to ask for and so she sought the advice of her mother. Herodias saw her opportunity to be rid of John the Baptist. The prophet's head on a platter was the requested gift. Herod, not wanting to be embarrassed before the guests at the banquet, kept his word and John was beheaded. Following this incident, Herod was haunted by dreams of John the Baptist. When he heard of Jesus' preaching, he even entertained the thought that John had returned from the dead.<sup>265</sup>

The second incident in which Herod is prominent took place when Jesus had been arrested. Herod was in Jerusalem for the Passover. When the Jews brought Jesus before Pilate,<sup>266</sup> he sent Jesus to Herod, since Herod was the ruler of the province (Galilee) from whence Jesus came and where much of his activity had taken place. Pilate was trying to avoid pronouncing the death sentence on Jesus – something for which the Jewish establishment was clamoring - and he hoped to pass off that responsibility to Herod. Herod did not cooperate with the scheme, but contented himself with pouring contempt on Jesus and then sending him back to Pilate.<sup>267</sup>

Herodias did not bring anything good to Antipas, but seemed to bring him increased problems. Aretas, the Arabian, could not forget that on account of Herodias Antipas had cast off his daughter. The feud grew and clashes over boundaries began to be frequent. Finally, in 36 AD, the ongoing conflict broke out into open war. The army of Antipas was destroyed by the Arabians. Antipas ran to Emperor Tiberius for help. Tiberius sent an army under the command of General Vitellius, who had no heart for the mission. Tiberius died before Vitellius could engage the Arabian and so he abandoned the undertaking and Aretas avoided punishment for defeating Antipas.

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<sup>260</sup> Sometimes spelled, *Machaerus*

<sup>261</sup> Matthew 14:3ff; Mark 6:17ff; Luke 3:19ff

<sup>262</sup> Matthew 14:5

<sup>263</sup> Mark 6:20

<sup>264</sup> The Gospels describe her as a κοράσιον, a girl. One scholar who had done a lot of research on the family tree arrives at the assumption that Salome was born 10 AD, and thus would have been eighteen when the described event took place.

<sup>265</sup> Matthew 14:1ff; Mark 6:14-16; Luke 9:7ff

<sup>266</sup> Pilate was the procurator of Judea 26-37 BC. He was merciful, cruel, noted for his habitual brutality. On one occasion, he mingled the blood of some rebellious Galileans with their sacrifices (Luke 13:1)

<sup>267</sup> Luke 23:7-12

After the death of Tiberius, Caligula became the emperor. Antipas' brother, Philip recently had died and Caligula appointed Herodias' brother, Agrippa, to the Philip's tetrarchy. Not only that, Caligula gave Agrippa the title, "king." Agrippa had been a political adventurer whose fortunes had risen and fallen, but at this time rose dramatically. Herodias became envious of her brother's title. She insisted on her husband's seeking from Caligula the same royal title. Antipas didn't want to take this step, but finally he gave in to Herodias and with her in tow, he made the trip to Rome. Agrippa did not want Antipas to be given the title, king. It would have diminished Agrippa's prestige if another crowned head had existed in the neighboring realm. He sent a representative named Fortunatus, bearing a document full of accusations against Antipas. Some of the charges intimated that Antipas had revolutionary tendencies and had made a pact with the Parthians. In proof of these charges, Fortunatus pointed out the accumulation of arms that Antipas had gathered in his capital. Caligula asked Antipas to explain this large arms cache and he was not able to give a satisfactory explanation. This caused Caligula to give credence to the other charges. Instead of being made a king, Antipas was deposed from his tetrarchy and banished to Lyons in Gaul. Because Herodias was the sister of Caligula's friend Agrippa, he offered to allow her to live on her private estate, rather than going into exile with her husband. Herodias was a proud woman; she scored the offer and went into exile with her husband. As proof of Caligula's affection for Agrippa, he was given the tetrarchy that had belonged to his brother-in-law, plus all of the money in Antipas' treasury.

### **Archelaus** **4 BC – 6 AD**

Archelaus, as noted above, was Herod the Great's choice to be his successor. Of all of the sons of Herod, Archelaus developed the worst reputation. He was violent and tyrannical. He set up and removed High Priests at his pleasure. He especially offended the Jews by marrying Glaphyra, the daughter of the King of Cappadocia, also named, Archelaus.

Glaphyra first had been married to Herod's son, Alexander, one of the sons of Mariamne I. This was the Alexander who was executed in 7 BC, because of the deceit of his half-brother, Antipater (see above). After Alexander's death, she was married to Juba, King of Mauritania. That marriage was dissolved and Glaphyra returned to her father's home. When Archelaus met Glaphyra, he immediately fell in love with her, divorced his wife, Mariamme, and took Glaphyra to be his wife. The Jews were offended because Glaphyra had children by Alexander and thus, according to their tradition, the marriage was unlawful. Not long after Glaphyra arrived in Judea, she had a dream in which her first husband, Alexander, appeared to her and told her that her death was approaching. Indeed, she died shortly thereafter.

Archelaus had the family propensity for building. He constructed magnificent buildings, including an impressive aqueduct to supply water for the palm-groves that he laid out north of the palace that he built at Jericho. He also founded a city and named it for himself.

The Jews would not be reconciled to his mismanagement and harsh rule. After ten years of his mismanagement, a deputation of Jewish and Samaritan aristocracy went to Rome to lay out charges against Archelaus. The outcome of this delegation was Archelaus' being summoned to Rome to answer the charges. After hearing Archelaus' explanation, Augustus deposed him from his government, banished him to Vienne in Gaul, in 6 AD. Interestingly, as with Glaphyra, Archelaus' fate had been foretold in a dream.

Archelaus' territory immediately came under total Roman rule and was attached to the province of Syria, but received from the equestrian order a procurator of its own. Publius Quirinus (Luke calls him Cyrenius), the former governor of Syria was sent to the region to reorganize the area into a Roman province. Coponius became the procurator (lieutenant governor) under the Syrian governor.



instead he slipped away into the night and arrived in Alexandria. Kypros had accompanied her husband from place to place and in Alexandria, through her connections, she was able to obtain a loan for Agrippa from a wealthy official of the city. After obtaining the money for her husband, Kypros returned to Judea, leaving Agrippa to travel to Rome, alone.

When he reached the city of Puteloi, Agrippa sent a very respectful letter to Tiberius who gave him a cordial welcome to the Roman court. All might have gone well were it not for a letter that Tiberius received from Herennius Capito calling attention to large debt that Agrippa owed to the treasury. Tiberius immediately dismissed Agrippa from all court circles until the debt could be paid.

Antonia, the friend of Agrippa's deceased mother, Berenike, took pity on Agrippa and lent him the money that he needed to repay the treasury and then used her influence to restore the relationship between Tiberius and Agrippa. Tiberius came to trust Agrippa to the point that he appointed him to be the companion of his grandson, Gemellus. Agrippa fulfilled this companionship as a responsibility, but most of his time was spent with Caligula, who not only was the grandson of Antonia, but as already noted, the grandson of Tiberius. As a friend of Gamellus and Caligula, Agrippa had no problem borrowing money and so his days of financial embarrassment seemed to be over.

Agrippa's next bit of bad luck came from an offhand remark. While he and Caligula were riding in a chariot, Agrippa remarked that it would be great if Tiberius died and the position of emperor would be given to Caligula. The charioteer, Eutyches, overheard the remark and before long Tiberius heard about it. Tiberius had Agrippa thrown into prison, where he remained until Tiberius' death, six months later.

Caligula came to the throne in 37 AD. As soon as he became emperor, Caligula released Agrippa from prison, gave the tetrarchy of the recently deceased Philip and bestowed upon him the title of King. Agrippa did not leave Rome for his new kingdom for more than a year. He and Caligula enjoyed one another's company – he was Caligula's closest friend, sharing with the emperor the life of corruption that both of them enjoyed. When Agrippa could put off responsibility no longer, he left Rome with the promise to Caligula that he would return as soon as he put things in order in Palestine.

When he arrived in Palestine, he probably shocked those who remembered him as an abject, poverty-stricken, individual. Now, he was the emperor's most intimate friend, and a king. He could look down on those who formerly had pitied him.

Caligula was killed by the Praetorian guards in 41 AD, having ruled for about four years. Surprisingly, Agrippa was able to ingratiate himself with the new ruler, Claudius. One reason that this was so was because Agrippa and used his political skills to see that Claudius became the emperor. Claudia not only confirmed Agrippa in his existing kingdom, but added to it all of the territories that had been ruled over by Herod the Great.

Agrippa arrived in Jerusalem and began to do all that he could to impress his Jewish subjects. He offered daily all of the sacrifices that were required of him. He carefully kept the law in Jerusalem. He was generous with he people. One act that seemed to be designed to please the Jews was his persecution of Christians as recorded in Acts 12:1-19

Within his domain Herod also had a large group of Gentiles. In order to please these subjects, he embarked on extensive building projects at key locations in the Gentile regions. At Berytu he built a theatre and an amphitheatre, baths, and porticoes. He organized a gladiatorial contest in which 1400 criminals were forced to fight – all were killed. In Caesarea he put on shows to honor the emperor, appearing in glorious apparel to impress the crowd. In the palace at Caesarea he had statues of his daughters erected – which for a Jew was a serious violation of the Law. The coins that he minted in Jerusalem did not contain any effigy. Those minted in Gentile regions had either a picture of himself or of the emperor.

Agrippa reigned only for a few years. He died in 44 AD, just three years after the death of Caligula. Acts 12:21-23 describes his death.

After the death of Agrippa, a new era began for the Jews. Before beginning that study, we will take a side journey to note the condition of the Jews dispersed throughout the empire.

## **Jewish Dispersion During The Roman Period**

The three most important centers of the Jewish Dispersion during the Roman period were

- Alexandria
- Rome
- Babylonia and the East

### **Jews in Alexandria**

Through archaeology and the study of documents, a few details regarding the organization of the Jewish community in Alexandria are now known. The Jews had their special quarter in the city, but were not confined to it. Synagogues existed in various parts of the city. The Alexandrian Jews formed an autonomous civil, as well as religious, community. At their head was a Gerousiarch who presided over the council of elders (a *Gerousia*). They enjoyed the same civil rights as other citizens.

From the time of the first contact between the Jews and the Romans, a friendly relationship had been established, a relationship which was cemented by the Jewish support of Caesar when he found himself in a difficult position in Egypt. This friendship had the unfortunate effect of embittering the Alexandrians against the Jewish inhabitants of the city. The persistent hatred of the Jews felt by the Gentile elements in Alexandria, a hatred which showed itself by not infrequent violence and bloodshed, arose to a large extent through the favorable treatment accorded to the Jews by Rome. At the same time, it must be recognized that the Jews did a good deal to inflame feelings against themselves. Political, religious, racial, economic, and social causes all contributed to make the Jews disliked in Alexandria.

During the reigns of the earliest emperors this dislike took violent form. The first outbreak of violence occurred in the reign of Caligula in connection with the presence of Herod Agrippa in Alexandria on his way to Palestine. Agrippa had taken a ship to Alexandria, where he would transfer to another vessel bound for Caesarea. He intended to make his layover a quiet one, but the Jews of the city would not allow this. For one of their number to bear the title, king, was something to flaunt before their Gentile neighbors. A grand display of Agrippa's presence took place. In reaction, the Gentile Alexandrians launched a pogrom that was close to the one executed by the Nazis in the 1940's. Because of Agrippa's intimate friendship with Caligula, the Jews were avenged, but it took years for them to recover. Flaccus, the governor of Alexandria, who had shown great animus against the Jews, was recalled, and condemned to death. Later the Jews themselves took revenge by attacking the Greeks.

Under Caligula's successor, Claudius, the ancient rights and privileges of the Jews were confirmed. This restoration was the result Agrippa's friendship with Claudius. For a season, peace existed between the Jews and Greeks, though intermittent strife broke out at times. A very serious encounter occurred during the reign Nero, in A.D. 66. The violence in this incident resulted in such a terrible massacre of the Jews that for a generation nothing is recorded of any further encounter between them and the Gentiles.

### **Jews in Rome**

Next in importance was the Roman community of Jews. There is no direct evidence regarding the earliest settlement of the Jews in Rome. The first reference to their presence in Rome belongs to the time of Pompey, though it is exceedingly probable that many Jews were settled there long before this time.

Some interesting knowledge of the Jewish communal organization in Rome has been gathered from Jewish inscriptions in ancient cemeteries and in the catacombs. From these it is learned, for example, that the Jews in Rome had a number of independently organized communities, each with its own synagogue, and each under a separate Gerousia.



Not until the reign of Tiberius do we hear of any overt action being taken against the Jewish community in Rome. For some reason, Tiberius issued an edict banishing all Jews from the city of Rome, but it seems that they soon were permitted to return. Acts 18:2 mentions another Jewish banishment from Rome during the reign of Claudius.

The Romans, like the Alexandrians, disliked the Jews, and for many of the same reasons. Two different groups particular aggravated the Romans: Jewish beggars, on the one hand, and rich Jews with disagreeable propensities, on the other.

### **Babylonia and the east**

Lastly, there is Babylonia and the East. The Jews of the Eastern Dispersion were scattered over a very wide area. The most important settlements were in Nehardea and Nisibis, both cities situated on the Euphrates. The main characteristic recorded of the Jews of the East was their rigid adherence to the Law. In general, their lives were probably spent peacefully; but at times restless spirits made trouble.

As elsewhere in the dispersion, the Jews' Gentile neighbors tended to dislike them. Nehardea was the site of more than one persecution. One of the most severe caused the Jews to flee the area and take refuge in Seleucia, west of the Tigris. A curious episode is recorded of a converted Jew becoming a vassal-king in Parthia. In later days Babylonia became a very important centre of Judaism.

The Jewish settlements in Asia Minor were very numerous. Some of the Jewish settlements in Asia Minor adopted Graeco-Oriental cult-like behavior, but such adoption was in form only, the essence of Judaism remained the same.

## **Section Four: Judaea under Roman Procurators**

When Agrippa I died, his only son, Agrippa II, was living in Rome under the care of Claudius. Although the young Agrippa was only seventeen years old, Claudius planned to place him on his father's throne. Wiser counsels, however, prevailed. It was pointed out to Claudius that a mere boy was quite unfitted to preside over a kingdom like Judea. The Jews were an intractable group of subjects and an inexperienced young man would not be able to handle the job. Claudius decided to place the region, once again, under the oversight of procurators.

In 48 AD, young Agrippa was given the small kingdom of his uncle, the late Herod of Chalkis. This was a rather insignificant domain in the district of Lebanon. In 50 AD, the emperor removed him from this tetrarchy and gave him the tetrarchy of Philip, plus Batanaea, Trachonitis, and Abilene. When Nero came to the throne, he gave Agrippa II a portion of Galilee and villages in Perea. A sign that the Romans wanted to get along with the Jews was the authority that Agrippa was given in Jerusalem. He had the authority to appoint the High Priest, he was guardian of the Temple and the Temple treasury as well as having oversight of the Temple services. Other concessions also were given.

During Agrippa's reign, the continued growth of Jewish exclusiveness caused renewed estrangement between the Jews and the surrounding non-Jewish peoples. Various events occurred that made it clear that the relationship between Agrippa and his subjects was not a friendly relationship. This is not surprising in that Agrippa was not a man of high morals and his conduct offended the Jews.

Even though Agrippa II was made a tetrarch, the real power remained with the Roman procurators. The Roman Strabo listed three types of imperial provinces. Many provinces were administered by men who had been senators. Others, large provinces like that of Syria, were administered by men to had been consuls, and the lesser ones by men who had been praetors. The third class was an exceptional group in which men of military experience were required in the government. Such provinces consisted of those who because of special tenacity in adhering to peculiar national customs, or on account of the savage state of the country, the government could not be carried on by usual methods. The provinces of this third class always were administered by a procurator of the equestrian class. The equestrian procurators were given a free hand in their administration. The

procurators of Judea were subordinate to the governor of Syria only to the extent that the governor had the right and duty to interfere when a case of extreme necessity developed.

The residence of the procurator of Judea was not in Jerusalem but in Caesarea. His residence was called the *Praetorium*. In Caesarea, his praetorium was the palace built by Herod. When in Jerusalem, the praetorium was the palace of Herod in Jerusalem.

The Judean procurators tried not to interfere with the Jewish religion. Only when that religion interfered with the collection of taxes, or in some way promoted rebellion, did the procurator interfere. The procurators were not ideal rulers, but the conditions of the times made their task impossible. The first of the procurators, Cuspius Fadus, was sent to Judea in 44 AD. He immediately faced an unruly situation. A miniature war was going on between the Jews of Perea and the Gentiles of Philadelphia. In addition to the ongoing conflicts between the Jews and Gentiles, three other elements faced the procurator:

- Lawless bands had developed that lived by rape and murder. This had become possible through Rome's practice of having only a small contingent of military "auxiliaries" in the land. These were stationed at Caesarea on the coast, and a small barracks in Jerusalem. They were not sufficient to deal with these organized gangs.
- The various parties within Judaism were at one another's throats. The Romans could not understand these conflicts and so the Jews were viewed as a nuisance
- The growing presence of the Zealots with their militant ideas of freedom and Messianic expectations caused a number serious conflicts. An extreme group of Zealots developed. They were called, *Sicarii*, the name of the daggers with which they armed themselves.

One of the difficult challenges for Fadus was the Zealots' propensity for following false Messiahs. One of the most notable was a man named Theudas. He persuaded a great number of people to take their possessions and follow him to the Jordan River. He told them that he would part the water and they could cross over on dry land. Fadus heard of the event and showed up with a group of cavalry and slew many of Theudas' disciples. They captured Theudas and decapitated him.

Fadus was followed by Tiberius Alexander. During his procuratorship a severe famine afflicted the land. There was a minor uprising resulting in the execution of scions of prominent families.

Next on the scene was Cumanus. During his rule, a Roman soldier did something indecent in Jerusalem during Passover. The specifics of the indecency are vague. However, this caused a riot and several hundred Jews were slain.

A few years later, some Jews were traveling through Samaria for a religious festival in Jerusalem. Some Samaritans attacked and killed them. The Jews went to Cumanus for justice, but he had been bribed by the Samaritans and refused to take any action. As a result, two Zealots, Eleazar and Alexander, led a sizeable group of their number into Samaria burning villages and killing indiscriminately. Cumanus arrived with cavalry from Caesarea and killed a number of the Zealots.

Immediately thereafter, delegations of both Jews and Samaritans approached the Syrian legate, Ummidius Quadratus. The Samaritans complained about the Zealots raiding their land. The Jews complained about the initial murders of the Jewish pilgrims and Cumanus' taking bribes. Quadratus traveled to Samaria and did an intense investigation of the situation. His resolution was to execute the leaders of both Samaritans and Jews, then to send a delegation of both groups along with Cumanus to Rome for the emperor to sort out the situation. The outcome of this even was in the Jews' favor. The Samaritans were executed and Cumanus was sent into exile. This was in 52 AD.

Because the procurator had been chastened by the emperor, the Jews began to lose respect for the Roman rulers. They came to feel that they could disobey any Roman official.

The next two procurators, Felix and Festus, are important to us because they are mentioned in connection with Paul.<sup>269</sup> During the rule of Felix and his successor, Festus, things grew worse and worse. The climax was reached under the procuratorship of Florus, partly because of his maladministration, but mainly owing to causes which had been accumulating for years. The final catastrophe fell during his procuratorship.

## **The Fall of Jerusalem**

### **70 AD**

The procurator, Florus, had obtained his position because of his wife's friendship with the wife of the emperor. He was an unprincipled man who abused his authority in many ways. One writer states that he "used his office for rapine and plunder."<sup>270</sup> In May 66 AD, he demanded seventeen talents from the Temple treasury. In other situations this might have been considered not an unusual request, but such a request from Florus provoked resentment. The Jewish leaders accused him of trying to plunder the royal treasury. When the Jews refused to comply, Florus showed up at the head of a company of soldiers and proceeded toward the Temple, intending to take by force the seventeen talents. The Jewish crowd resisted him and he realized that his band of soldiers was not large enough to overcome the resistance and so he withdrew. This episode inflated the Jews with confidence because a group of citizens had driven back a procurator and his military force. As the news of this event spread throughout the region, various Jewish leaders became the leaders of hastily formed military units. The Zealots were quite active in all of this.

Both the Pharisees and Sadducees realized that a dangerous course of action was being taken and they did all that they could to halt the growing conflict. More than once, they asked Agrippa II to bring troops into the area and suppress the revolutionaries and each time he attempted to do so he was driven away by superior numbers. The Jews captured the Roman fort at Masada and it became a powerful Jewish stronghold.

Eleazer, governor of the Temple and captain of the Temple guard, became the head of the Jerusalem Zealots. The Zealots attacked the Tower of Antonia, captured it and executed the Roman soldiers housed therein. Throughout Palestine the Jews assumed an air of independence. Cities were fortified and arms were collected, anticipating conflict with the Romans. Although the Jews knew that the Romans were superior, militarily, they believed that Jehovah fought on their side and that they would prevail, mainly because they had the Temple of Jehovah.

In the fall of 66 AD, during the Feast of Tabernacles, Cestius, the Roman Prefect of Syria, advanced against the rebels with an army of 10,000 Roman troops, accompanied by 13,000 auxiliaries from allies. He bivouacked at Gagao, about six miles north of Jerusalem. Cestius ordered the city to surrender and gave the Jews three days to comply. When his offer was refused he seized the suburbs. The defenders of the suburbs retreated into the city and joined those who hurled stones and javelins on the Romans.

Under the cover of protecting shields held overhead, the Romans began to undermine the walls of the city, but found the task greater than they had imagined. Some of the moderate elements of the Jews were ready to open the gates of the city when, for reasons that never have been determined, the Romans surprisingly withdrew from the siege. The Jews, seeing the retreating columns, rushed out and killed 6000 Romans as they retreated through the narrow passes. The Romans left behind a vast store of war materials which the Jews quickly appropriated. After this inexplicable deliverance, the Jews were certain that Jehovah was taking care of them and fighting on their side.

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<sup>269</sup> Acts 24

<sup>270</sup> Owen, page 170

### Excursus: Jerusalem Christians and the Siege of Jerusalem

Christians in Jerusalem, heeding the words of Jesus as recorded in Luke, left the city.

*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*<sup>271</sup>

R.C. Foster's comments on this passage are worth noting.

“Various specific facts or events associated with the approaching siege of Jerusalem are selected by various commentators as being the exact fulfillment of what was meant by the “abomination of desolation” (Matthew 24: 15; Mark 13:14), but Luke gives the key to the interpretation of the prophecy by showing that Jesus also said: ‘but when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that *her desolation* is at hand’ (Luke 21:20) The Greek has a present participle, ‘being compassed,’ so that the Christians are warned to flee as they see the hostile armies closing in on the city; after the city had been ‘compassed,’ it would have been too late. Their work of evangelization which had been so fruitful in the capital is now to be made impossible by violence; they are to flee to other places with their precious message.”<sup>272</sup>

Eusebius, the early church historian, writing about 250 years after the event, presents the following information which he had obtained from sources extant in his time,

“The people in the church in Jerusalem being commanded to leave and dwell in a city of Peraea called Pella, in accordance with a certain oracle which was uttered before the war to the approved men there by way of revelation.”<sup>273</sup>

Eusebius evidently is giving a rather free reference to the prediction that Jesus gave to the apostles and the manner in which the Jerusalem Christians heeded that warning.

When the Roman emperor, Nero, heard of Cestius' strange retreat, he sent one of his most accomplished generals, Vespasian, to take command of the forces in Syria. Vespasian was commissioned to carry on the Jewish War. Vespasian sent his son, Titus, to Alexandria to bring to Ptolemais the fifth and tenth Roman legions. At Ptolemais they were met by auxiliaries from surrounding companies.<sup>274</sup> The entire army consisted of 60,000 horsemen and footmen, besides the vast numbers of servants who followed the army. Vespasian also had 160 military “engines” and a famous battering ram. Vespasian began by launching a campaign in Galilee, one of the most revolutionary regions of Palestine. The first major city that they attacked was Jotopata, where Flavius Josephus was the governor and commander of the military. The Jews poured boiling oil down on the

<sup>271</sup> Luke 21:20-24

<sup>272</sup> R.C. Foster, *Studies in the Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO., College Press) 1995, page 1192

<sup>273</sup> Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, Chapter 5, paragraph 3

<sup>274</sup> The core of the Roman army consisted of those who were Roman citizens. These were well trained and uniform in weaponry and tactics. These legions were supplemented by “auxiliaries.” The auxiliaries were troops that consisted of warriors from nations of the Roman Empire, who were not Roman citizens. The auxiliaries used the weapons that were common in their countries. The cavalry from these auxiliary nations also used its native weaponry. All, however, were under the command and direction of Roman officers and fought as a unit.

Romans, and so the Romans built 50 strong towers near the walls, which put them out of reach of the boiling oil. From these towers the Romans hurled stones and javelins into the city. Jotopata held out for 47 days. Just before daybreak on July 1, 67 AD, the Romans launched a surprise attack and took the city. The women of the city were sent to the slave market, 15,000 of the men were killed and the others were sent to Corinth to work on cutting the new canal.

Josephus and some of his leading men jumped into a dry well that opened into an underground cavern. When the Romans discovered them, they asked the men to surrender with the understanding that their lives would be spared. Josephus wanted to surrender, but the others did not, arguing that they should die together. Finally, they made a death pact. One by one the men were slain until only Josephus and one other remained. By mutual consent, the two of them walked out and surrendered themselves. Josephus ingratiated himself to Vespasian, by acting as a prophet and predicting that Vespasian soon would become the emperor of Rome. The Romans made Josephus a part of their team and used him as an advisor in the Palestinian campaign.

During the following months other Galilean cities fell. At Gischala, the Jewish general, John, received from the Romans an offer of protection if he surrendered. Pretending to be favorable to the offer, John of Gischala asked Titus if the Romans would pull back their besieging troops for one day, since it was the Sabbath. Titus, believing that John was acting on good faith, withdrew for the night. During the night, John and his band of Zealots slipped out of the city and made their way to Jerusalem. John of Gischala he later became a force in the defense of the city.

The Romans wintered at Caesarea. During the winter troubles beset the Roman empire. A revolt that broke out in Spain spread to Gaul and finally to Rome itself. Nero attempted to escape the city but was killed by assassins. The civil war continued as ambitious generals struggled for the throne. The army held the real balance of power and so after a year of this turmoil, the army declared Vespasian to be the emperor. Vespasian soon was on his way to Rome, leaving his son, Titus, to carry on the war with the Jews.

In February 70 AD, Titus and his army appeared before the walls of Jerusalem. Titus fully expected that he could force the city into submission. His army consisted of the 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> legions, accompanied by cavalry, engineers, and auxiliary troops. Among his weapons were the *scorpiones* (quick-firing siege engines) and *ballistae* (stone throwers). Both of these machines could throw stones weighing 100 pounds a distance of 600 feet. The army was estimated to be 80,000 men. He had with him a larger number of battering rams than had been used in any previous warfare. He was accompanied by King Agrippa, Tiberius Alexander, and the Jewish general and future historian, Flavius Josephus.

The population of Jerusalem had swelled to well beyond normal occupancy. Jews had been arriving from around the world to celebrate the Passover. Others from the nearby regions, had come into the city weeks before, anticipating a need to defend the city from the threatening Romans. Ultimately, 600,000 people were crowded into the city.

When the pilgrims entered Jerusalem, they found the city in a turmoil. Various factions were fighting with one another. Disputes took place over how best to fight the Romans, personal animosities, and religious issues. The Zealots and the moderates especially had intense conflict. One group held the upper town, one the lower and one the Temple area in between. Riots and assassinations were frequent. All of this while the most powerful military force in the world surrounded the city.

Titus demanded that the city surrender. He demanded the acknowledgement of Roman rule and the payment of taxes. He hoped to secure Jerusalem's submission without having to destroy the city. Two things seemed to be his motivation for wanting to end the siege. He wanted to get to Rome and enjoy the position of being the emperor's son in Rome. He also was quite devoted to a Jewish prince and for her sake he wanted to spare the city.

The Jews refused to consider any negotiation with the general. The siege began in earnest. The groves and gardens to the north and west of Jerusalem were destroyed. The siege machines were erected on three sides of the city. The siege was launched during Passover, when Titus believed that the Jews would not fight.

However, he was wrong. The Jews rushed to the defense of their beloved city. They were able to destroy the battering rams, scatter the workmen, bringing alarm and confusion to the Roman ranks. The Jews threw massive stones at the Romans, poured boiling oil upon the heads of their assailants and even hurled back at the Romans the huge stones that the Romans had catapulted into the city. The Romans built a platform near the Tower of Antonio from whence they could attack the city with missiles but it stood for only a short time – some Jews crept through a subterranean passage and set fire to the platform.

In spite of the zeal of the Jews, the Romans did begin to gain ground. After fifteen days of fierce fighting, the Romans broke through the outer northern wall and took possession of a Bezetha (see **MAP XXII**), a northern section of the city. Having broken into the city, Titus thought that he could persuade Jerusalem to surrender. He called off the attack and planned a grand parade of Roman might. He instructed all of the soldiers to polish their armor and weapons, and put on their full-dress uniforms. The legionaires put on their coats of mail, their armor, and their helmets. The horses were dressed out in fine attire. As trumpets blared, tens of thousands of warriors marched past Titus and received their pay in full view of the Jewish onlookers. For four days, from early morning until dusk, the tramping of feet was heard until all of the Romans had marched past Titus. Titus hoped that this display of force would cause the Jews to realize that their plight was hopeless. Instead, from every possible precipice, the Jews spat hatred at the soldiers. The demonstration had not achieved its goal, but seemed to have made the Jews more rigid.

Titus next tried to persuade the Jews to surrender, by sending Flavius Josephus to plead with them. Josephus tried to reason with the Jerusalem defenders,

“O hard hearted men, throw away your weapons, have pity on your country that stands on the edge of the abyss. Look round and behold the beauty of all that you are eady to betray. What a city! What a Temple! What gifts from so many nations! Who would dare to let all of this be given to the flames? Is there one of you who can wish for all this to be no more? What more precious treasure could have been given to man to preserve – You obdurate creatures, more unfeeling than these very stones!”<sup>275</sup>

Josephus continued by reminding them of their forefathers, of their history, and of the mission of Israel, but his pleas fell on deaf ears.

The battle proceeded with intensified force. When darkness set in, the Roman camp was surrounded by swarms of Jews who had crept out of hiding places outside of the walls, or had left Jerusalem through underground passages, or had crept over the walls. Titus ordered that every Jew found outside of the walls, deserters, raiders, foragers, all were to be crucified. And so the forests of the area were denuded to make crosses. 500 Jews were crucified every day until the practice had to be halted because no more wood for crosses could be found.

The Romans had come to a flourishing countryside, but now all vintage around Jerusalem was gone. Even the Mount of Olives no longer provided shade. An unbearable stench hung over the area, because corpses of those who died of starvation or had died in battle were thrown over the walls by the Jews. These corpses piled up against the walls by the hundreds. No one had the time or strength to bury the dead in the normal manner.

In order to seal off the city, Titus ordered the erection of a high earthwork wall that would encircle the city. The wall was strengthened by 13 fortified strong points and it was guarded by a close chain of soldiers. If it had been possible to smuggle supplies into the city by night or though secret underground tunnels, the *circumvallation* stopped this activity. Famine and starvation began to win the battle. The description of the scene within the city is difficult to read. Even animal dung was consumed. One very striking account records an event that shocked even Titus when learned of it. Zealots who were foraging through the city trying to find something to eat suddenly smelled the aroma of roast meat. They followed the aroma and burst into the house of Maria, the daughter of a very wealthy family who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. The Zealots threatened her with death unless she handed over the roast meat. With a wild look she gave them what they asked for – the half-consumed body of Maria’s own child.

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<sup>275</sup> Murray, page 401

The rumor had gotten around the Roman auxiliary camp that the Jews who were slipping out of the city through one means or another had swallowed jewels and gold so that they would have funds once they made their escape. The auxiliaries became hunters. When they found a Jew they quickly killed him and slit open his abdomen looking for treasure. In one night alone, 2000 Jews lost their lives in this way. Titus learned of this and was furious. He had his cavalry decimate one auxiliary unit that had been guilty of this practice.

Meanwhile, the Romans took over more and more of the city, until they faced the Temple as the next structure before them. Titus called a council of war, consisting of six of the chief generals. The question before them was what they were to do about the Temple. Three advised the destruction of the Temple as the quickest way to bring the Jews into submission. Titus was opposed to the destruction of the Temple, one reason being his feelings for the Jewish princess, Bernice. Three of the council agreed with Titus and so the decision was made to take the Temple but to not destroy it.

On two occasions the Jews burst forth from the city in an effort to drive back the Romans but in both instances, it was the Jews who were driven back. When they made a third attempt, they were closely followed back into the city by the Romans. One soldier, mounted on a comrade's shoulders, hurled a firebrand through the so-called golden window of the Temple. The wooden beams, the stored oil, and other flammable products quickly burst into flame. Titus hurried to the spot and tried to extinguish the fire, but to no avail. The Roman troops were in a frenzy and out of control. They surged into the Temple, killed everyone in their wake, and hurled more firebrands into the structure. Many Jews threw themselves into the flames determined to not out-live their precious Temple.

Some of the Zealots retreated to the upper city where they held out for several more days. On September 8, 70 AD, all resistance ended and the survivors were herded together where they were sorted into groups. Some were slain and other set aside to be sold as slaves. The city was leveled, with the exception of three structures that Titus left standing. He left these so that they would stand as testimony to any future visitors that he had conquered a very significant city.

Three fortresses outside of Jerusalem still remained, Machaerus, Herodium, and Masada. Two of these were near the Dead Sea, and the other one between the Dead Sea and Bethlehem. Machaerus and Herodium soon surrendered to the Romans, but Masada, perched on an almost impregnable promontory remained unconquered.

The majority of the survivors of Jerusalem were held as captives and their treatment was a pathetic story. Many of the older people were either slain or allowed to starve to death. The young men over seventeen were transported to Rome to be in Titus' triumphal, after which they were put into the arena to fight with wild beasts or to die in some other unnatural fashion. Thousands were taken to spend the rest of their lives in the Roman mines, while the young women and children under sixteen were taken to the slave markets of the world. The slave markets were so glutted that the Jews were sold at incredibly low prices.

## **After the Fall and the Final Revolt 70 – 135 AD**

After the fall of Jerusalem, Titus made a triumphal march through the region. He was accompanied by the vast throngs of Jewish captives. He stopped at Caesarea, Caesarea Philippi, and Berytus, and then on to Antioch. At each stop along the way, grand spectacles were held in the amphitheaters, in which Jews were forced to kill one another in gladiatorial combat. Before heading on to Rome, he toured Jerusalem once again to admire his great victory. The arch which was erected to celebrate Titus' victory still stands in Rome. Upon it are carved the reliefs of the Romans bearing the seven-branched candlestick, golden table of showbread, a scroll of the Law, and other vessels from the Temple. The table of showbread and the candlestick ended up in the Temple of Peace, which Vespasian had erected. The scroll and purple robes of the priesthood were kept in Vespasian's castle.

After two years of resisting the Romans, the defenders of Masada realized that they could not hold out much longer. The commander called his men together and they agreed together to end their resistance, but not through surrender. Each man was to kill his wife and children, then the men would kill one another until only one was left. The survivor was to set fire to the fortress and then take his own life. 960 people perished as a result of this gruesome pact. After the fall of Masada, all semblance of Jewish military power was gone from Palestine.

Those Jews who were not taken to Rome or sold to the slave markets scattered to the four corners of the earth. Everywhere they went they experienced prejudice and depreciation. Never before in the history of the world, had such obvious and strict laws been passed to control and denigrate a race of people. The racial discrimination was so great that Jews rebelled in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Cyprus, and Cyrene. Cyprus was so drenched in blood that the Jews were forbidden to set foot in Cyprus.

For decades after the fall of Jerusalem, the few Jews who were permitted to remain in Palestine were not only submissive, but seemed to be grateful for the privilege of being allowed to live and to carry on their life and religion.

The emperor, Hadrian, ruled the empire from 117 AD to 138 AD. He began to permit the Jews to strengthen themselves and at the beginning of his reign showed them many favors. In 130 AD, Hadrian laid out plans to rebuild Jerusalem. There is some indication that the Jews petitioned him to rebuild the Temple and he initially promised to do so. However, the Samaritans learned of his plans and protested. The Jews, feeling their importance once again, began to act as if they were the ones who had a say in the matter. Hadrian realized that a new Jewish problem was growing.

The first thing that caused the Jews to rise in protest against Hadrian was his banning of circumcision. This act does not seem to have been aimed at the Jews but Hadrian saw it as a law against mutilating the flesh. Domitian before him had banned castration in the empire, even if it were done as a religious rite (it was so practiced among the priesthood of some religions). Hadrian was man of genteel spirit and so he saw prohibition of circumcision as just more civilizing step beyond the banning of castration. The Jews were not the only ones in the empire who practiced circumcision.<sup>276</sup> Yet, regardless of Hadrian's reason for banning circumcision he had banned the most important element in making one a partaker in the Mosaic Covenant.

In preparation for building his new Roman city, Hadrian had his soldiers run a plowshare across the site of Jerusalem. Predictably, the Jews reacted in anger when they learned of Hadrian's plans to build a Roman city and a Temple of Jupiter on the site of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Throughout Judea the Jews immediately responded to what they believed was the call of duty. The spontaneous, unanimous, and sudden nature of the reaction caught the Romans by surprise. The Messianic hope rose once again and they began to resist Rome. Another surprise is the fact that it appeared that all of Jewry believed that the Messiah had been identified. A young Jewish warrior named Barkoziba, stirred with patriotic and religious zeal, declared himself to be the "Star" that was to come out of Jacob. The most celebrated Rabbi of the day, Rabbi Akiba, became convinced that indeed Barkoziba was the Messiah. He declared that this man was the fulfillment of Numbers 24:17, *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel* (It is interesting that Rabbi Akiba did not take into account the rest of the verse). Therefore, the young man's name was changed from Barkoziba to Bar-Kokhba, *The Son of a Star*. People began to flock to this Messiah. Before long Bar-Kokhba was master of Judea. Coins quickly were minted declaring Judaea's freedom.

Titus Rufus, the procurator of Judea realized that he did not have the forces to deal with the revolutionaries. Hadrian sent reinforcements again and again, but this accomplished nothing. Bar-Kokhba's troops avoided pitched battles, but because of the topography of the country they were able to make sudden dashes from their lairs, devastating the surrounding country and destroying everyone who would not join them. Finding the

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<sup>276</sup> Herodotus II 104, as noted by Oesterly, page 460



rebels' strongholds and rooting them out was a long and difficult task. Finally, Hadrian sent his most accomplished military leader, Julius Severus to take care of the problem. After three years, the final refuge, Beth-ther, fell into the hands of the Romans. It was the eighteenth year of Hadrian (134/135 AD). The losses on both sides were very heavy. According to the Roman Dio Cassius, more than 500,000 Jews were slain in the fighting, as well as those who died from disease and hunger. Cassio also stated that all Judea was almost a wilderness. The Romans also paid a heavy price, as is indicated by Hadrian's report to the Senate after the war. Usually, a report began with a statement that all was well with him and his army, but this report did not follow that usual introductory formula.

Hadrian proceeded to build the new Roman colony, Aelia Capitolina, replacing the Jerusalem Temple with a temple to Jupiter. Hadrian peopled his new city with Gentiles. No Jew was allowed to enter the city on the pain of death.

From this time onward, the Jews became more and more aliens in a heathen world. They never gave up the hope that someday a Jewish state would be re-established in the Holy Land. Through the centuries, the Jews prayed daily in their synagogues,

*And to Jerusalem, Thy city, return in mercy, and dwell therein, as thou has spoken rebuild it soon in our days as an everlasting building, and speedily set up therein the throne of David.*

*Accept, O Lord our Lord, Thy people Israel and their prayer; restore the service to the oracle of Thy House, and receive in love and favor both the fire-offerings of Israel and their prayer; and may the service of Thy people Israel be every acceptable unto thee. And let our eyes behold Thy return in mercy to Zion.<sup>277</sup>*

In 1948, this prayer began to be answered.

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<sup>277</sup> The fourteenth and seventeenth benedictions of the synagogal prayer, *Shemoneh Esreh*, (The Eighteen Benedictions).

## ADDENDUM A

### Herodotus' description of Babylon

Herodotus was a Greek writer and traveler who was born 485 BC, and died no earlier than 425 BC. When he was a very young man, he visited Babylon. Although Babylon was ruled by Persia at the time, the city essentially was as it had been during the Babylonian Empire, which had been conquered by Cyrus, the Mede/Persian, in 539 BC. Thus, Herodotus' visit to Babylon was about 75 years after Cyrus and the Persians had displaced the Babylonian monarchy and made it the residence of Persian monarchs. The following are excerpts from the section of his writing that describe the Persian Wars. Herodotus seems to have written his travelogue during his travels or shortly thereafter. He read portions of his writing as lectures, during his lifetime and around 430 BC combined the various accounts into a single document which modern scholars label, *Herodotus' Histories*. The word, "histories," is a transliteration of the Greek word (ἱστορέω) that primarily means, "to visit for the purpose of coming to know someone". Everywhere he traveled, Herodotus expended great energy investigating the "history" of the region and recording his own observations. In his description of Babylon, Herodotus calls the region, "Assyria," since it geographically was considered to be that.

#### **Herodotus: From *The History of the Persian Wars*, c. 430 BCE**

**I.178:** Assyria possesses a vast number of great cities, whereof the most renowned and strongest at this time was Babylon, where, after the fall of Nineveh, the seat of government had been removed.

The following is a description of the place: The city stands on a broad plain, and is an exact square, a hundred and twenty furlongs in length each way [15 miles]<sup>278</sup>, so that the entire circuit is four hundred and eighty furlongs [60 miles].<sup>279</sup> While such is its size, in magnificence there is no other city that approaches to it. It is surrounded, in the first place, by a broad and deep moat, full of water, behind which rises a wall fifty royal cubits in width, and two hundred in height. (The royal cubit is longer by three fingers' breadth than the common cubit.)

**I.179:** And here I may not omit to tell the use to which the mud dug out of the great moat as turned, nor the manner wherein the wall was wrought. As fast as they dug the moat the soil which they got from the cutting was made into bricks, and when a sufficient number were completed they baked the bricks in kilns. Then they set to building, and began with bricking the borders of the moat, after which they proceeded to construct the wall itself, using throughout for their cement hot bitumen, and interposing a layer of wattled reeds at every thirtieth course of the bricks. On the top, along the edges of the wall, they constructed buildings of a single chamber facing one another [defense towers], leaving between them room for a four-horse chariot to turn. In the circuit of the wall are a hundred gates, all of brass, with brazen lintels and side-posts. The bitumen used in the work was brought to Babylon from the Is, a small stream which flows into the Euphrates at the point where the city of the same name stands, eight days' journey from Babylon. Lumps of bitumen are found in great abundance in this river.

**I.180:** The city is divided into two portions by the river which runs through the midst of it. This river is the Euphrates, a broad, deep, swift stream, which rises in Armenia, and empties itself into the Erythraean sea [Persian Gulf]. The city wall is brought down on both sides to the edge of the stream: thence, from the corners of the wall, there is carried along each bank of the river a fence of burnt bricks. The houses are mostly three and

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<sup>278</sup> A furlong is 220 yards, 1/8 of a mile

<sup>279</sup> Koldewey's excavation of Babylon cause scholars to doubt Herodotus' measurement of Babylon's circumference. Given the nature of "histories" of that era, most now consider Herodotus to have exaggerated or, as was common in such narratives of the ancients, "hyperboles," designed to make a point. **MAP VIII**, pictures Babylon as excavated by Koldewey. However, it is possible that there were walls far beyond those excavated thus far.

four stories high; the streets all run in straight lines, not only those parallel to the river, but also the cross streets which lead down to the water-side. At the river end of these cross streets are low gates in the fence that skirts the stream, which are, like the great gates in the outer wall, of brass, and open on the water.

**I.181:** The outer wall is the main defense of the city. There is, however, a second inner wall, of less thickness than the first, but very little inferior to it in strength. The center of each division of the town was occupied by a fortress. In the one stood the palace of the kings, surrounded by a wall of great strength and size: in the other was the sacred precinct of Jupiter Belus [Bel], a square enclosure two furlongs each way, with gates of solid brass; which was also remaining in my time. In the middle of the precinct there was a tower of solid masonry [this is one of the two ziggurats that contends for the title, “the Tower of Babel”], a furlong in length and breadth, upon which was raised a second tower, and on that a third, and so on up to eight. The ascent to the top is on the outside, by a path which winds round all the towers. When one is about half-way up, one finds a resting-place and seats, where persons are wont to sit some time on their way to the summit. On the topmost tower there is a spacious temple, and inside the temple stands a couch of unusual size, richly adorned, with a golden table by its side. There is no statue of any kind set up in the place, nor is the chamber occupied of nights by any one but a single native woman, who, as the Chaldaeans, the priests of this god, affirm, is chosen for himself by the deity out of all the women of the land.

**I.182:** They also declare---but I for my part do not credit it---that the god comes down in person into this chamber, and sleeps upon the couch. This is like the story told by the Egyptians of what takes place in their city of Thebes, where a woman always passes the night in the temple of the Theban Jupiter [Amon-Ra]. In each case the woman is said to be debarred all intercourse with men. It is also like the custom of Patara, in Lycia, where the priestess who delivers the oracles, during the time that she is so employed---for at Patara there is not always an oracle---is shut up in the temple every night.

**I.183:** Below, in the same precinct, there is a second temple, in which is a sitting figure of Jupiter [Marduk], all of gold. Before the figure stands a large golden table, and the throne whereon it sits, and the base on which the throne is placed, are likewise of gold. The Chaldaeans told me that all the gold together was eight hundred talents' weight. Outside the temple are two altars, one of solid gold, on which it is only lawful to offer sucklings; the other a common altar, but of great size, on which the full-grown animals are sacrificed. It is also on the great altar that the Chaldaeans burn the frankincense, which is offered to the amount of a thousand talents' weight, every year, at the festival of the God. ...Besides the ornaments which I have mentioned, there are a large number of private offerings in this holy precinct.

**I.184:** Many sovereigns have ruled over this city of Babylon, and lent their aid to the building of its walls and the adornment of its temples, of whom I shall make mention in my Assyrian history. Among them two were women. Of these, the earlier, called Semiramis,<sup>280</sup> held the throne five generations before the later princess. She raised certain embankments well worthy of inspection, in the plain near Babylon, to control the river, which, till then, used to overflow, and flood the whole country round about.

**I.185:** The later of the two queens, whose name was Nitocris,<sup>281</sup> a wiser princess than her predecessor, not only left behind her, as memorials of her occupancy of the throne, the works which I shall presently describe, but

<sup>280</sup> Semiramis, (also spelled, Semaramis) according to tradition, was the wife of Nimrod and the Queen of Babylon. Many researchers consider her to be the model for all future goddess worship. See Bryce Self, *Semaramis, Queen of Babylon* at, [www.ldolphin.org/semir.html](http://www.ldolphin.org/semir.html)

<sup>281</sup> Nitocris is mentioned by both Herodotus and Manetho, but nothing certain is known about her. Herodotus here reports what he was told by the Babylonians of his day. Some speculate that Nitocris was the queen mentioned in Daniel 5:10, who would have been the queen mother – probably the mother of Nabonidus, thus, Belshazzar’s grandmother, or possibly the wife of Evil-Merodoch, and thus, the daughter-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar. If that is true, then both Nabonidus (who did not like the responsibilities of ruling) and his son, Belshazzar (who seemed to party more than rule), probably left the

also, observing the great power and restless enterprise of the Medes, who had taken so large a number of cities, and among them Nineveh, and expecting to be attacked in her turn, made all possible exertions to increase the defenses of her empire. And first, whereas the river Euphrates, which traverses the city, ran formerly with a straight course to Babylon, she, by certain excavations which she made at some distance up the stream, rendered it so winding that it comes three several times in sight of the same village, a village in Assyria, which is called Ardericea; and to this day, they who would go from our sea to Babylon, on descending to the river touch three times, and on three different days, at this very place.

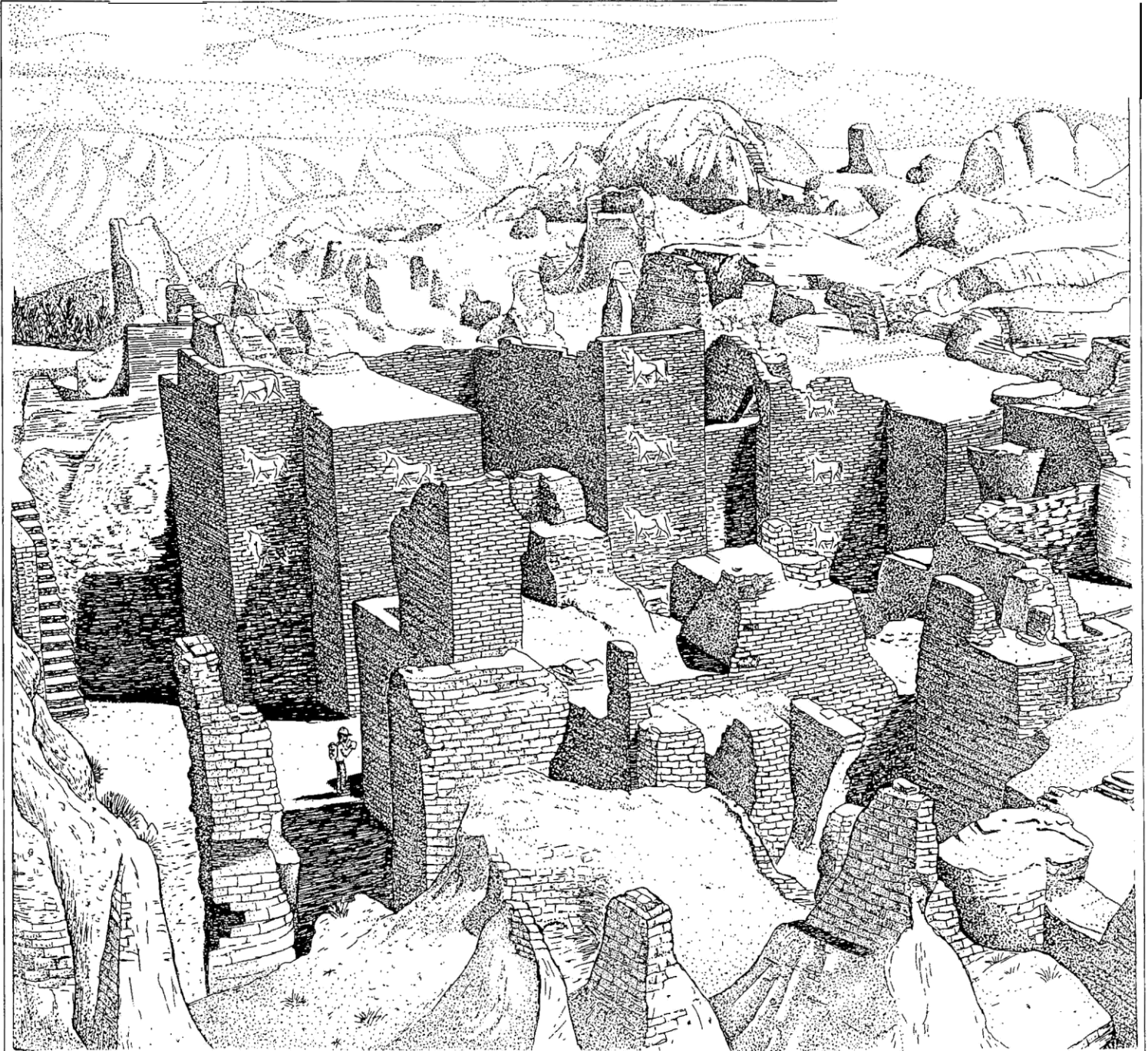
She also made an embankment along each side of the Euphrates, wonderful both for breadth and height, and dug a basin for a lake a great way above Babylon, close alongside of the stream, which was sunk everywhere to the point where they came to water, and was of such breadth that the whole circuit measured four hundred and twenty furlongs. The soil dug out of this basin was made use of in the embankments along the waterside. When the excavation was finished, she had stones brought, and bordered with them the entire margin of the reservoir. These two things were done, the river made to wind, and the lake excavated, that the stream might be slacker by reason of the number of curves, and the voyage be rendered circuitous, and that at the end of the voyage it might be necessary to skirt the lake and so make a long round. All these works were on that side of Babylon where the passes lay, and the roads into Media were the straightest, and the aim of the queen in making them was to prevent the Medes from holding intercourse with the Babylonians, and so to keep them in ignorance of her affairs.

**I.186:** While the soil from the excavation was being thus used for the defense of the city, Nitocris engaged also in another undertaking, a mere by-work compared with those we have already mentioned. The city, as I said, was divided by the river into two distinct portions. Under the former kings, if a man wanted to pass from one of these divisions to the other, he had to cross in a boat; which must, it seems to me, have been very troublesome. Accordingly, while she was digging the lake, Nitocris bethought herself of turning it to a use which should at once remove this inconvenience, and enable her to leave another monument of her reign over Babylon. She gave orders for the hewing of immense blocks of stone, and when they were ready and the basin was excavated, she turned the entire stream of the Euphrates into the cutting, and thus for a time, while the basin was filling, the natural channel of the river was left dry. Forthwith she set to work, and in the first place lined the banks of the stream within the city with quays of burnt brick, and also bricked the landing-places opposite the river-gates, adopting throughout the same fashion of brickwork which had been used in the town wall; after which, with the materials which had been prepared, she built, as near the middle of the town as possible, a stone bridge, the blocks whereof were bound together with iron and lead. In the daytime square wooden platforms were laid along from pier to pier, on which the inhabitants crossed the stream; but at night they were withdrawn, to prevent people passing from side to side in the dark to commit robberies. When the river had filled the cutting, and the bridge was finished, the Euphrates was turned back again into its ancient bed; and thus the basin, transformed suddenly into a lake, was seen to answer the purpose for which it was made, and the inhabitants, by help of the basin, obtained the advantage of a bridge.

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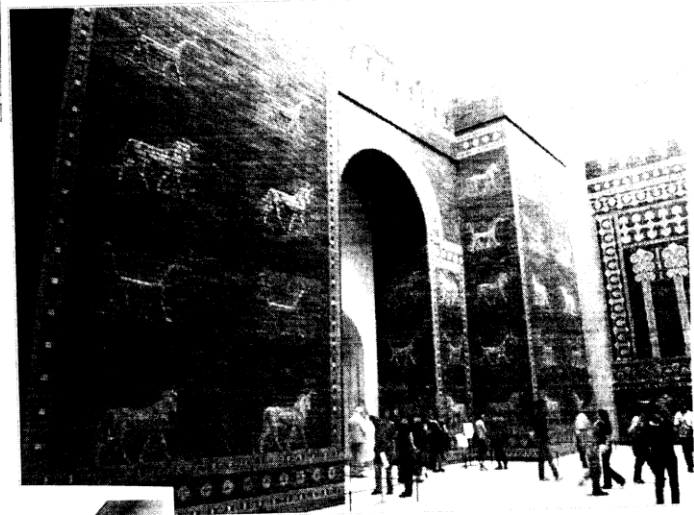
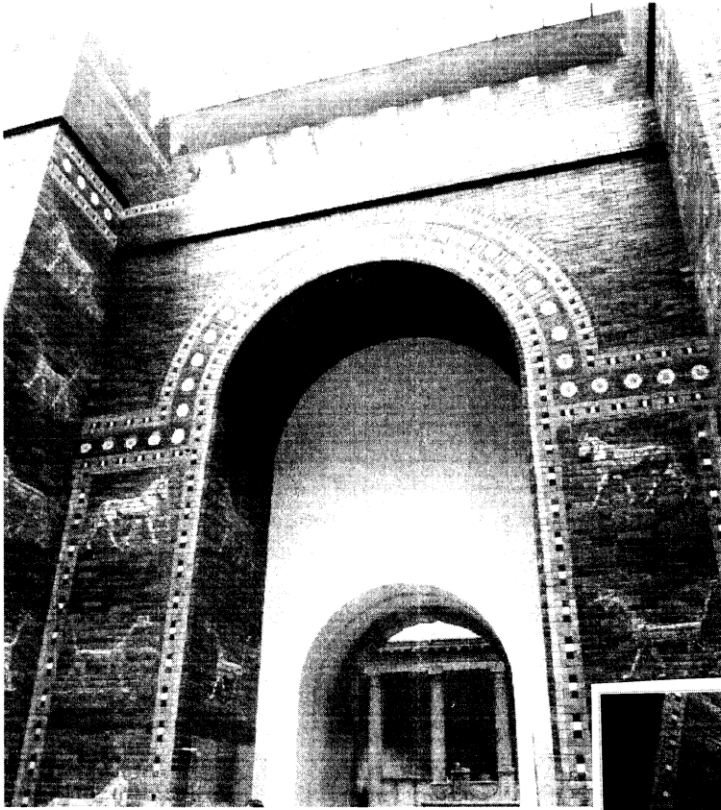
governance of the kingdom to this woman who was known for her wisdom. Herodotus provides a basis for this conclusion in his statement, "The expedition of Cyrus was undertaken against the son of this princess" I.188

**ADDENDUM B**  
Babylon as excavated by Robert Koldewey  
Ishtar Gate in the foreground



## ADDENDUM C

Views of the Ishtar Gate, in the Pergamum Museum of Berlin



## ADDENDUM D

*This article, although dated, presents an interesting sidelight on the site of Babylon.*

[guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk), Saturday May 4 2002 23.57 BST

### Iraq appeals to Berlin for return of Babylon gate

Ewen MacAskill in Babylon

Iraq urges Germany today to return chunks of Babylon shipped to Berlin at the beginning of the last century in a heritage seizure which makes Britain's removal of the Parthenon Marbles look tame. When Britain took the marbles from Athens, at least it left the Acropolis behind. The German archaeologists who excavated the Babylon site had no such scruples.

An entire tower, the Ishtar Gate, was lifted and taken to a museum in Berlin, where it remains today. Standing on the tower's original site, Mohammed Aziz Selman al-Ibrahim, an archaeologist and official of the antiquities and heritage department of Iraq's ministry of culture, called for its return. "I have anger, but what can we do?" he said. "Just, I appeal to the German government to give back our antiquities to Iraq." Behind him, diggers and trucks were working on the excavation of another part of the Babylon site.

The Pergamon Museum in Berlin describes the Ishtar Gate on its website as "one of the major attractions" on display. A spokesman refused to comment on the Iraqi appeal yesterday.

Today a huge portrait of Saddam Hussein stands at the entrance to the Babylon site, 56 miles south of Baghdad. He has left his own mark at Babylon, building a presidential palace a few hundred metres from the site, in the same style as the original.

German archaeologists worked at the site for 20 years, until the outbreak of the first world war. They took with them many treasures, including most of the friezes, each depicting a golden lion, which lined Babylon's Procession Street. There were 120 of them, 60 on each side. The Germans took 118.

The French took a share of Babylon's treasures to the Louvre and the British helped themselves between the wars, when Iraq was a British protectorate. Mr Ibrahim said the British adventurer and writer Gertrude Bell "filled two ships with goods she stole from here". He said they remained in the British Museum.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were one of the seven wonders of the world. The city reached its peak during the empire of Nebuchadnezzar the Second in 604-562BC. When the Euphrates shifted nine miles to the west, the population went with it, and Babylon fell into ruin.

President Saddam's palace sits on a hill overlooking the great throne room of Nebuchadnezzar's palace.

But United Nations weapons inspectors, hunting for biological and chemical weapons between 1991 and 1998 claimed it might have another use: to hide an arsenal of banned weapons.

If the negotiations between Iraq and the UN reach a successful compromise in New York, the weapons inspectors will soon be back in Iraq, but could again come up against the problem of getting into to palaces such as this.

The presidential palace is not the only change made to the Babylon landscape. To protests from Unesco, which has responsibility for world heritage sites, President Saddam's department of antiquities and heritage decided to make up for the bareness of the site by building brick walls in 1987 on the original foundations, to provide an idea of what Babylon may have looked like. Visitors have mixed opinions about the results, some dismissing the work carried as the "Disneyfication" of archaeology. The return of the Ishtar Gate might encourage Iraq to remove the recent work.

**ADDENDUM E**  
**Herodotus' description of Cyrus' conquest of Babylon**  
**Herodotus, *Histories* 1.189-191**  
*Translation by George Rawlinson*

(1.189) Cyrus on his way to Babylon came to the banks of the Gyndes [*i.e., Diyala*], a stream which, rising in the Matienian mountains, runs through the country of the Dardanians, and empties itself into the river Tigris. The Tigris, after receiving the Gyndes, flows on by the city of Opis [*i.e., Baghdad*], and discharges its waters into the Erythraean sea [*i.e., the Persian Gulf*]. When Cyrus reached this stream, which could only be passed in boats, one of the sacred white horses accompanying his march, full of spirit and high mettle, walked into the water, and tried to cross by himself; but the current seized him, swept him along with it, and drowned him in its depths. Cyrus, enraged at the insolence of the river, threatened so to break its strength that in future even women should cross it easily without wetting their knees. Accordingly he put off for a time his attack on Babylon, and, dividing his army into two parts, he marked out by ropes one hundred and eighty trenches on each side of the Gyndes, leading off from it in all directions, and setting his army to dig, some on one side of the river, some on the other, he accomplished his threat by the aid of so great a number of hands, but not without losing thereby the whole summer season.

(1.190) Having, however, thus wreaked his vengeance on the Gyndes, by dispersing it through three hundred and sixty channels, Cyrus, with the first approach of the ensuing spring, marched forward against Babylon. The Babylonians, encamped without their walls, awaited his coming. A battle was fought at a short distance from the city, in which the Babylonians were defeated by the Persian king, whereupon they withdrew within their defenses. Here they shut themselves up, and made light of his siege, having laid in a store of provisions for many years in preparation against this attack; for when they saw Cyrus conquering nation after nation, they were convinced that he would never stop, and that their turn would come at last.

(1.191) Cyrus was now reduced to great perplexity, as time went on and he made no progress against the place. In this distress either some one made the suggestion to him, or he bethought himself of a plan, which he proceeded to put in execution. He placed a portion of his army at the point where the river enters the city, and another body at the back of the place where it issues forth, with orders to march into the town by the bed of the stream, as soon as the water became shallow enough: he then himself drew off with the unwarlike portion of his host, and made for the place where [*legendary former queen*] Nitocris dug the basin for the river, where he did exactly what she had done formerly: he turned the Euphrates by a canal into the basin, which was then a marsh, on which the river sank to such an extent that the natural bed of the stream became fordable.

Hereupon the Persians who had been left for the purpose at Babylon by the, river-side, entered the stream, which had now sunk so as to reach about midway up a man's thigh, and thus got into the town. Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street gates which gave access to the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy, as it were, in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and so took the city. Owing to the vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts (as the residents at Babylon declare) long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had chanced, but as they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and reveling until they learnt about the capture. Such, then, were the circumstances of the first taking of Babylon.



## ADDENDUM F

### The Verse Account of Nabonidus

The Verse Account of Nabonidus is a poem by one of the priests of the Esagila, the temple of the Babylonian supreme god Marduk. It shows that the religious establishment of Babylon was upset because the important New Year's festival (Akitu) had not been celebrated in Nabonidus' absence. The author of this libel does little to hide his contempt for the impious madman.

Some scholars deduce from the Verse Account that during Nabonidus' life time, there were strong rumors that the king suffered from a mental illness and proposed a religious reform (preferring the Moon god Sin to all other gods). These rumors were used by the author of the Verse Account to explain Nabonidus' stay abroad: being mad, he ignored the supreme god Marduk and went away. Nabonidus' devotion to the Moon god, Sin, is a historical fact, proven by an inscription found in Harran (in 1956). That he blasphemed against Marduk, however, probably is an exaggeration.

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#### Excerpts from the text

[As to Nabonidus:] law and order are not promulgated by him, he made perish the common people through want, the nobles he killed in war, for the trader he blocked the road. For the farmer he made rare the *[unintelligible]*, there is no *[lacuna]*, the harvester does not sing the alalu-song any more, he does not fence in any more the arable territory. *[lacuna]* He took away their property, scattered their possessions, the *[lacuna]* he ruined completely, their corpses remaining on a dark place, decaying. Their faces became hostile, they do not parade along the wide street, you do not see happiness anymore, *[lacuna]* is unpleasant, they decided.

As to Nabonidus, his protective deity became hostile to him. And he, the former favorite of the gods is now seized by misfortunes. Against the will of the gods he performed an unholy action, he thought out something worthless: he had made the image of a deity which nobody had ever seen in this country, he introduced it into the temple, he placed it on a pedestal; he called it by the name of Moon. It is adorned with a necklace of lapis lazuli, crowned with a tiara, its appearance is that of the eclipsed moon, the gesture of its hand is like that of the god Lugal-*[unintelligible]*, its head of hair reaches to the pedestal, and in front of it are placed the Storm Dragon and the Wild Bull.

When he worshipped it, its appearance became like that of a demon crowned with a tiara, his face turned hostile *[lacuna]*. His form not even Eamummu could have formed, not even the learned Adapa knows his name.

Nabonidus said: 'I shall build a temple for him, I shall construct his holy seat, I shall form its first brick for him, I shall establish firmly its foundation, I shall make a replica even of the temple Ekur. I shall call its name Ehulhul for all days to come.

When I will have fully executed what I have planned, I shall lead him by the hand and establish him on his seat. Yet till I have achieved this, till I have obtained what is my desire, I shall omit all festivals, I shall order even the New Year's festival to cease!

And he formed its first brick, did lay out the outlines, he spread out the foundation, made high its summit, by means of wall decoration made of gypsum and bitumen he made its facing brilliant, as in the temple Esagila he made a ferocious wild bull stand on guard in front of it.

After he had obtained what he desired, a work of utter deceit, had built this abomination, a work of unholiness - when the third year was about to begin- he entrusted the army [?] to his oldest son, his first born, the troops in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted the kingship to him, and, himself, he started out for a long journey. The military forces of Akkad marching with him, he turned to Temâ deep in the west.

He started out the expedition on a path leading to a distant region. When he arrived there, he killed in battle the prince of Temâ, slaughtered the flocks of those who dwell in the city as well as in the countryside. And he, himself, took residence in Temâ, the forces of Akkad were also stationed there. He made the town beautiful,

built there a palace like the palace in Babylon. He also built walls for the fortification of the town and he surrounded the town with sentinels.

The inhabitants became troubled. The brick form and the brick basket he imposed upon them [*i.e., forcing them to make bricks and carry them to the building site*]. Through the hard work they [*lacuna*] he killed the inhabitants, women and youngsters included. Their prosperity he brought to an end. All the barley that he found therein [*lacuna*]

*(This translation was made by A. Leo Oppenheim and is copied from James B. Pritchard's Ancient Near Eastern texts relating to the Old Testament, 1950 Princeton. Some minor changes have been made.)*

## ADDENDUM G

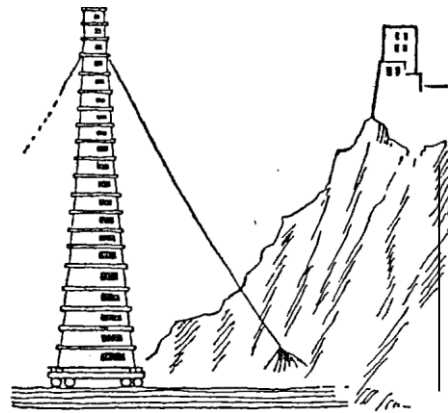
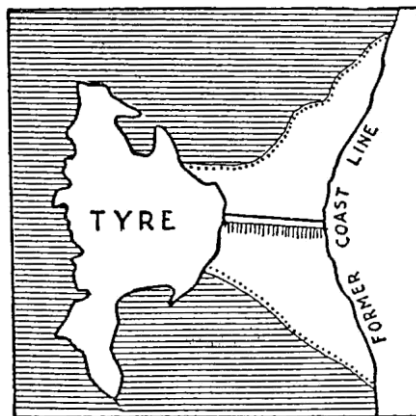
### The Macedonian Phalanx




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## ADDENDUM H

### Alexander's siege of Tyre



Tyre was a high-walled city on an island 2000 feet off the Lebanese shore. It was a key naval base. Alexander constructed a causeway 200 feet wide that reached from the Lebanese shore to the island. A tightly packed road was at the center of the causeway, thus enabling the siege towers to progress from the shore to the island. Today, drifting sand has widened the causeway and an asphalt road now traces the road Alexander constructed.

The siege towers were 160 feet high. Because of their height and narrow base, they were cumbersome and unsteady. They were pulled forward by ropes and pulleys. Ropes dangling from the tops of the towers were held by men on all sides, keeping the towers steady and upright. While the siege towers assaulted the east wall, ship-borne battering rams and catapults hammered the western wall.

## ADDENDUM I

### Philip II of Macedonia

Philip II was king of Macedonia (360-336 BC). He was responsible for the modernization of his kingdom and its expansion into Greece, father of Alexander the Great.

According to the Greek historian Theopompus of Chios, Europe had never seen a man like king Philip of Macedonia, and he called his history of the mid-fourth century BCE the *Philippic History*. Theopompus had a point. Not even his better known son Alexander has done so much to change the course of Greek history. Philip reorganized his kingdom, gave it access to the sea, expanded its power so that it could defeat the Achaemenid Empire, and subdued the Greek city-states, which never regained their independence again. To achieve this, he modernized the Macedonian economy, improved the army, and concluded several marital alliances. The result was a superpower with one weakness: it was as strong as its king. When Philip's son Alexander died, the institutions were too weak, and Macedonia never recovered.

#### Rise to power

When Philip was born in 382, Macedonia was not a very strong power. The historian Arrian of Nicomedia says that the Macedonians were "wandering about without resources, many of them clothed in sheepskins and pasturing small flocks in the mountains, defending them with difficulty against the Illyrians, Triballians and neighboring Thracians" (full text). This is exaggerated, but it is true that king Amyntas III, Philip's father, found it difficult to defend his country against its neighbors, and more or less had to lease his own kingdom from the Illyrians.

In 370, Amyntas died and was succeeded by Philip's elder brother Alexander II, who was forced to send his brother as a hostage to the Illyrians. Later, when Alexander had tried to expand his influence in Thessaly and had gotten involved in a war with Thebes, the only way to obtain peace was to send Philip as hostage to the house of the Theban politician Pammenes, a friend of the famous general Epaminondas. Philip was now at an age to understand what he saw, and learned a lot about warfare, about city life, and the importance of Persia, a Theban ally.

Meanwhile, king Alexander II had been assassinated by a man named Ptolemaeus of Aloros (perhaps the lover of the queen-mother Eurydice). The new king was a brother of Alexander II, Perdicas III, who was one year older than Philip, but still too young to be a ruler. Ptolemaeus was his regent. In 365, when Perdicas was old enough, he became king, and immediately killed Ptolemaeus. His younger brother returned to Macedonia, which was still a weak kingdom.

Yet, the seeds of change had been sown. Alexander had reorganized the Macedonian phalanx (to be discussed below), Philip arrived with new military and political knowledge, and Perdicas knew how to play the diplomatic game. He was forced by the Athenians to cooperate with them in an attempt to conquer the city of Amphipolis, and indeed, Perdicas did fight together with the Athenian commander Timotheus, but once Amphipolis had been captured, he kept it for himself and broke off the collaboration.

Amphipolis was important. It controlled the river Strymon, which passed along strategically important forests with high trees, necessary for anyone who wanted to build a ship. The city also controlled the road from Macedonia to Thrace. And, the most important thing: there were gold mines. As long as Macedonia had Amphipolis, it had the resources to build up an army and it could blackmail any sea power. Immediately, Perdicas invited the Athenian Callistratus to reform the

Macedonian economy and toll system. However, the king was not to see the edifice for which he had laid the foundations, because in the last weeks of **360**, his army was defeated by the Illyrian king Bardylis. Perdikkas and 4,000 others died in action.

He left a very young son, Amyntas, and Philip became regent. Immediately, Athens opened secret negotiations and offered to support him when he established his throne, and asked him to give up Amphipolis. Philip replied to this overture by removing the garrison from Amphipolis, which was now independent again. At the same time, he paid the Thracians and Paeonians, which gave him the rest he needed. This temporizing diplomacy paid off. In 359, he recruited and trained a new army, and in the spring of 358 he was ready to strike. The Paeonians were subdued and would never be independent again. In the summer, Bardylis had to face the new Macedonian army, and saw how his own men were massacred. The mines of Damastion were from now on Macedonian.

Shortly before Philip set out to the Paeonians, king Artaxerxes II Mnemon of Persia died and was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes III Ochus, an energetic man whose main aim was to reconquer Egypt. To achieve this, he needed to control the sea, and he therefore had to take action against Athens, which had a navy and had supported Egypt on more than one occasion. The satrap of Caria, Maussolus, was able to provoke a revolt among the Athenian allies. This was the beginning of the Social War (357-355).

Immediately, Philip (who had probably accepted money from the king of Persia but needed no encouragement anyhow) captured Amphipolis. The inhabitants were treated kindly, although the Macedonian ruler ordered several people to be exiled and placed a garrison in the city. He now promised to give up his new conquest if the Athenians would give him Pydna, an important port. The Athenians listened to the offer, but when Philip understood that they were not capable of fighting two wars at the same time, he decided to keep both cities. From now on, everyone in Greece understood that for the first time in history, the Macedonians were united, possessed money and an army, and were led by a capable leader.

In the same year 357, Philip married to Olympias, the daughter of the king of the Molossians, a nation living between the Greeks, Macedonians, and Illyrians. He also married a Macedonian princess named Phila of Elymiotis (a district in the west) and Audata of Illyria. The three marriages secured Macedonia's western border. When the winter came, Olympias was pregnant, and Philip, now king for three years, could already look back upon a very successful reign. The Thracian frontier was safe now that he had conquered Amphipolis; in the north, the Paeonians had been subdued; in the northwest, the Illyrians were decisively defeated; in the west, the Molossians were his allies; he had obtained mines and had given Macedonia its first access to the sea, Pydna. But this was only the beginning.

In 356, Philip was invited to become the protector of a city named Crenides, east of Amphipolis. Accepting it would almost certainly create problems with the Thracians (and indeed, Athenian diplomats were able to unite three Thracian leaders against Macedonia), but on the other hand, control of this rich agricultural town would give the Macedonian king access to the Pangaeon mountains, which were rich in precious ores. So, he accepted what was offered, and the city received a new name: Philippi. The mines were exploited with new techniques, offering Philip an additional yearly income of about 1,000 talents.

Until then, the Macedonian king had been nothing more or less than the foremost Macedonian aristocrat. From now on, however, he exceeded his equals in wealth, and Philip could start to create a new type of society. It was no longer an archaic state ruled by noblemen who accepted one of them as "first among equals", more or less like the aristocrats in Homer's *Iliad*; instead, Macedonia

was to become a full-blown monarchy, not unlike the Achaemenid Empire. Philip copied several Persian institutions, like the office of *spasaka* (or *episkopos*; a man who controlled the towns on behalf of the king), and the royal pages (the sons of the noblemen, who received an education at court and guaranteed, as hostages, their fathers' conduct). Like the Persian king, Philip had the money to buy whatever he needed.

Meanwhile, the Athenians still tried to get back Amphipolis, and because they were involved in the Social war, they left the fighting to their allies, the Thracian Cetriporis, the Paeonian Lyppeius, and the Illyrian Grabus. The continued Athenian interest in the northern part of the Aegean, however, created distrust in the Greek cities. Olynthus was the first to ally itself to Philip; in return, he captured Potidaea and handed it over to the Olynthians. The terms of the treaty are not entirely clear, but it is likely that the Macedonians were permitted free use of the Potidaean ports. The Athenian garrison that had defended the city was sent back home safely: in this way, Philip opened the way towards reconciliation.

In the same summer, Philip's wife Olympias gave birth to a son who was called Alexander, and his wife Philina became mother of Arridaeus. More or less at the same time, one of Philip's commanders, Parmenion, defeated the pro-Athenian Illyrian leader Grabus in a great battle, and one of Philip's horses won a course during the Olympic Games. If we are to believe the philosopher Plutarch of Chaeronea, Philip heard the news about the birth of Alexander and that of the victories of Parmenion and the race-horse on the very day of his capture of Potidaea. This is probably not true, but the summer of 356 was remarkable. Later, Philip was recognized as king - no longer was he just a regent, but the real ruler, with the right to be succeeded by one of his own sons. Thus ended one of the most spectacular years in Philip's spectacular career.

Next year, he started to besiege Methone, a port that was situated north of Pydna. Because the Social War was in its final stages, the Athenians were unable to offer help, and the city fell in 354. During the siege, Philip lost an eye.

### **The Third Sacred War**

While these events were taking place in the north, the Third Sacred War had broken out in the south, the greatest disturbance in the history of Greece, and in fact the end of its independence. Thebes had suffered some minor setbacks on Euboea and wanted to compensate for them by the conquest of Phocis, a comparatively powerless state in the west of central Greece. However, the Phocians learned what was about to happen, and in the spring of 356, they helped themselves to the temple treasury of Delphi, and hired an army of mercenary. Technically, this was sacrilege, and it offered the Thebans an excuse to do what they wanted to do anyhow: they were fighting for the honor of the god of Delphi, Apollo.

When the Thebans had learned that Athens had lost the Social War (summer 355), they understood that this once powerful state could not help the Phocians, and in 354, war broke out. Within a few months, all Greek cities were allied to one of the opposing sides. In the east, the former allies of Athens sided with Thebes, and Athens itself, although powerless, joined the Phocians. Sparta did the same, and its archenemies Agros and Megalopolis received help from Thebes; in the far west, the parties in the civil wars of Syracuse and the rest of Sicily and southern Italy lined up with one side or another; and in the north, the inhabitants of Pherae used the Phocians to liberate Thessaly from Theban occupation (or, the other way round, the Thessalians asked Theban help against the Pheraeans).

While the Greeks were destroying each other, two kings were smiling: Artaxerxes III Ochus knew that his Egyptian enemies would receive no support, and Philip knew that he could consolidate his conquests. In 353, he defeated the Thracian leader Amadocus and Cetriporis, who became his

vassals. The eastern frontier, which was destabilized after the annexation of Crenides/Philippi, was secure again.

In fact, the future was even brighter than Philip expected. In Thessaly, the inhabitants of Larissa and their Theban allies were challenged by the Pheraeans and the Phocians. Traditionally, Larissa had been allowed to appoint the tagos, president, of the Thessalian confederacy, but the Pheraeans had obtained it under their leader, a tyrant named Jason. But he had been killed and everything was open again. Philip, who hardly needed an invitation, gladly offered help to the Larissans when they requested it in 353, and invaded Thessaly, proclaiming to fight for Thebes and the honor of Apollo, whose portrait from now on graced Macedonian coins.

Unexpectedly, Philip was defeated, for the first time in his life, by the Phocian commander Phayllus, who employed catapults, a weapon that the Macedonians had never seen before. During the winter, Philip had to overcome a mutiny of his soldiers (the only one in his career; see ADDENDUM J), but in 352, he was back again. The Phocians and Pheraeans offered battle on the coastal plain (the "Crocus Field"), where they expected Athenian help, but the Macedonian king had already defeated his opponents before the Athenians arrived. Philip ordered the execution of the sacrilegious Phocians, proceeded to Larissa, and got what he wanted: he was the new *tagos*.

The surrender of Pherae was a matter of time, and although Philip was unable to advance to central Greece (the Athenians occupied Thermopylae), 352 had been a good year for Philip. He had now united Macedonia and Thessaly in a personal union: a spectacular achievement, which gave him membership in the panhellenic organizations. He was no longer a barbarian.

This was not the end of Philip's successes. On learning that the Athenians had garrisoned Thermopylae, he did not continue his push to the south, but instead invaded Thrace, where he reached the Sea of Marmara in November 352. It showed the world that his army was faster than any other.

His whereabouts in 351 are unreported, but there was a rumor that he was ill - perhaps because he really was, or perhaps because he was, for once, inactive and preferred to stay at home with his wives and two six-year old sons. Anyhow, in 350, the Olynthians appealed to Athens for help. It seems that Philip had decided to conquer Olynthus and its neighborhood now that no Greek power could help it. In 349, he laid siege to the city, and in the next year, he took it (after he had bought the help of a traitor), and razed it to the ground. In the meantime, he intervened among the Molossians, another former ally, and expelled king Arybbas. The new king was Olympias' brother Alexander of Molossis.

Meanwhile, the Sacred War was still going on. First, Thebes had been successful, then Phocis had recovered and after a period of guerilla warfare, the Phocians invaded Boeotia in 347. Their funds were now running out and this invasion was their last attempt to win the war. Thebes was tired of the war too, and appealed to the Macedonian king. What happened exactly is unclear. There was an attempt to block Thermopylae, but the garrison was not in place when the Macedonian army arrived, and in 346, the Phocians surrendered to Philip. Perhaps, as is stated in some sources, he had bribed the Phocian generals, but this may be contemporary propaganda, broadcasted to demoralize the Phocians. Anyhow, Phocis surrendered, a peace treaty was concluded, and its two votes in the panhellenic councils were given to Philip.

The Third Sacred War was over. Thebes, Phocis, and all other Greek city-states were seriously weakened, and Philip had shown this part of the world that he was its supreme leader. A little earlier, the Macedonian king had already concluded a second treaty, with Athens (the "peace of Philocrates"). This marked the end of a war that had started when Philip had attacked Amphipolis

and Pydna in 357 (above).

The historian Diodorus of Sicily states that by now, Philip was already thinking about an invasion of the Achaemenid Empire. This may explain why Philip and Athens allied themselves: the Macedonian army, supported by the Athenian navy, could be a serious enemy for the Persian king Artaxerxes III Ochus, who was still trying to conquer Egypt. Yet, war was not to break out yet, and perhaps the anecdote told by Plutarch is more reliable: Persian envoys visited the Macedonian court, and received a warm welcome from the young prince Alexander (text).

### **The road to hegemony**

The next couple of years are poorly documented, which suggests that Philip was involved in the northern areas of his kingdom. In 345, he was active in the north of what is now Albania (receiving a wound in his leg); he continued to reorganize Thessaly, and in late 342, we find the Macedonian army in Thrace, where it subdued the kingdom of a man named Cersobleptes, and from where Philip continued to the Black Sea. In 341, he founded Philippopolis, modern Plovdiv. The area between the Aegean Sea and the Balkan mountains received a viceroy, not unlike a Persian satrap.

The obvious next step was to expand the frontiers to the Sea of Marmara, where several Greek cities were still independent. In the winter of 341/340, Philip started to besiege Perinthus and Byzantium. Then, the unthinkable happened: Artaxerxes III Ochus ordered direct Persian intervention in Europe, something that had not happened since the days of his ancestor Xerxes. The shock that the Macedonians experienced was still felt eight years later, when Philip's son Alexander wrote a letter to the Persian king Darius III Codomannus, in which he stated that the Persian help to Perinthus and Byzantium had been the cause of war (text).

But although this may have been unexpected to Philip, in fact, the Persian king had no alternative. The Macedonians threatened the use of the straits, one of Persia's vital interests. Until then, the normal policy of Persian kings against the Yaunâ (Greeks) had been to set up others against them. But now, Philip was allied to all Greeks, so there was no alternative for direct intervention. Therefore, Artaxerxes ordered satrap Arsites of Hellespontine Phrygia and general Mentor of Rhodes to send mercenaries to Perinthus.

It seems that Philip first wanted to continue the struggle. Back home, prince Alexander was appointed as regent, and Philip ordered his trusted general Parmenion to come to his assistance. At the same time, the Persians invaded Thrace and the satrap of Caria ordered the Greeks of Rhodes, Cos, and Chios to send troops to Perinthus. The Athenians were in a state of shock, because they imported food from the Black Sea area, and could not allow Philip to obtain a stronghold in Perinthus or Byzantium, where he could cut off the Athenian food supply. When Philip did indeed seize 240 grain ships, they declared war. Now, the Macedonian king had to give up the siege of Perinthus. It was the second defeat in his career.

Artaxerxes could be happy. After the Athenian declaration of war, he could play the old game of using Greeks against Greeks. He had won back the diplomatic initiative. One additional payment was enough to restore the ties with Thebes, which started to prepare for war in 339. At the same time, the Athenians blocked the Macedonian ports.

But Europe had never seen a man like king Philip of Macedonia, who possessed the talent to benefit from his very defeats. He accepted the loss of Perinthus as the price he had to pay for something better: war in the south, where he had already broken the powers of the Greek cities. He only needed to conquer them, so that he could reorganize Greece according to his wishes. This



would be easy, because during the last decades, the Greeks had relied upon mercenaries, but after the end of the Third Sacred War, these professionals had been hired by the Persians. The Greeks could only employ citizen levies, whereas the Macedonian king would use a well-trained, professional army.

Philip was not in a hurry. In 339, he campaigned north of the Balkan mountains, near the Danube, and it was only in 338 that he finally descended upon Greece. In the meantime, the Athenian politician Demosthenes had created an anti-Macedonian alliance, and it looks as if Philip postponed to strike until it was ready. He wanted one, decisive battle against a well-prepared army, to make it very clear that the Greeks were no match. The final battle took place in August 338, near Chaeronea, west of Thebes (text). Philip employed less than half of his army, and his victory was never in doubt.

Now, everybody knew that the Greeks had not recuperated from the Third Sacred War. They had had all time to prepare themselves and had been decisively beaten. The Macedonian propaganda made sure that everyone understood the significance of this battle. Philip had conquered Greece. And besides, much was made of the fact that crown prince Alexander, eighteen years old, had led the decisive charge. Philip's dynasty was strong. Resistance was futile.

### **Army and state**

After the battle of Chaeronea, Philip was at the zenith of his career. In he wanted to surpass himself, he would have to leave Europe and attack the Achaemenid Empire. What had made him so powerful?

It's useless to deny that he was lucky. During the first years of his reign, the Greek powers in the south simply underestimated the man who appeared to be just another Macedonian leader. It was only after the outbreak of the Social War in 357 that Philip showed his true intentions when he captured Amphipolis and Pydna. But then, intervention had become impossible. Athens lost much of its empire in 355, and immediately, Thebes got into trouble in the Third Sacred War. Sparta had been in decline since the battle of Leuctra (371). At the same time, the king of Persia was more interested in Egypt. There was every opportunity for an ambitious Macedonian leader to expand his power.

This being said, we can only add that Philip was a great general, a visionary statesman, and very clever. A man, also, who seems to have lived for his ambitions and had no real private life. Except, perhaps, for his final marriage, every woman in his life served a political aim. The result was the most powerful state Europe had ever seen.

One of Philip's greatest ambitions (and successes) was organizing an army that was loyal to the king, and not to the Macedonian aristocrats. To achieve this, he took several measures. In the first place, he created new noblemen, so that the privileges became more common and less prestigious. The old aristocrats were compensated with dubious new privileges and land. This land was typically given in one of the newly conquered parts of Macedonia, so that the nobleman could no longer spend all his time in his native county, and loosened the ties with his own people. Among the privileges was the right to send one's sons to the royal court, where they would serve as pages of the king. The boys received an excellent education and learned to know people from all over Macedonia. At the same time, they served as hostages and guaranteed the loyalty of their fathers.

The old nobility being less strong, Philip could create a new aristocracy. On a massive scale, he gave out land and military offices. The people who received land were to serve as cavalry men, and were called *Hetairoi*, "companions". They were not unlike the Prussian Junker class. When Philip became king, there were about 600 companions; when he died, more than 3,000. Many people had

been included who were not native Macedonians: for example, Paeonians, Thessalians, Thracians, and Greeks. In this way, the Hetairoi were some sort of melting pot. When Alexander accepted Iranians among the companions, he simply continued his father's policy.

Unlike the common practice in the Greek world, Philip used these men for frontal attacks. In a wedge-shaped formation ("like a flight of cranes", in the words of Polyaeus), they attacked their enemies. The commander was in the first rank, and casualties among Macedonian officers were higher than in Greece, and it is no coincidence that Philip was lame at the end of his life. On the other hand, the cavalry men were inspired by this type of leadership and fought better.

Non-aristocrats fought in the Macedonian phalanx of heavily armed infantry. The Pezhetairoi ("feet companions") had been founded by Philip's brother Alexander II (above). Always, these soldiers, often called hoplites, had been armed with a spear with a length of about four meters, a sword, shield, helmet, shinguards, and armor. They fought in close battle arrays, which could not be defeated as long as they kept their formation intact. However, when their array was shattered, the losses could be terrible.

Philip improved the force of the phalanx by making it deeper and giving the feet companions a lance of six meters instead of a spear. The lance had to be carried with two hands and therefore, the Macedonian shield was less heavy. The sheer offensive power of the six battalions of 1500 men was the unit's best defense.

To be strong enough to force away its opponents, a phalanx had to be many rows deep; and to prevent outflanking, it had to be many files wide. Training so many people cost a lot of time and was expensive. The soldiers also had to learn to carry their own armor, tent, and food, to make them less dependent on mules, and therefore faster than other armies. All this took time, but the result was Europe's first professional army: large, well-trained, heavily armed, fast, and invincible.

Except for the Companions and the Foot Companions, Philip created or reorganized other units. There were light-armed spearmen and Cretan archers, who were used to break the rows and files of enemy phalanxes. The Agrinians were very light troops, often used in the mountains, whereas the Hypaspists ("shieldmen") appear to have been some sort of elite hoplites. And of course, there was the artillery of catapults and a group of engineers, which were used during sieges. During the siege of Perinthus in 340, the Macedonians used a tower that was 30 meters high, and Alexander would order the construction of moveable towers on wheels during the siege of Tyre (332).

Although this army was almost invincible, and although it appeared to be permanently active, it was in fact less often used than it seemed. Philip understood that only soldiers that are alive can inspire terror, and his men knew that their king would not unnecessarily risk lives. Philip may have agreed with the words of general Patton that loyalty from the top down is more important for an organization than loyalty from the bottom to the top, and Philip had the wounds to show that he shared the dangers with his men.

It was foolish to attack a city if you could also employ the twin weapons of threatening to attack & hiring a traitor. So he bought Olynthus, bribed Phocian officers, and summarized his policy with the famous words that walls could also be scaled with gold. The king of Persia, who used his silver and gold for the same purposes, could have said the same, and would also have understood the extravagance of Philip's parties. The guests gave him important information, and when the Macedonian host sent them home with precious presents, he knew that one day, they would help him. It was expensive, but it worked.

Meanwhile, the Macedonian state remained underdeveloped. Philip was the center of everything. It

is highly significant that the coins bear the legend Philippou ("of Philip"), whereas the coins of the Greek cities had legends like Athenaiôn ("of the Athenians"). But there were no coins "of the Macedonians". Treaties were concluded by Philip, not by the Macedonian state. The apocryphal words of the French king Louis XIV, L'état, c' est moi ("The government, that's me"), might have been spoken by Philip.

One of the results of this concentration of power was the impossibility to find reliable generals, who might have independent commands. The soldiers remained loyal to commanders, not to an abstract state. Philip once said that he envied the Athenians, because they could every year elect ten generals, whereas he had found only one, Parmenion. This is often seen as a compliment to Philip's most trusted officer, who was a real commander, but there's more to this famous quote. It is a fine illustration of the difference of a real, developed state, and a pristine state like Macedonia.

Philip could modernize other sectors of Macedonian society. The cities, whether they were old Greek colonies like Amphipolis or new settlements like Philippiopolis, were very important because they were centers of Greek culture and a more advanced economy. The problem, however, was that cities were usually independent, and this did not fit well in the autocracy that was Philip's Macedonia. As we already noticed above, Philip imitated the Persian solution: he left the cities their independence and appointed officials that were to report about what happened in the cities (spasaka, episkopos). In several towns, garrisons were stationed.

So, Philip created, in the almost twenty-four years of his reign, a new Macedonian state, army, and society. Of course, the times were favorable, with the Greeks creating their own destruction and the Persian king looking to Egypt. On the other hand, a man with less personal courage, less diplomatic skills, and less talent for organizing a kingdom, would have achieved less.

It was a brilliant achievement, but it had one fatal flaw. The state created by Philip was exactly that: a state he had created. People remained loyal to the king and not to an abstract state. Philip could bring the Macedonian society from the level of a tribal organization to that of a pristine state, but never beyond this point. Macedonia was like Cyrus' Persia and Charlemagne's Franconia, in which the ruler overcame opposition by continuous conquest, and the sharing of booty. Macedonia had to expand or implode.

Therefore, Philip's kingdom was always growing, and sooner or later this expansion would interfere with the vital interests of the Persian empire. As it turned out, this moment was the Perinthus incident. Here, he had to admit defeat, and this is why he was to provoke a new conflict with the Greek cities, which he defeated once and for all at Chaeronea.

### **The final year**

After the battle Chaeronea, Philip pursued a friendly policy. He wanted to reorganize Greece, not to destroy it. What he needed was a safe southern border, so that he could leave Europe and invade the Achaemenid Empire. Besides, there was no need to attack cities and replace their governments with pro-Macedonian leaders, because they came to power almost naturally after the show of strength at Chaeronea. He only placed garrisons in Thebes and Corinth, and moved to Sparta with his army, just to impress this part of the Greek world too.

Meanwhile crown prince Alexander and the important courtier Antipater visited Athens. The envoys made the Athenians an offer they couldn't refuse: they only demanded that their defeated enemies would dismantle their empire. Because most of the Athenian allies already behaved more or less independently, this was a very moderate demand. Philip's leniency can easily be explained, because he needed the Athenian navy if he wanted to attack Persia, and he could not allow the

Athenians to side with king Artaxerxes III Ochus. During the autumn of 338, Athenian representatives exchanged oaths with Alexander and Antipater.

At this moment, news arrived that the Persian king had died and was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes IV Arses. Philip knew that a Persian ruler always needed some time to secure his position, and understood that there never had been a better opportunity to invade Asia. Within a couple of months, rebellions had started in Babylonia (Nidin-Bêl), Egypt (Khababash), and Armenia (prince Artasata, who was to become king under the name of Darius III Codomannus).

Philip immediately broke off the Spartan campaign, and invited representatives of the Greek towns to Corinth, where they organized themselves in a new alliance, the Corinthian league. Its members would remain free and autonomous, but agreed never to wage war against each other, unless it was to suppress revolution. This meant that the oligarchs that ruled most Greek towns or had recently come to power, would not have to lose their position. A Council was created that had to supervise the peace in Greece, and Philip was elected as leader (hegemon) of a common army. This office was to be reserved for the Macedonian king, and it is likely that crown prince Alexander was present too.

Having organized the Greeks in this league, Philip announced that he wanted to invade Persia, because almost a century and a half before, the Persian king Xerxes had invaded Greece and pillaged the temples of Athens. This was a pretext (if only because back then, the Macedonian king Alexander I had been Xerxes' ally), but no one really cared. There was a lot of booty to be taken away from Asia. To Philip, there was an additional bonus: no Greek would think of revolt as long as a great many compatriots were serving in the Macedonian army abroad.

The real cause of this war, of course, was not revenge, or Philip's greed, or his attempt to create peace in Greece by uniting it against a common enemy. The deepest cause was the lack of internal structure of his kingdom. As noted above, Macedonia had to expand or implode.

The moment of the invasion was well chosen. After all, the Persian king needed some time to organize his kingdom, and Artaxerxes IV Arses had to win a civil war against the rebel prince Artasata, who was marching to the south from Armenia. Besides, the supreme commander of the Persian forces in western Asia, Mentor of Rhodes, was dead too. That Artaxerxes IV was soon to be poisoned by his vizier Bagoas was not yet known, but will only have improved Greek and Macedonian enthusiasm.

The invasion was to start in the spring of 336, but Philip still had to arrange a couple of things. He conducted an Illyrian campaign, and had to think about concluding a diplomatic deal with Pixodarus, the satrap of Caria. This man had opened negotiations and announced that he had a daughter of a marriable age, and Philip promised her the hand of his mentally deficient son Arridaeus. This was an important marriage, because it gave the Macedonians a chance to obtain the city of Halicarnassus, the capital of Caria and an important, heavily fortified port. During a war against Persia, this would be a first-class asset.

Unfortunately, crown prince Alexander was not happy with the deal. He thought that his father intended to appoint Arridaeus as his successor, and because he wanted to prevent this, he sent an envoy to Halicarnassus that declared that he was willing to marry the girl too. Pixodarus was delighted, but Philip was not, and ordered Alexander's advisers (Erigyus, Laomedon, Harpalus, Ptolemy, and Nearchus) to leave Macedonia.

The affair had been laid to rest, but a new and more important crisis followed when Philip announced that he wanted to marry again, with a girl named Cleopatra, the daughter of a brother of Attalus, an important courtier. During the wedding banquet, Attalus prayed that the Cleopatra might give birth to a legitimate son worthy of the throne. Queen Olympias and prince Alexander felt insulted, decided to leave Macedonia and went to the court of Olympias' brother, Alexander of Molossis.

In the winter of 337/336, this family quarrel escalated to an international crisis when Alexander allied himself to several Illyrian leaders and threatened to invade Macedonia. Now, Philip understood that things were going wrong, and he reconciled himself with his son, saying that he had sent Attalus away from court. This was true. In the spring of 336, Attalus and general Parmenion were leading the Macedonian advance force to Asia; Philip was to join them during the autumn.

When Alexander had returned, Philip decided to organize a great festival. He had to show the world that the Macedonian king and crown prince were on good terms. He also wanted to make it clear that the ties between Macedonia and Molossis had not suffered, and he therefore invited Olympias' brother, king Alexander, to come to Macedonia, and accept the hand of princess Cleopatra (not to be confused with Philip's wife). After the wedding, Philip would leave for Asia.

However, things turned out differently. The marriage took place, and there was a big festival in the theater of Aegae, but Philip was murdered by a man named Pausanias (text). He had personal motifs, but there were whispers that he was not the only conspirator. The debate about the possibility of a larger conspiracy and the names of its other members is still continuing. What is certain, is that Alexander succeeded his father and executed several opponents, that Parmenion saw to the assassination of Attalus, and that Alexander could invade Asia in the spring of 334, where he executed his father's plans.

Although archaeologists have excavated a lavishly decorated tomb at Vergina, which certainly belonged to a member of the Macedonian royal family, the identification of the buried man with Philip, is uncertain. The decoration, which shows a lion hunt, is unlikely to have been added before Alexander's eastern conquests, when this artistic motif was "discovered" by European artists.

Adapted and edited from the original at <http://www.livius.org>

## ADDENDUM J

### The Mutiny at Opis

In August, 324 BC, Alexander's soldiers revolted. They were discontent because of Alexander's orientalism. The Greek author, Arrian of Nicomedia, described this event in section 7:8-9, and 7:11, of his *Anabasis*. The following translation was made by M. M. Austin

On arriving at Opis [1], Alexander called together the Macedonians and declared that he was discharging from the campaign and sending back to their country those who were unfit for service because of age or wounds suffered. The presents he would give would make them an object of even greater envy at home and would encourage the other Macedonians to take part in the same dangers and hardships.

Alexander spoke these words with the clear intention of pleasing the Macedonians, but they felt Alexander now despised them and regarded them as completely unfit for service. It was not unreasonable for them to take exception to Alexander's words, and they had had many grievances throughout the expedition. There was the recurring annoyance of Alexander's Persian dress which pointed in the same direction, and the training of the barbarian 'Successors' in the Macedonian style of warfare,[2] and the introduction of foreign cavalry into the squadrons of the Companions. They could not keep quiet any longer, but all shouted to Alexander to discharge them from service and take his father on the expedition (by this insult they meant Ammon [3]).

When Alexander heard this -he was now rather more quick-tempered and eastern flattery had made him become arrogant towards the Macedonians- he leaped from the platform with the leaders around him and ordered the arrest of the most conspicuous troublemakers, indicating to the hypaspists the men for arrest, thirteen in all. He ordered them to be led off for execution, and when a terrified silence had fallen on the others he ascended the platform again and spoke as follows.

'Macedonians, my speech will not be aimed at stopping your urge to return home; as far as I am concerned you may go where you like. But I want you to realize on departing what I have done for you, and what you have done for me. Let me begin, as is right, with my father Philip. He found you wandering about without resources, many of you clothed in sheepskins and pasturing small flocks in the mountains, defending them with difficulty against the Illyrians, Triballians and neighboring Thracians. He gave you cloaks to wear instead of sheepskins, brought you down from the mountains to the plains, and made you a match in war for the neighboring barbarians, owing your safety to your own bravery and no longer to reliance on your mountain strongholds. He made you city dwellers and civilized you with good laws and customs. Those barbarians who used to harass you and plunder your property, he made you their leaders instead of their slaves and subjects. He annexed much of Thrace to Macedonia, seized the most favorable coastal towns and opened up the country to commerce, and enabled you to exploit your mines undisturbed. He made you governors of the Thessalians, before whom you used to die of fright, humbled the Phocians and so opened a broad and easy path into Greece in place of a narrow and difficult one. The Athenians and Thebans, who were permanently poised to attack Macedonia, he so humbled (and I was now helping him in this task [4]) that instead of you paying tribute to the Athenians and being under the sway of the Thebans, they now in turn had to seek their safety from us. He marched into the Peloponnese and settled matters there too. He was appointed commander-in-chief of all Greece for the campaign against the Persians, but preferred to assign the credit to all the Macedonians rather than just to himself [5].

Such were the achievements of my father on your behalf; as you can see for yourselves, they are great, and yet small in comparison with my own. I inherited from my father a few gold and silver cups, and less than 60 talents in the treasury; Philip had debts amounting to 500 talents, and I raised a loan of a further 800. I started from a country that could barely sustain you and immediately opened up the Hellespont for you, although the

Persians then held the mastery of the sea. I defeated in a cavalry engagement the satraps of Darius [6] and annexed to your rule the whole of Ionia and Aeolis, both Phrygias and Lydia, and took Miletus by storm.

All the rest came over to our side spontaneously, and I made them yours for you to enjoy. All the wealth of Egypt and Cyrene, which I won without a fight, are now yours, Coele Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia are your possession, Babylonia and Bactria and Elam belong to you, you own the wealth of Lydia, the treasures of Persia, the riches of India, and the outer ocean. You are satraps, you are generals, you are captains. As for me, what do I have left from all these labors? Merely this purple cloak and a diadem.' [...]

When he had finished Alexander quickly leaped down from the platform, retired to the royal tent and neglected his bodily needs. For that day and the day after he would not let any of his Companions see him. On the third day he invited inside the élite of the Persians, appointed them to the command of all the squadrons, and only allowed those who received the title of 'kinsmen' from him to kiss him.

As for the Macedonians, they were at first struck dumb by his speech and waited for him near the platform. No one followed the departing king, apart from the Companions around him and the bodyguards, but the majority were unable to decide what to do or say or to make up their minds to go away. When they were told what was happening with the Persians and Medes, that the command was being given to Persians and the oriental army was being divided into companies, that Macedonian names were being given to them, and there was a Persian squadron and Persian foot-companions and other infantry and a Persian regiment of Silver Shields, and a Companion cavalry together with another royal squadron, they could not endure it any longer.

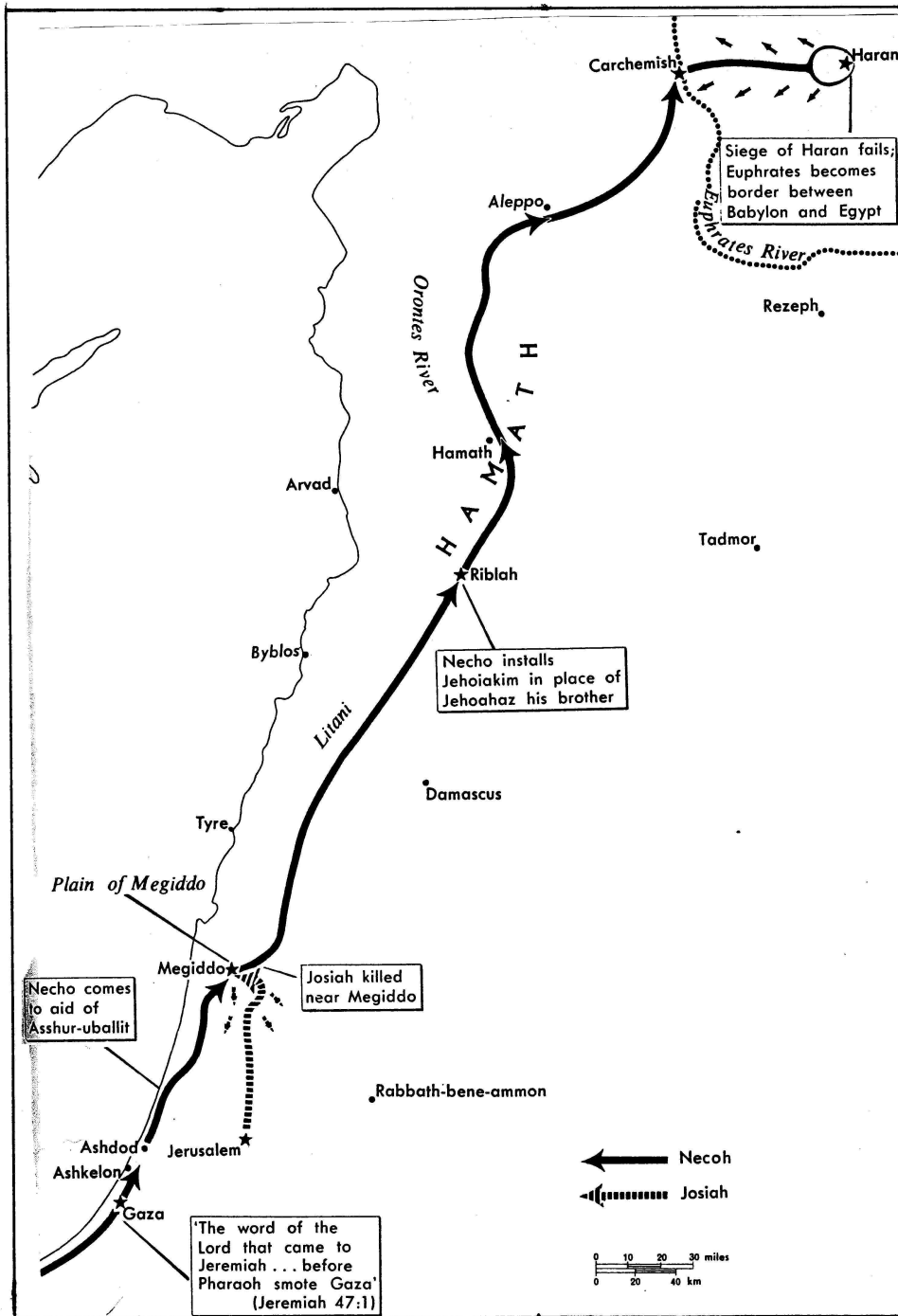
They ran in a body to the royal tent, cast their weapons down in front of the doors as a sign of supplication to the king, and standing before the doors shouted to the king to come out. They were prepared to hand over those responsible for the present disturbance and those who had raised the outcry. They would not move from the doors by day or night until Alexander took pity on them.

When this was reported to Alexander, he quickly came out and saw their humble disposition; he heard the majority crying and lamenting, and was moved to tears. He came forward to speak, but they remained there imploring him. One of them, whose age and command of the Companion cavalry made him preeminent (he was called Callines) spoke as follows. 'Sire, what grieves the Macedonians is that you have already made some Persians your "kinsmen", and the Persians are called "kinsmen" of Alexander and are allowed to kiss you, while not one of the Macedonians has been granted this honor.'

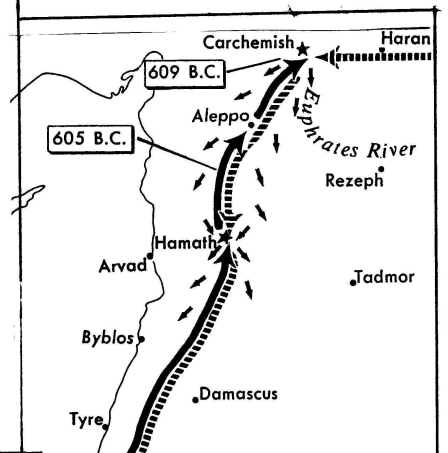
Alexander then interrupted him and said 'I make you all my "kinsmen" and henceforward that shall be your title.' At this Callines stepped forward and kissed him, and so did everyone else who wished. And thus they picked up their arms again and returned to the camp amid shouts and songs of triumph.

Alexander celebrated the occasion by sacrificing to the gods he normally sacrificed to, and offering a public banquet. He sat down and so did everyone else, the Macedonians around him, the Persians next to them, then any of the other peoples who enjoyed precedence for their reputation or some other quality. Then he and those around him drew wine from the same bowl and poured the same libations, beginning with the Greek seers and the Magians. He prayed for other blessings and for harmony and partnership in rule between Macedonians and Persians. It is said that there were 9,000 guests at the banquet, who all poured the same libation and then sang the song of victory.

**MAP I**  
**NECHO'S FIRST CAMPAIGN**  
**AGAINST THE BABYLONIANS**  
**509 BC**

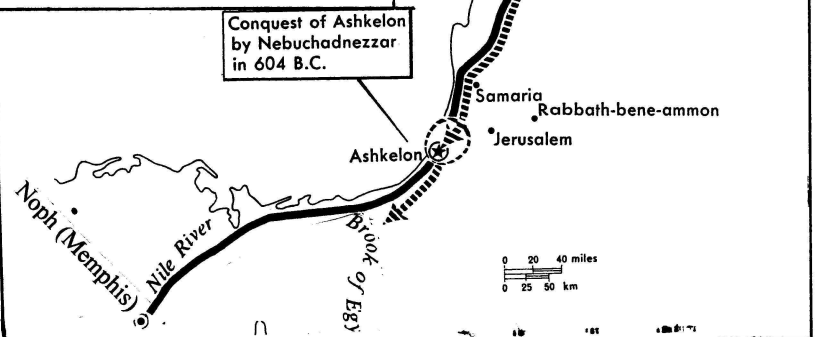


II Kings 23:29-30; Jeremiah 47;  
 II Chronicles 35:20-24;  
 Babylonian Chronicle: The Days  
 of Nebopilesser and Nebuchadnezzar,  
 Kings of Babylon

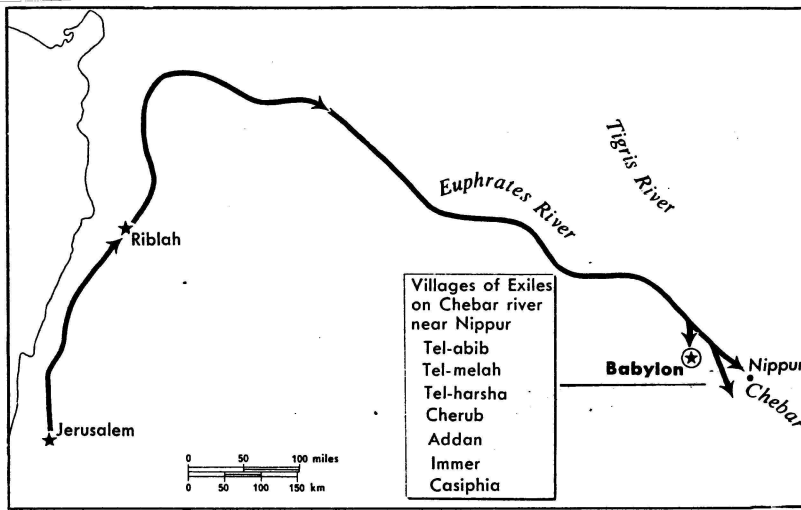


**MAP II**  
**NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S**  
**DEFEAT OF NECHO**  
**605-604 BC**

Jeremiah 46:2; Babylonian Chronicle:  
 Days of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon





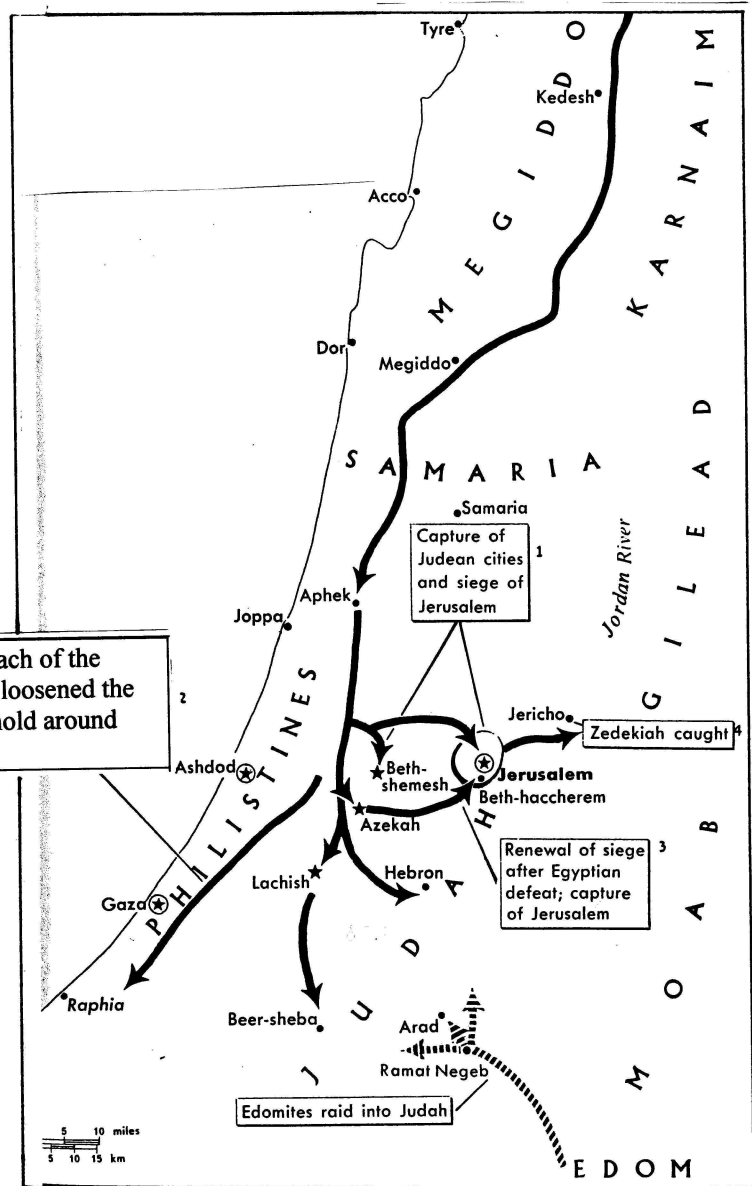


**MAP III**  
**THE EXILE FROM JUDAH**  
**597-582 BC**

II Kings 24:11-16; 25:11;  
 Jeremiah 52:28-30; Ezekiel 3:15;  
 Ezra 2:59; 8:17

2 KINGS 24: 11-16; 25: 11; JER. 52: 28-30; EZEK. 3: 15; EZRA 2: 59; 8: 17

**MAP IV**  
**NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S**  
**CAMPAIGN AGAINST JUDAH**  
**587 BC**

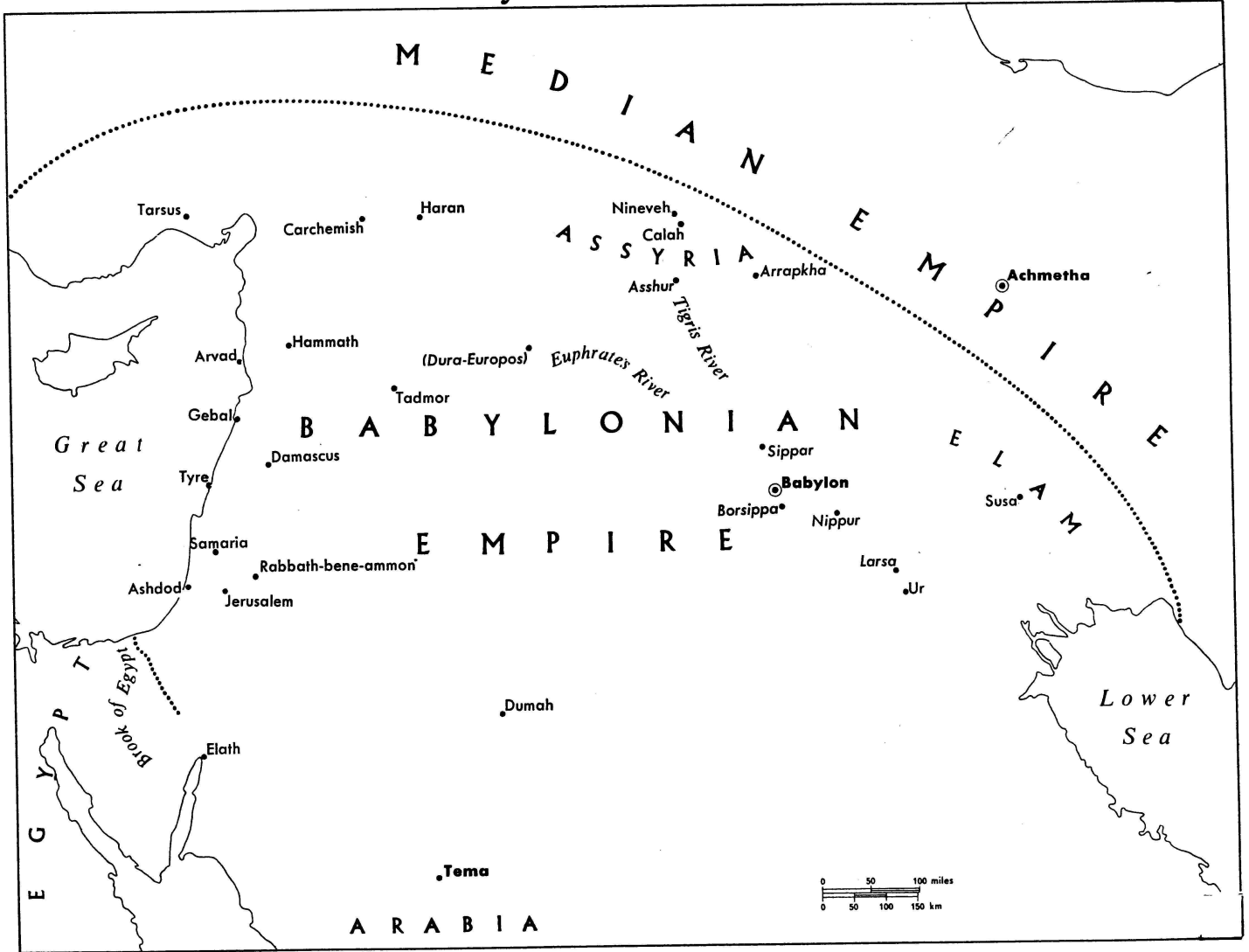


The approach of the Egyptians loosened the Assyrian hold around Jerusalem

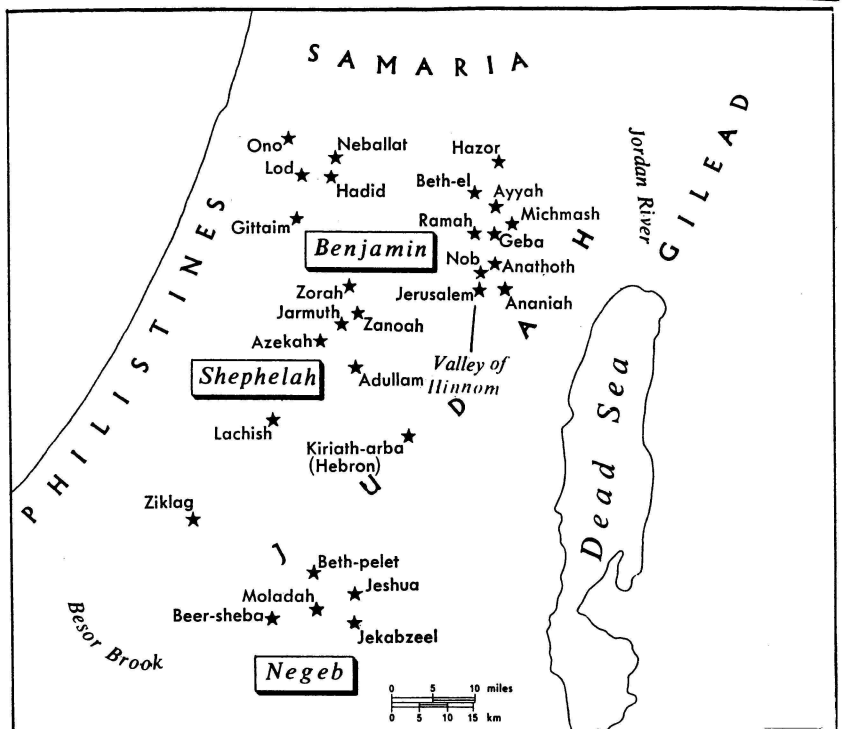
II Kings 25:1-21; Jeremiah 37:5; 52:4-27;  
 II Chronicles 36:17-21; Lachish Ostraca

2 KINGS 25: 1-21; JER. 37: 5; 52: 4-27;  
 2 CHRON. 36: 17-21; LACHISH OSTRACA

**MAP V**  
**THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE**  
**6<sup>TH</sup> Century BC**

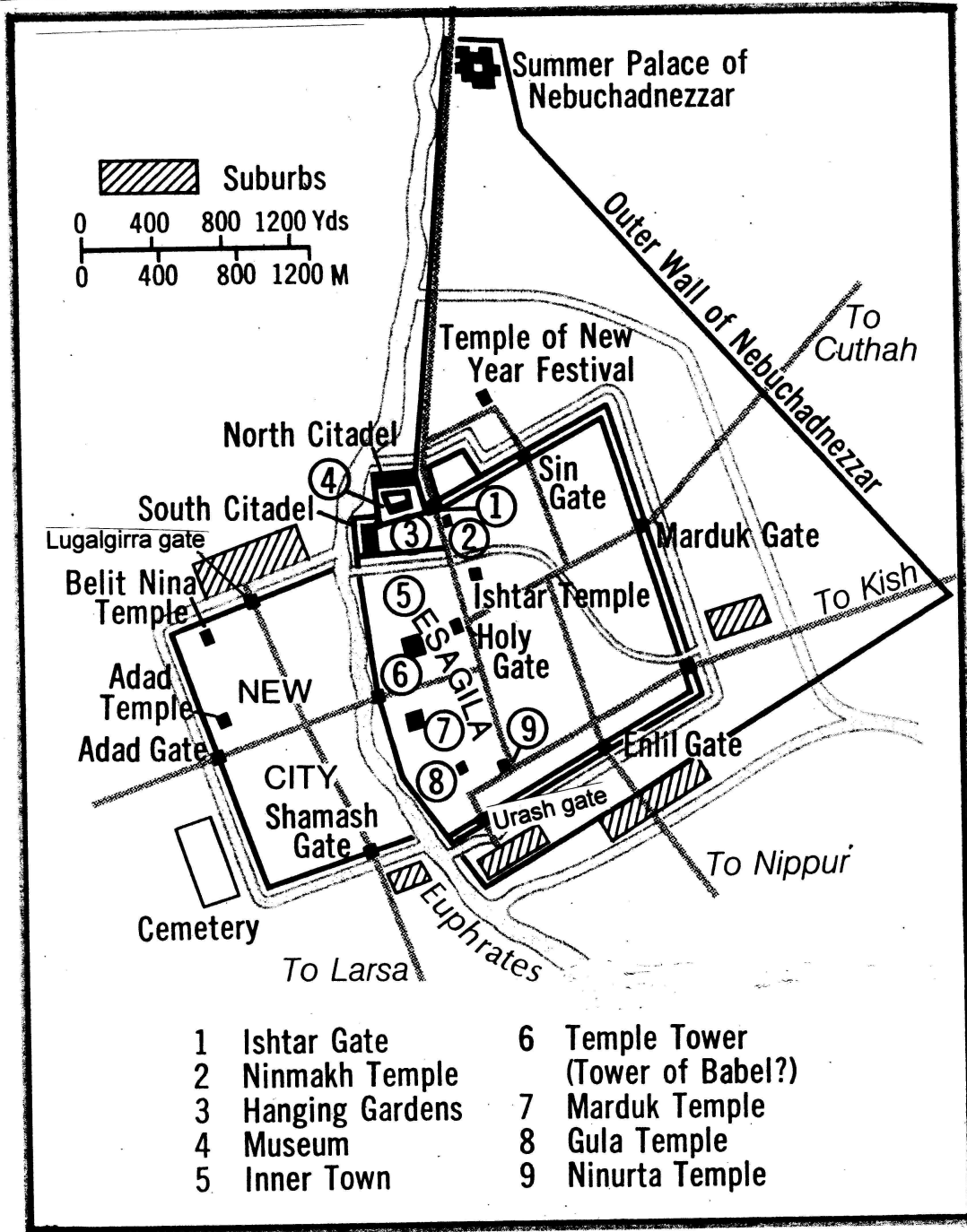


**MAP VI**  
**JUDAH AFTER THE DEPORTATION**  
**6<sup>TH</sup> Century BC**  
 Nehemiah 11:20-36



# MAP VII

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S BABYLON

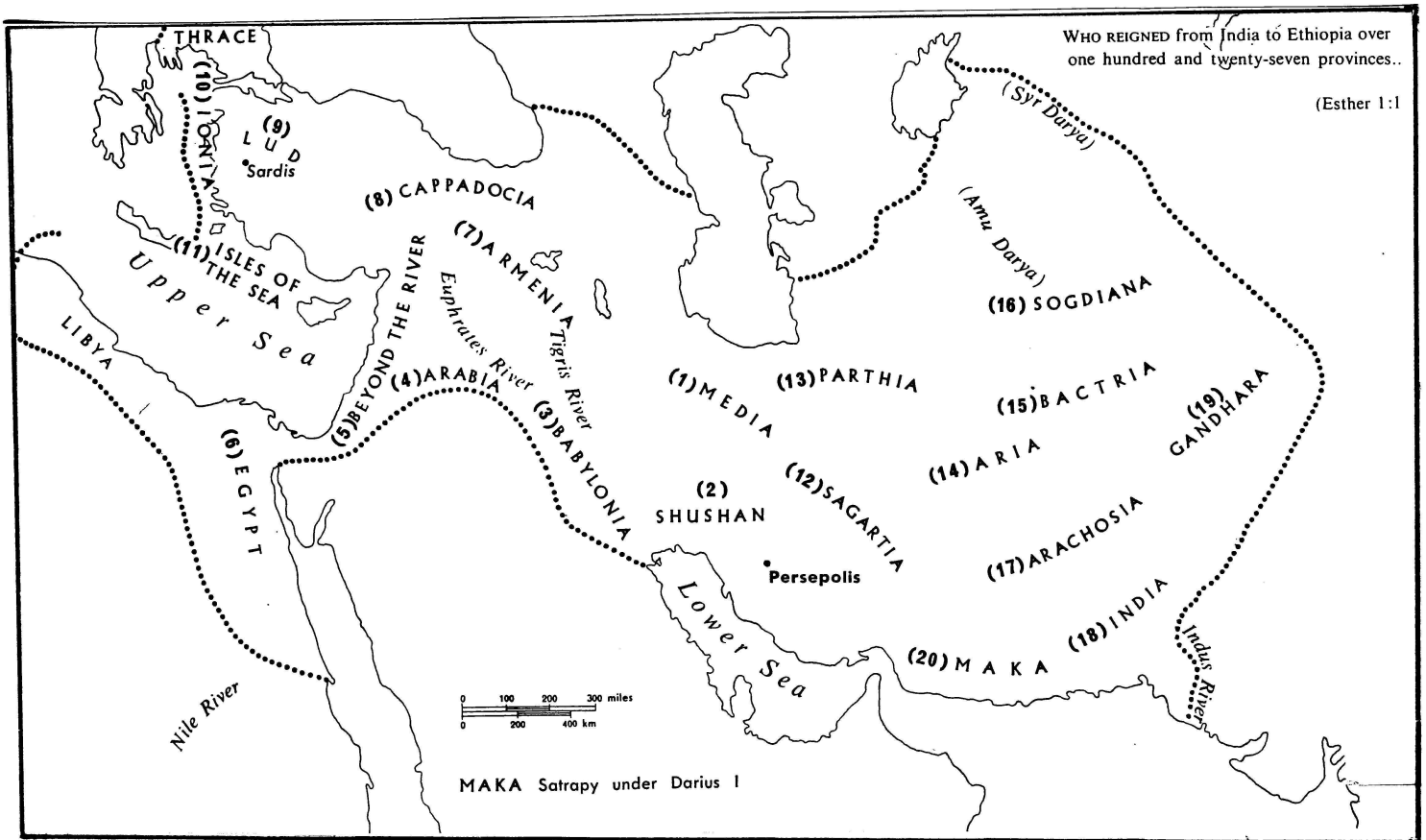


# MAP VIII

## The Persian Empire

### Esther 1:1

Cyrus founded the largest empire that the world had seen. His son, Cambyses, enlarged the empire by subjugating Egypt. Darius I reached India. Darius was a gifted organizer and administrator. He divided the empire into satrapies (provinces). There were 127 satrapies. The fifth satrapy was abar Nahara, "beyond the river," (Euphrates) which included "Yehud" - Judah

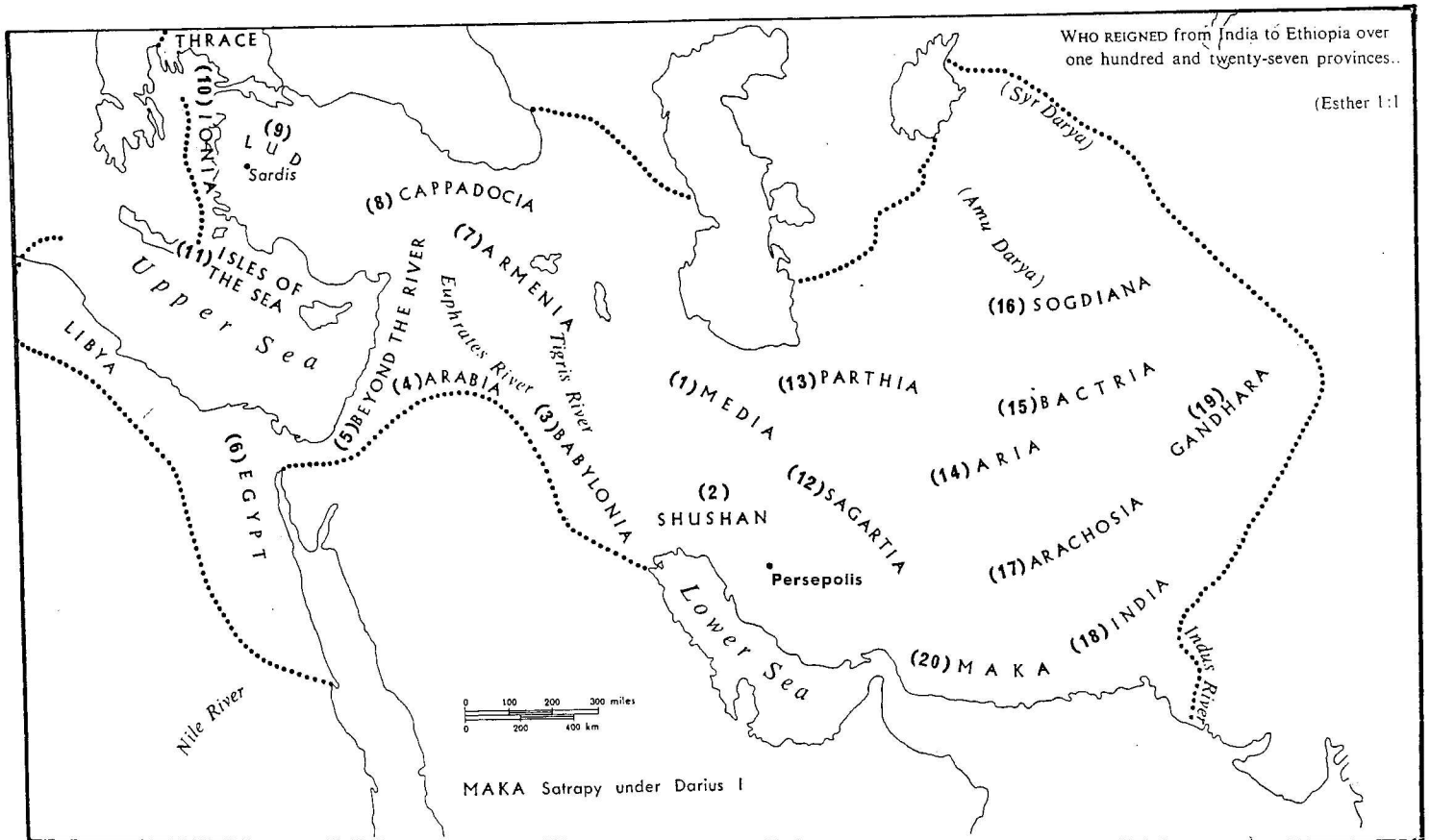


# MAP IX

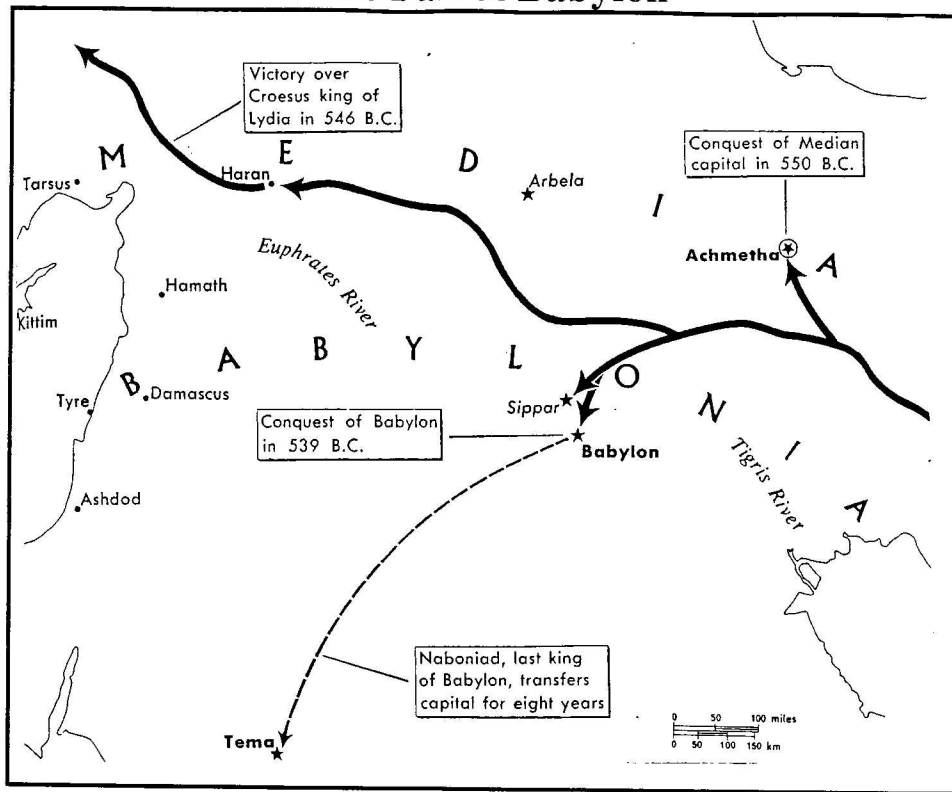
## The Persian Empire

Esther 1:1

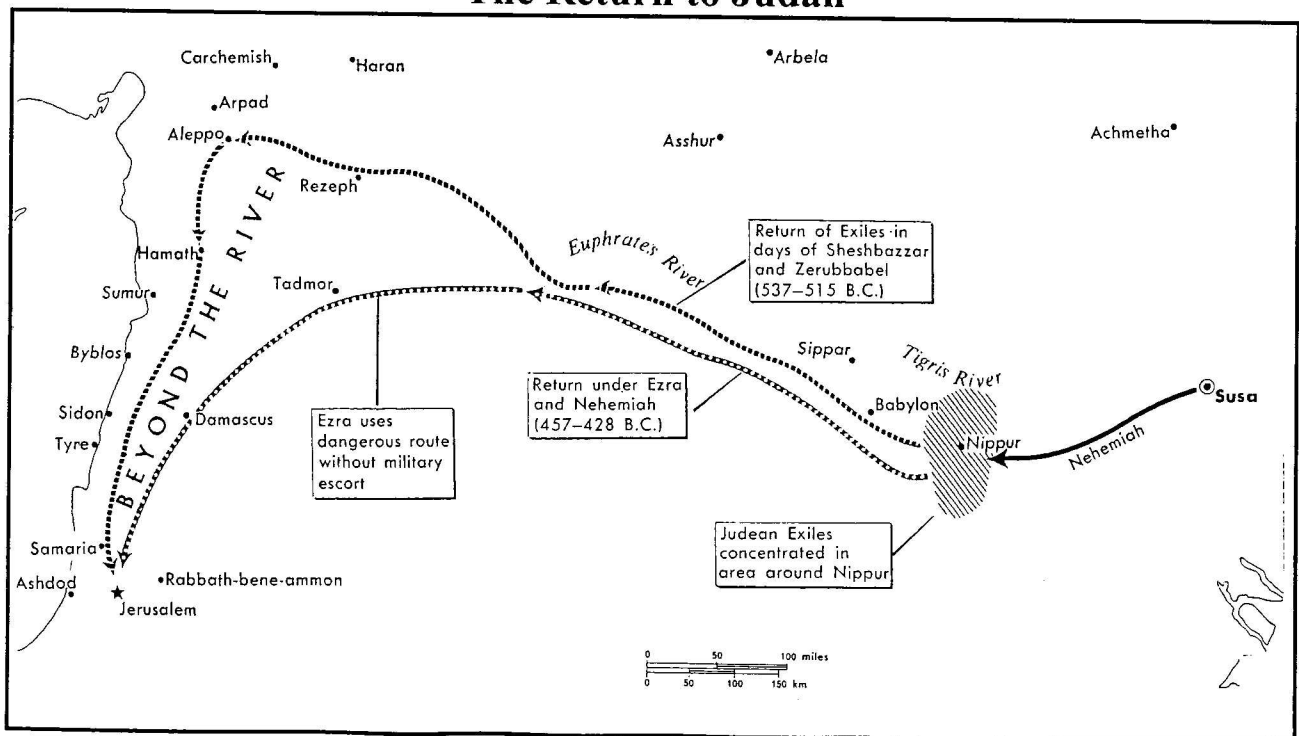
Cyrus founded the largest empire that the world had seen. His son, Cambyses, enlarged the empire by subjugating Egypt. Darius I reached India. Darius was a gifted organizer and administrator. He divided the empire into satrapies (provinces). There were 127 satrapies. The fifth satrapy was abar Nahara, "beyond the river," (Euphrates) which included "Yehud" - Judah



## MAP X The Fall of Babylon

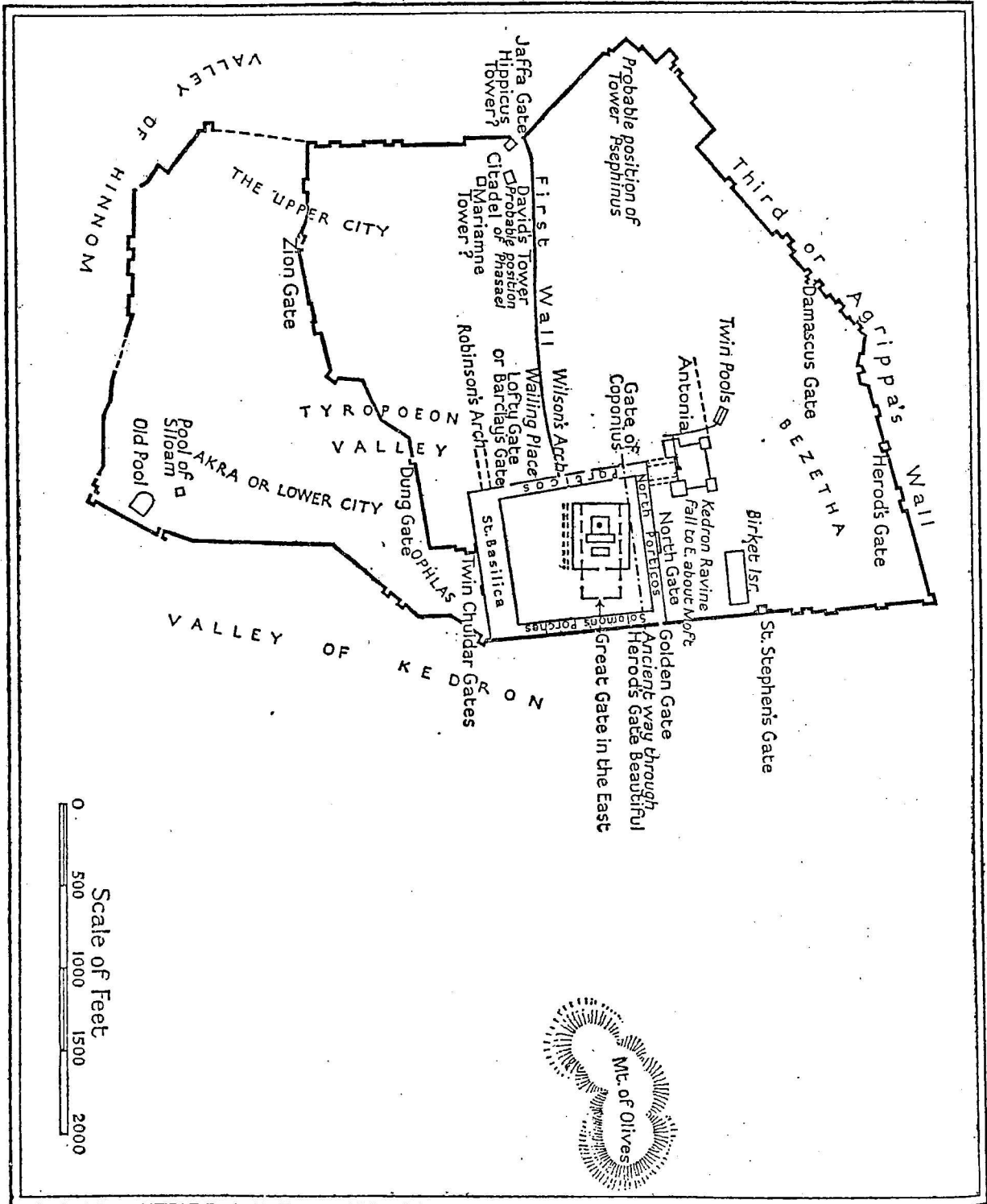


## MAP XI The Return to Judah



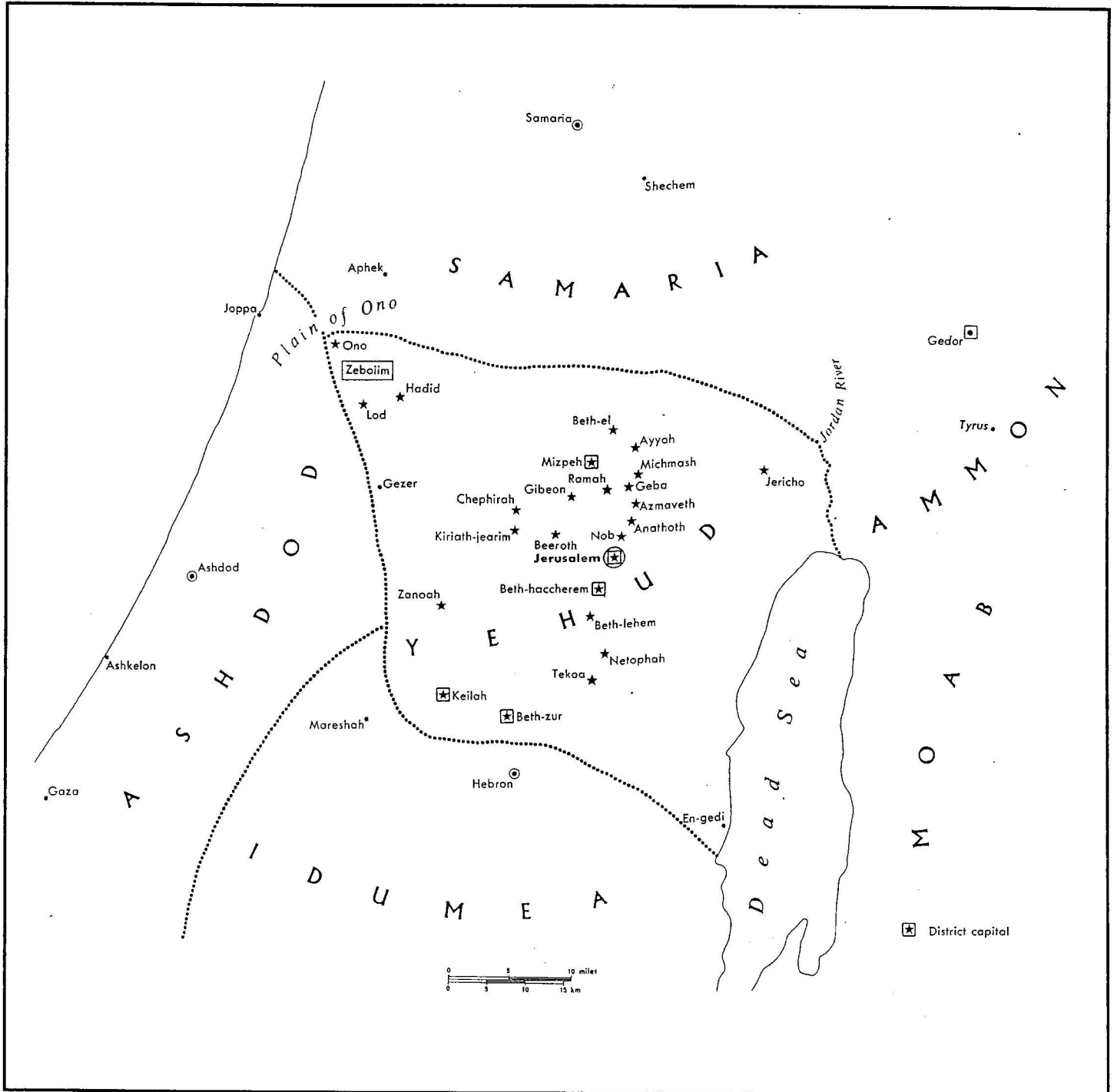
# MAP XXII

## Jerusalem in 70 AD



# MAP XIII

## The Land of Judah after the Return





# MAP XIV

## Macedonia before the reign of Philip

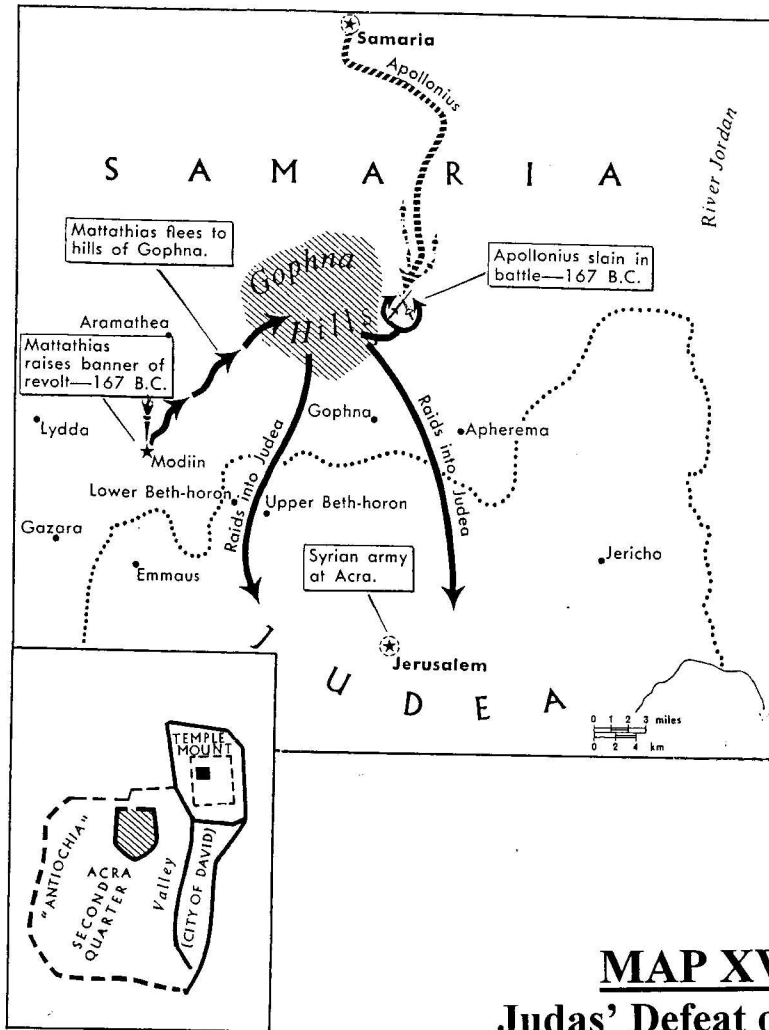
c. 360 BC



# MAP XV

## The First Days of the Maccabean Period

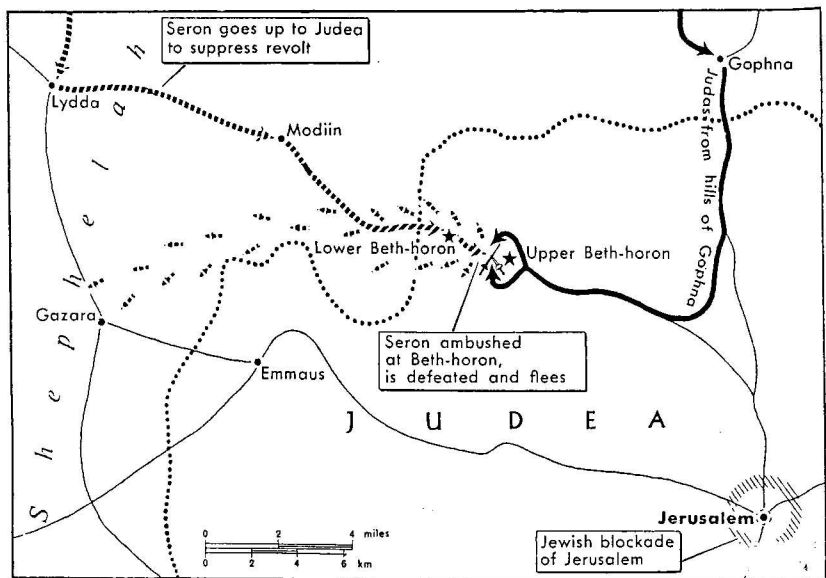
167 BC



# MAP XVI

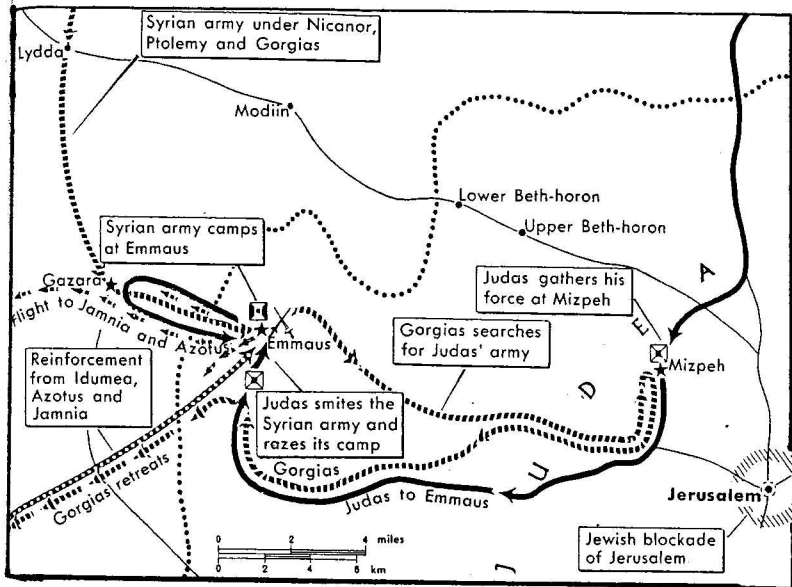
## Judas' Defeat of Seron

166 BC



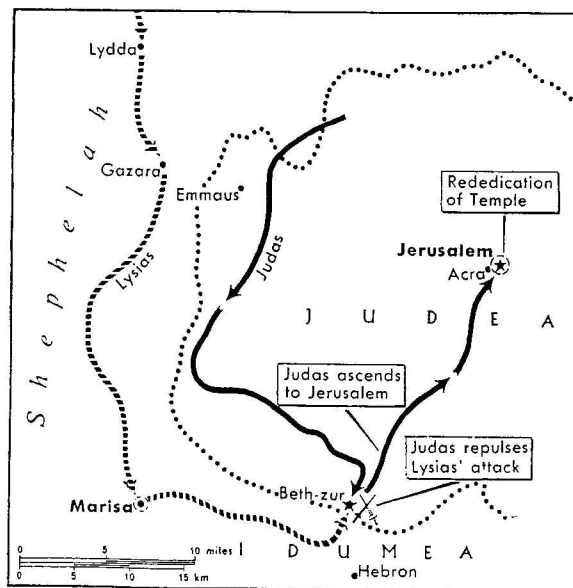
## MAP XVII

### Judas' Defeat of Syrian Troops at Emmaus 165 BC



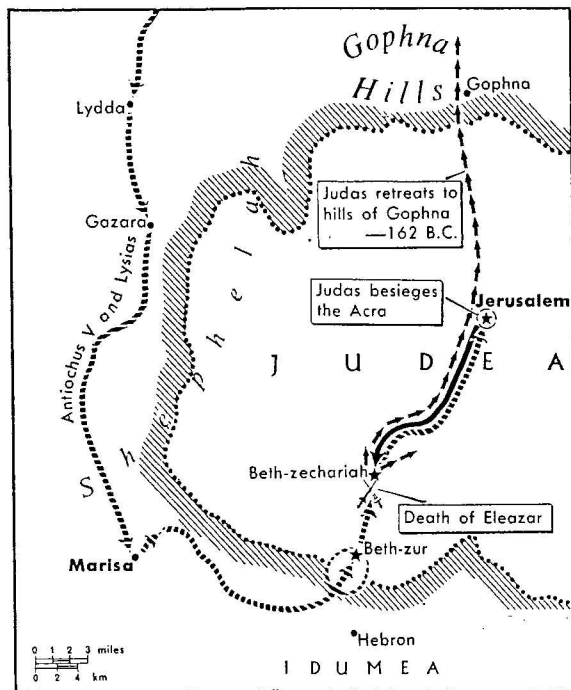
## MAP XVIII

### Judas' Defeat of Lysias at Beth-Zur The Temple is Rededicated 165 BC



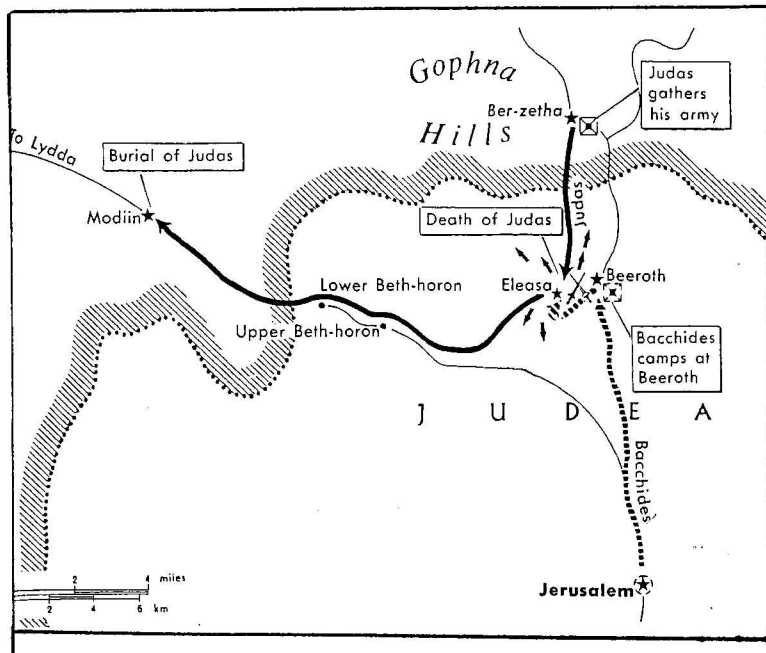
## MAP XIX

### The Battle of Beth-Zechariah The death of Eleazar



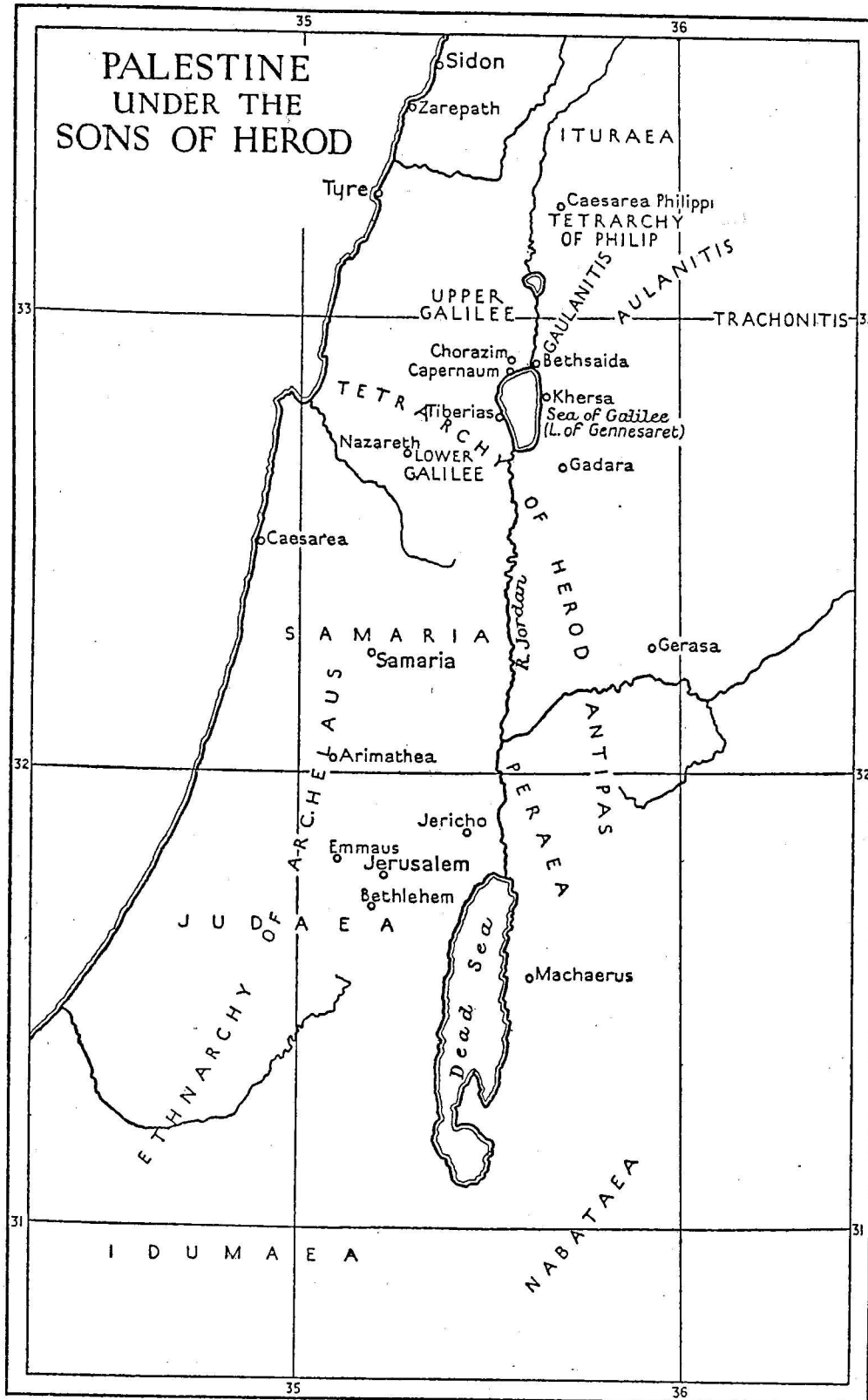
## MAP XX

### Judas' Slain at the Battle of Eleasa 161 BC



# MAP XXI

## Palestine Under the Sons of Herod



# MAP XXII

## Jerusalem in 70 AD

