

The Destruction of Solomon's Temple and the Babylonian Captivity

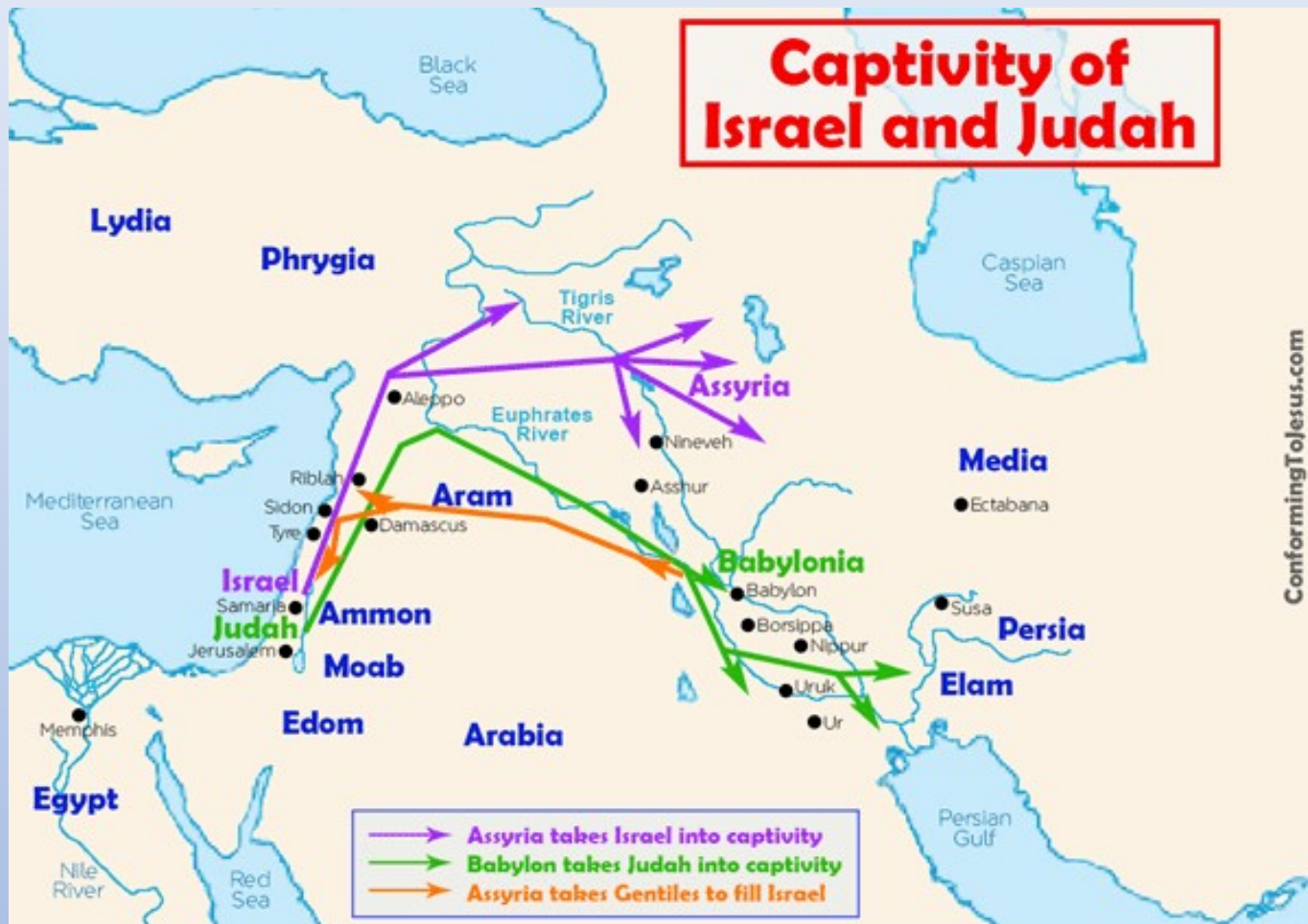


Why Did I Choose This Topic?

- Part of events leading up to the Royal Arch Degree
- Also central part of Super Excellent Master's Degree
- Leads into a discussion of the return of the Israelites and the building of the Second Temple (May)

Historical Background

- Important to understand that the Assyrian Captivity took place before the Babylonian captivity.



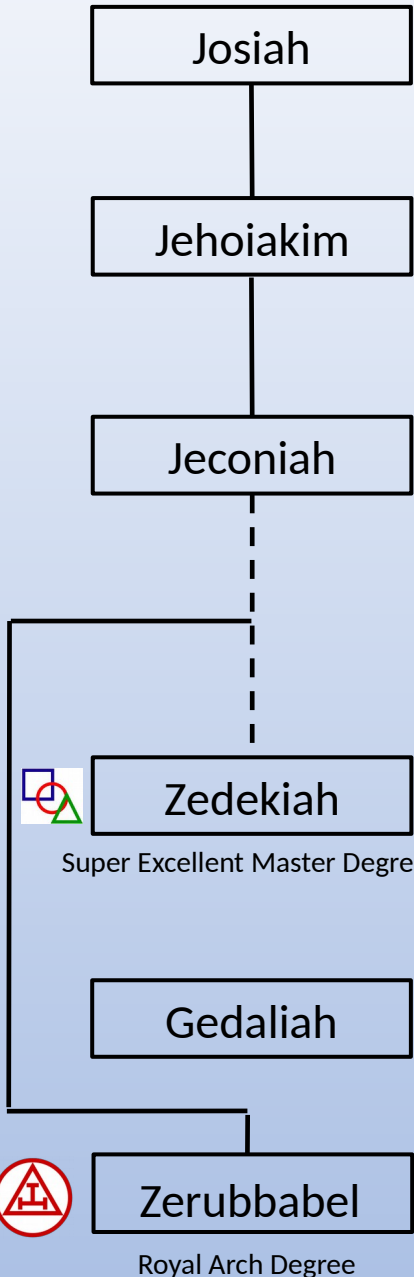
Assyrian Captivity – 740 B.C.

- Two kingdoms: Israel (in the north) and Judah (in the south)
- The Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Neo-Assyrian monarchs.
- The later Assyrian rulers Sargon II and his son were responsible for finishing the twenty-year demise of Israel's northern ten-tribe kingdom, although they did not overtake the Southern Kingdom.
- Jerusalem (in Judah) was besieged, but not taken. The tribes forcibly resettled by Assyria later became known as the Ten Lost Tribes and were never granted an edict to return.

What Happened Next?

- In the late 7th century BCE, the Kingdom of Judah was a client state of the Assyrian empire.
- In the last decades of the century, Assyria was overthrown by Babylon, an Assyrian province.
- Egypt, fearing the sudden rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire, seized control of Assyrian territory up to the Euphrates river in Syria, but Babylon counter-attacked.
- In the process Josiah, the king of Judah, was killed in a battle with the Egyptians at the Battle of Megiddo (609 BCE).
- After the defeat of Pharaoh Necho's army by the Babylonians at Carchemish in 605 BCE, Jehoiakim began paying tribute to Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon.

Rulers of the Kingdom of Judah



Major Events that Occurred During their Reign

King of client state under Assyria. Killed in a battle with the Egyptians at the Battle of Megiddo (609 BCE) against Babylonians.

Began paying tribute to Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon. Later revolted against Babylon; died in 598 B.C. during siege of Jerusalem.

King when Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC. Jerusalem and its Temple pillaged. He, his court and other prominent citizens (including the prophet Ezekiel) taken back to Babylon

Uncle of Jeconiah. Appointed king in his place. Despite warnings revolted against Babylon. **Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, resulting in the city's destruction in 587 BCE.** Zedekiah and his sons were captured, and the sons were executed in front of Zedekiah, who was then blinded and taken to Babylon with many others.

Native of Judah and first Babylonian Governor. Subsequently assassinated along with his Babylonian advisors.

Grandson of Jeconiah. Led the first group of Jews, numbering 42,360, who returned from the Babylonian captivity between 538 and 520 BC.

What Do We Know About the Babylonian Captivity?

- Historians agree that several deportations took place (each the result of uprisings in Palestine)
 - Many scholars cite 597 BCE as the date of the first deportation (under Jeconiah)
 - Others say the first deportation followed the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586
 - A later deportation occurred in Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year (5 years later)
 - The dates, numbers of deportations, and numbers of deportees given in the biblical accounts vary

What Do We Know About the Babylonian Captivity?

- Although the Jews suffered greatly and faced powerful cultural pressures in a foreign land, they maintained their national spirit and religious identity.
- Elders supervised the Jewish communities, and Ezekiel was one of several prophets who kept alive the hope of one day returning home.
- This was possibly also the period when synagogues were first established, for the Jews observed the Sabbath and religious holidays, practiced circumcision, and substituted prayers for former ritual sacrifices in the Temple.

What Do We Know About the Babylonian Captivity?

- Not all Jews were forced to leave their homeland

- Archaeological studies have revealed that not all of the population of Judah was deported, and that, although Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, other parts of Judah continued to be inhabited during the period of the exile.
- Out of a population of perhaps 75,000, according to the Bible 20,000 were taken into captivity.

- Returning Jews left Babylonia at various times

- The return of the exiles was a gradual process rather than a single event.

- Some Jews chose to remain in Babylonia

- Many of the deportees or their descendants did not return, becoming the ancestors of the Iraqi Jews.

Next Month

- The Book of Erza
- The Rise of the Persian Empire and the Proclamation of Cyrus
- The return of (some of) the Jews to Judah
- The building of the Second Temple