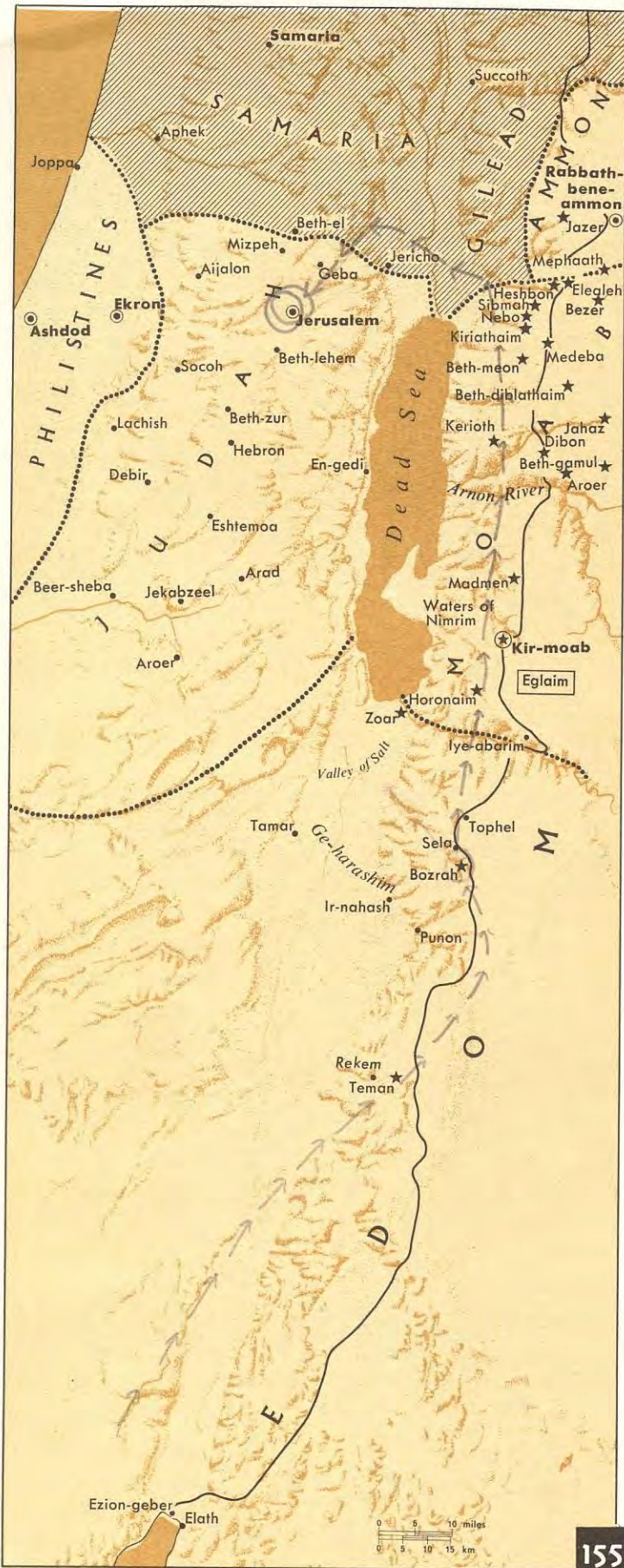


TELL it by the Arnon, that Moab is laid waste. Judgment has come upon the tableland...
(Jeremiah 48:20-21)

JUDAH AND HER NEIGHBORS IN THE DAYS OF MANASSEH EARLY 7TH CENTURY B.C.

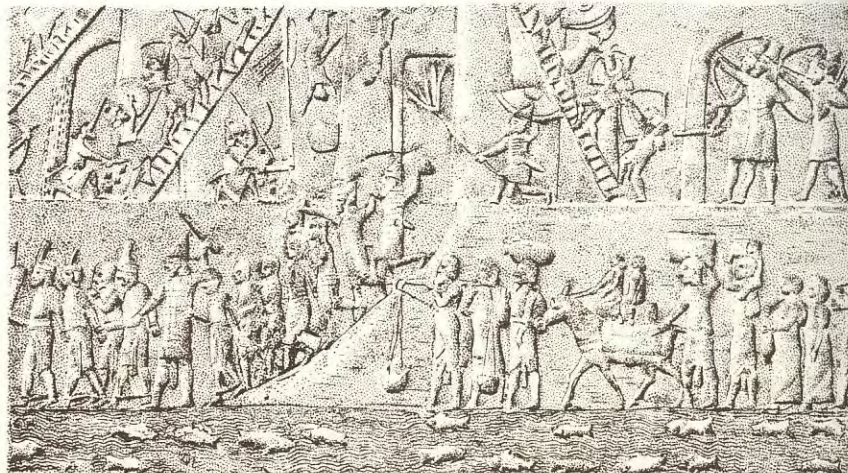
WE HAVE no definite information on the reign of Manasseh son of Hezekiah, who reigned for fifty-five years over the much reduced Judah under the shadow of Assyria. This was a period of quiet prosperity and healing of deep wounds left by the campaign of Sennacherib. On the north, Judah was bordered by the provinces directly ruled by Assyria, on the east and west there remained the kingdom of Philistia and the three small kingdoms of Transjordan: Ammon, Moab, and Edom. Between the years 639 and 637 B.C., Asshurbanipal carried out a punitive campaign against the Arabians who had revolted against Assyria, and who evidently took advantage of every opportunity to raid Transjordan. It was probably during this period that the drastic decline in population began. Abundant material on its cities in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. is found in the prophecies of Isaiah (15-16) and Jeremiah (48-49). There is a great similarity between the city names mentioned in these prophecies and the cities mentioned on the Mesha Stele, which precedes the former by 100-200 years (see map 131). It is natural that they mention the central Moabite settlements, especially on the plains which in the past had been an area of contention between Israel and Moab. It is possible, however, that the prophecies refer to the very words of boasting on the Moabite victory stele, and express joy at the misfortune of the Moabite cities.



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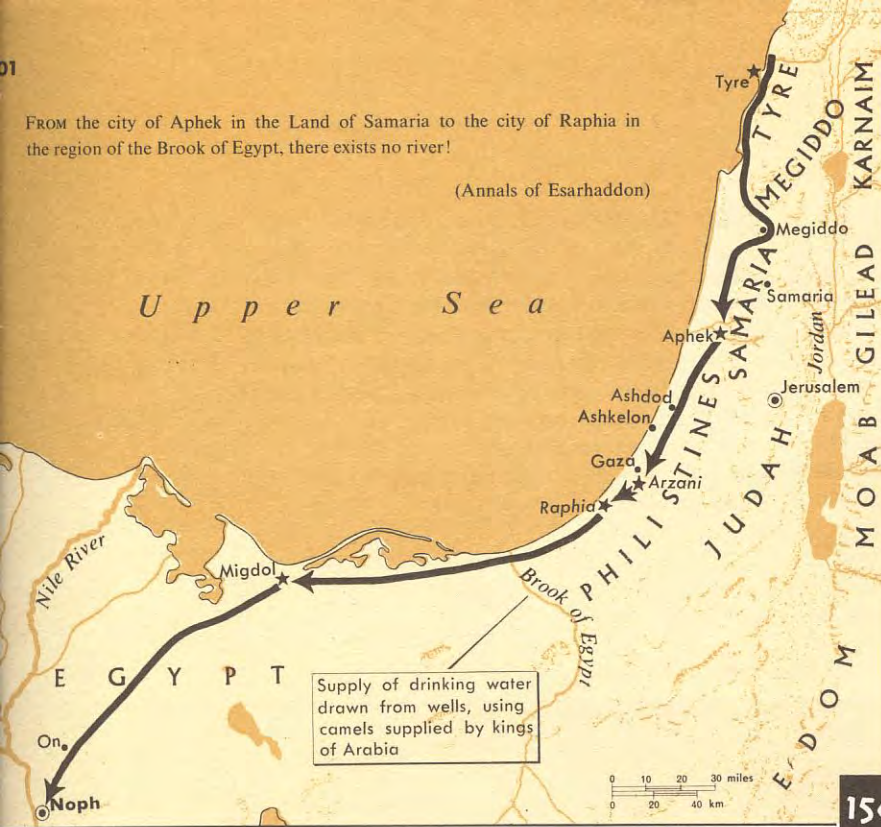
JER. 48-49: 22

Conquest of Egyptian town by Assyrian army
(relief from palace of Asshurbanipal at Nineveh)



FROM the city of Aphek in the Land of Samaria to the city of Raphia in the region of the Brook of Egypt, there exists no river!

(Annals of Esarhaddon)



THE CONQUEST OF EGYPT BY ESARHADDON

669 B.C.

THE EXPANSION of the kingdom of Assyria reached its height in the first half of the seventh century. In 669 B.C. Esarhaddon conquered Lower Egypt, and his entrance into the city of Noph realized a very old Assyrian dream. Two years later, however, Esarhaddon was forced to set out on another campaign to Egypt to meet the resistance of Tirkhaka; on the way he became ill and died. His son, Assurbanipal put down the insurrection and in 663 B.C. put Assyrian government in control over Upper Egypt. He conquered No-amon and put an end to the twenty-fifth dynasty in Egypt. The Assyrian sphere of control now extended over the entire Fertile Crescent, from Upper Egypt to the Persian Gulf and Elam (see map 146). The minor vassal kingdoms left on the edge of the desert were entirely dependent upon the Assyrian giant, and, among the kingdoms which loyally paid tribute mention is made of Manasseh king of Judah.

ANNALS ESARHADDON; OTHER ASSYRIAN DOCUMENTS; BABYLONIAN CHRONICLE, DAYS OF ESARHADDON

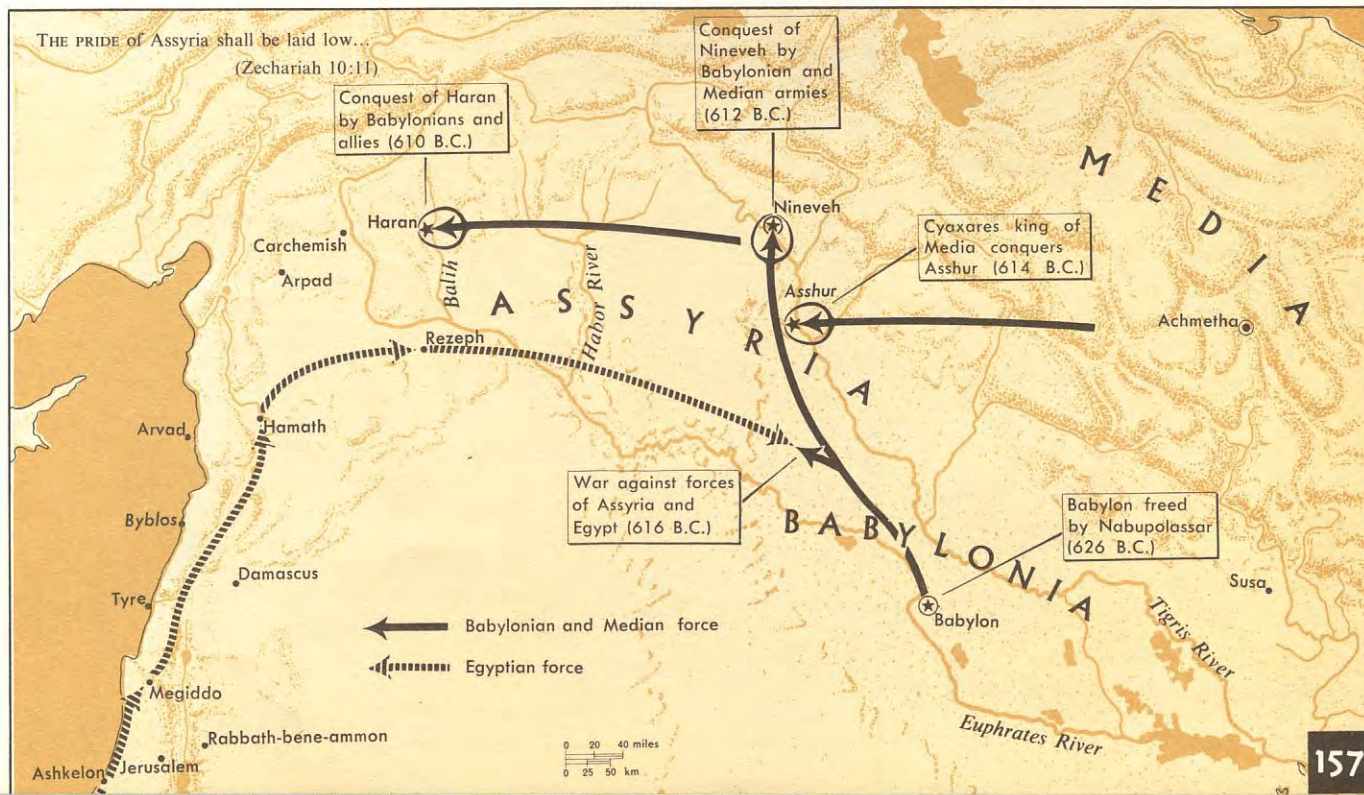
LIST OF TRIBUTARIES OF THE KING OF ASSYRIA

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Balu king of Tyre | Ikansu king of Ekron |
| Manasseh king of Judah | Milkiashapa king of Byblos |
| Qaushgabri king of Edom | Matanbaal king of Arvad |
| Musuri king of Moab | Abi-baal king of Shamsimuruna |
| Sil-bel king of Gaza | Puduil king of Beth-ammon |
| Metinti king of Ashkelon | Ahimilki king of Ashdod |

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KINGDOM OF ASSYRIA

END OF 7TH CENTURY B.C.

ASSYRIA'S DECLINE and fall came with surprising rapidity. Already under Assurbanipal Egypt freed itself from Assyrian rule. The successors of Assurbanipal found themselves between two emerging rivals, Babylon and the Medes, both of whom abetted the process of internal disintegration within the extensive empire. In 626 B.C., Babylon rose and defeated the Assyrians at the gates of Babylonia. Then a surprising event occurred: Egypt, the avowed foe of Assyria, came to its aid against the rising Babylon, probably out of consideration that Assyria had passed its peak, and to renew Egyptian rule in Palestine and Syria. Even this, however, did not hold the tide for long. In 614 B.C. the army of the Medes conquered the city of Asshur; two years later Nineveh fell before a combined attack by Babylon and the Medes and, in 610, Haran was also captured. This was the last stronghold left to Asshurballit, the last king of Assyria; with its fall the kingdom of Assyria ceased to exist.



BABYLONIAN CHRONICLE, DAYS OF NABUPOLASSAR KING OF BABYLON

THE KINGDOM OF JOSIAH

628 TO 609 B.C.

THE LAST PERIOD of greatness in the history of Judah was the reign of Josiah. He took advantage of Assyria's decline and aspired to renew the kingdom of the House of David in all of Palestine. The political and national revival in his day was intertwined with extensive religious reformations. The high places and altars in the rural areas were destroyed and defiled; and the purified Israelite worship was concentrated from this time on entirely on the temple in Jerusalem.

The information preserved in the Bible on Josiah mostly concerns his religious reformations and only in passing do we learn of his daring political and military activities. The purification of worship was carried out not only in Jerusalem and Judah, but also "in the

cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even unto Naphtali . . . throughout the land of Israel" (2 Chron. 34:6-7). Thus, we may assume that Josiah again ruled in all these areas and annexed the Assyrian provinces which had been founded in the territory of the kingdom of Israel: Samaria, Megiddo, and possibly also Gilead. This is confirmed by the fact that he fought at Megiddo. A Hebrew letter written in his time has been found at "Mesad Hashavyahu," a fortress built on the coast between Jabneh and Ashdod. According to the letter, an Israelite governor resided at the fort; thus, Josiah ruled also over this area, expanding his kingdom at the expense of the Philistine cities.

BEHOLD a son shall be born to the house of David,
Josiah by name...

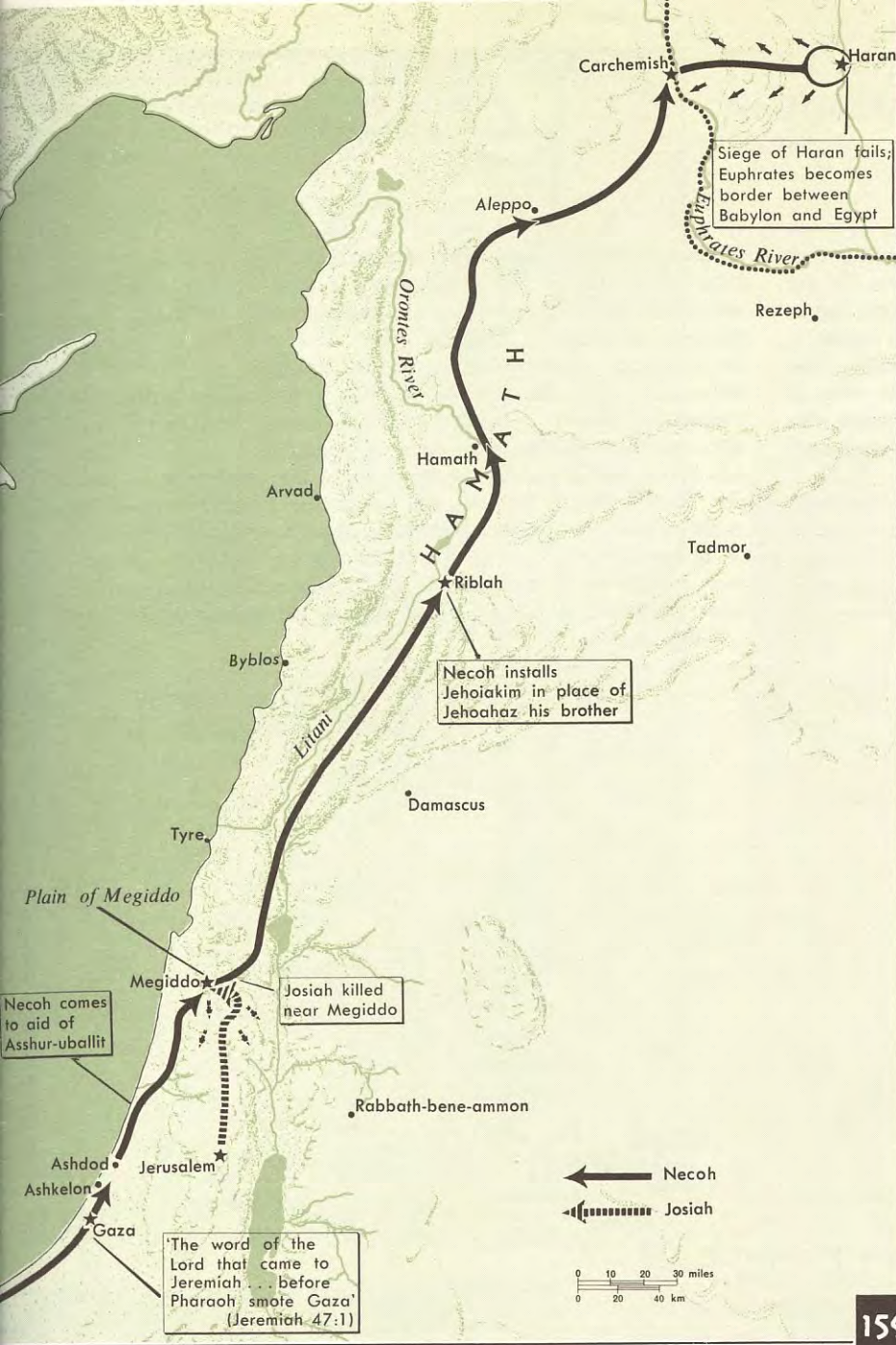
(1 Kings 13:2)



Hebrew Letter from Mesad Hashavyahu



2 KINGS 22: 1-23: 30; 2 CHRON. 34-35



In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him; and Pharaoh Neco slew him at Megiddo... (2 Kings 23:29)

THE FIRST CAMPAIGN OF NECOH 609 B.C.

CONCERNING the army of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates at Carchemish and which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah... (Jeremiah 46:2)

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THE FIRST CAMPAIGN OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR 605 TO 604 B.C.

2 KINGS 23: 29-30; JER. 47; 2 CHRON. 35: 20-24; BABYLONIAN CHRONICLE, DAYS OF NEBOPILESSER AND NEBUCHADNEZZAR, KINGS OF BABYLON

THE KINGDOM of Josiah disintegrated upon his tragic death near Megiddo, described briefly in the Bible and additional details on the events leading up to this battle are found in Babylonian sources. "Pharaoh-necoh" went up to Carchemish on the Euphrates in 609 B.C. to the aid of Asshuruballit, the last king of Assyria, in his attempt to reconquer Haran. Josiah met his death trying to stop Neco's advance near Megiddo, probably in order to prevent the reinstatement of Egyptian control in Palestine.

Although the Assyrian-Egyptian attempt failed, Neco controlled Palestine and Syria for several years. Upon Neco's return from the war, Jehoahaz the son of Josiah hastened to him at Riblah in the Land of Hamath, but Jehoiakim his brother was enthroned in his stead (2 Kings 23:33-35; Jer. 22:10-12; 2 Chron. 36:1-4).

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated an Egyptian army at Carchemish (Jer. 46:2) and again at Hamath. A year later he marched through the Holy Land, conquered Ashkelon, and reached the brook of Egypt (2 Kings 24:7). Again Judah became a small vassal kingdom of Babylon, soon to be ground down by the perennial wars between Babylon and Egypt.



JER. 46: 2; BABYLONIAN CHRONICLE, DAYS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR, KING OF BABYLON

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AND the king of Egypt did not come again out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates.

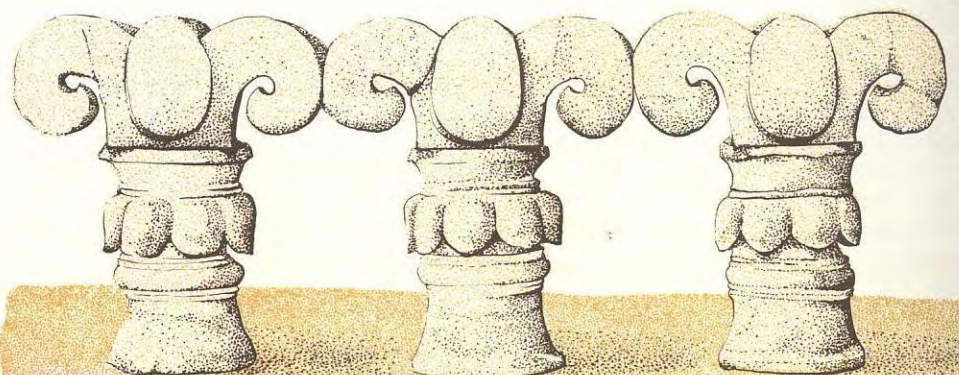
(2 Kings 24:7)

THE KINGDOM OF BABYLON EARLY 6TH CENTURY B.C.

THE KINGDOM of Babylon inherited most of the Assyrian Empire, and reached its zenith under Nebuchadnezzar. In the east and the north, it bordered on the kingdom of the Medes, and in the south stood Egypt, its rival. A petty kingdom like Judah needed in this period a king like Manasseh, who submitted to the yoke of the mighty power, sufficing in the minor role given him. The sons of Josiah were more ambitious. Even Jeremiah, the great prophet who rose in Judah in this period, could not curb their rash adventures with his harsh warnings.

Jehoiakim the son of Josiah remained on the throne after the Holy Land had come under Babylonian control and continued to aspire toward freedom from the Babylonian yoke with the aid of Egypt. Further proof of his daring ambitions can be seen in the remains of the magnificent palace uncovered at Ramat Rahel (probably the

biblical Beth-haccherem). This was intended for the garrisoning of large military forces close to the capital. For this construction, he did not refrain from using much forced labor, earning the hatred of the people of Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:4; Jer. 22:13-19). Three years after his surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, he felt ready to revolt against Babylonian rule. The reaction was swift: at first the Babylonians directed the unrest of Judah's neighbors toward her, mainly in the east, and the Chaldean army came up against Jerusalem in 598 B.C. Jehoiakim died at the start of the siege; he may have been murdered (Jer. 22:18-19; 36:30). His son Jehoiachin surrendered and was exiled to Babylon together with many of his family and the notables of the kingdom, "... all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land" (2 Kings 24:14).

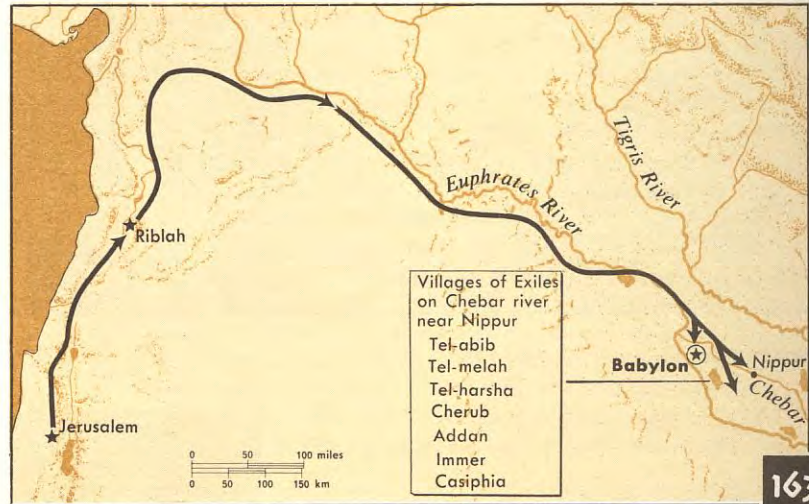


Stone window railing
(from palace of Jehoiakim at Ramat Rahel)

THE CAMPAIGN OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR AGAINST JUDAH 587 B.C.

THIS is the number of the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year, three thousand and twenty-three Jews; in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred and thirty-two persons; in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred and forty-five persons; all the persons were four thousand and six hundred. (Jeremiah 52:28-30)

THE EXILE FROM JUDAH 597 TO 582 B.C.



2 KINGS 24: 11-16; 25: 11; JER. 52: 28-30; EZEK. 3: 15; EZRA 2: 59; 8: 17

NEBUCHADNEZZAR enthroned Zedekiah the son of Josiah, a person of weak character and totally unsuited for rule in troubled times. In 589 B.C. Zedekiah, with the feeble assistance of Egypt, was drawn into a new rebellion against Babylon, on the counsel of other states in Palestine. Upon the approach of Nebuchadnezzar's punitive campaign Judah was, in effect, abandoned to face the mighty Chaldean army alone. The Edomites again took advantage of the circumstances and invaded Judah (Obad. 1:10-14; Ps. 137:7; Lam. 4:21-22).

This time the Babylonian reprisal was hard and without pity. The cities of Judah were destroyed one after the other. In various excavations, such as at Ramat Rahel, Beth-zur, Beth-shemesh, Lachish, Debir, Arad, and En-gedi, absolute destruction is apparent. The last of the fortified cities of Judah to fall were Lachish and Azekah (Jer. 34:7). The sentence: "We are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah," in one of the Lachish Letters (no. 4), was obviously written after the fall of Azekah. Finally, Jerusalem was besieged; the siege, however, was lifted for a short period following a rumor of the approach of the Egyptian army (Jer. 37:5), though it was immediately reimposed. In the summer of 587 B.C. the walls of the city were breached and Jerusalem was captured. A month later the Babylonians burned the entire city, including the temple, and again many people were exiled to Babylonia.

More people were exiled in 582, possibly as a result of another rebellion; most of the exiles were settled in various villages on the Chebar River near Nippur and Babylon. The number of exiles is given in the Book of Jeremiah (52:28-30), though this includes probably only the important families.

THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT CA. 586 B.C.

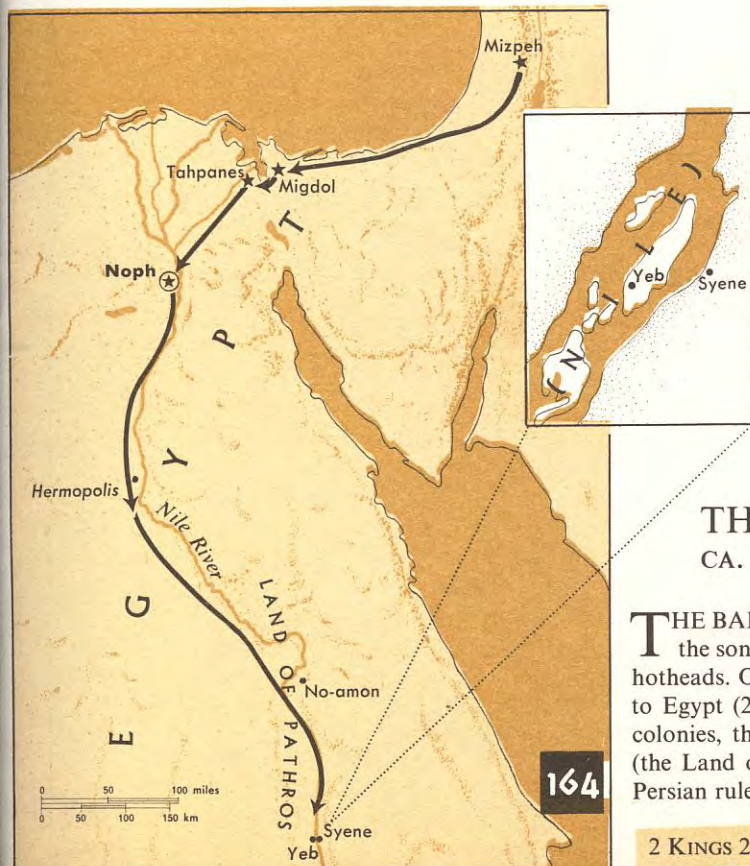
THE BABYLONIANS left the internal rule of Judah in the hands of Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, who ruled from Mizpeh; he was, however, murdered by hotheads. Out of fear of Babylonian reprisal for his murder, many families fled to Egypt (2 Kings 25:22-26; Jer. 40-44). Here they founded Jewish military colonies, the most famous of which, at Yeb (Elephantine) in southern Egypt (the Land of Pathros), is well known through the archive from the period of Persian rule found there.

2 KINGS 25: 25-26; JER. 42-45

Figure of king painted on jar fragment (from palace of Jehoikim at Ramat Rahel)



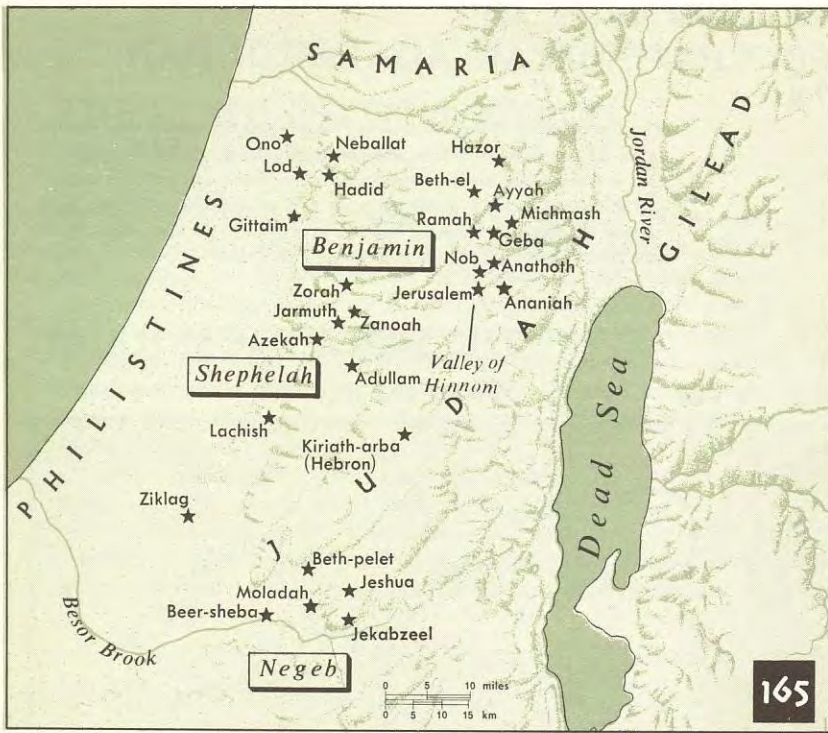
2 KINGS 25: 1-21; JER. 37: 5; 52: 4-27; 2 CHRON. 36: 17-21; LACHISH OSTRACA



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THE INHABITANTS of these waste places in the land of Israel...

(Ezekiel 33:24)

JUDAH UNDER BABYLONIAN RULE EARLY 6TH CENTURY B.C.

THE DESTRUCTION was harsh and cruel and overlooked none of the important cities of Judah. Some of the lands and destroyed settlements were quickly occupied by the "residue of the people" (Jer. 40:10), causing much resentment among the captive exiles (Ez. 33:21-27).

The central highlands of Judah, however, were denuded of their populations, and the Babylonians did not bring new settlers here to fill the void. These areas were gradually seized by the Edomites—who were crowded by the pressure of Arabian tribes—and the southern Judean hills to the region of Beth-zur now became "Idumea" (see map 171).

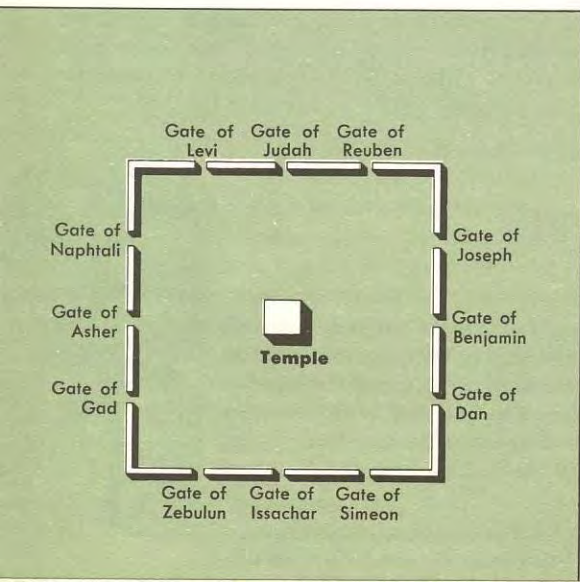
Judean settlements remained mainly in the outlying regions, some of which probably became detached from Judah already in 597 B.C. These were included in the list of the "residue of Israel" preserved in Nehemiah 11:20-36, which records mostly sites in Benjamin, the Negeb, and the Shephelah on the border of Philistia.

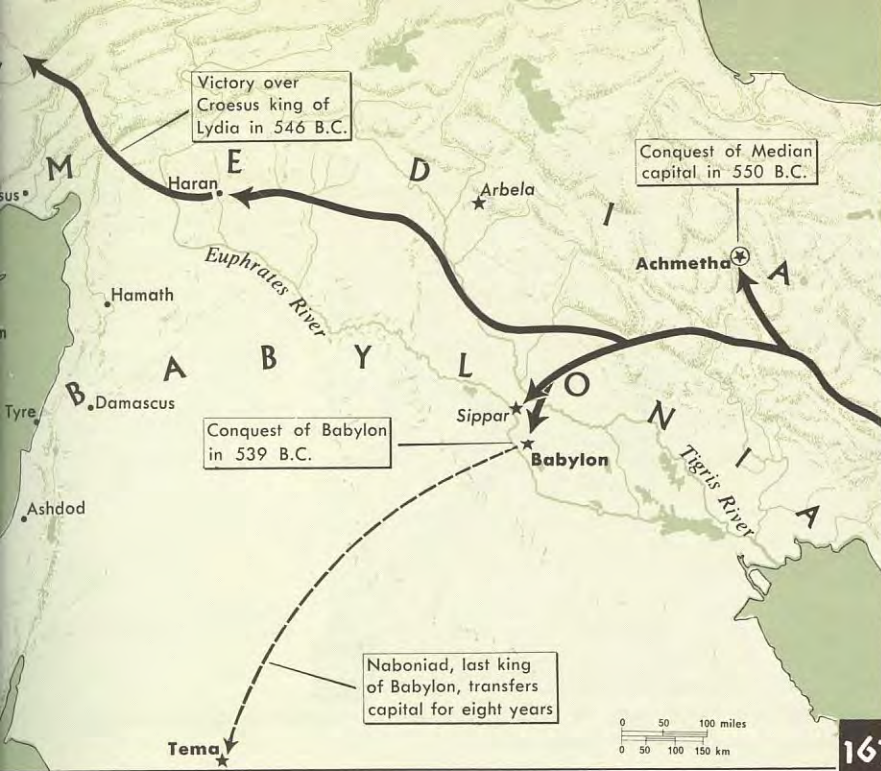
NEH. 11: 20-36

EZEK. 47: 13-48:29

PALESTINE IN THE VISION OF EZEKIEL

MOST of the exiles in Babylon who were settled in scattered agricultural communities preserved their spiritual and religious heritage and cultivated the vision of "Return to the Promised Land." This found expression in the visions of Ezekiel, who was exiled to Babylon together with Jehoiachin. In chapters 47-48, appears his utopian redistribution of the Holy Land among the twelve tribes, settled one alongside the other in adjacent inheritances. The borders of the land are in accordance with the ancient borders of the Land of Canaan (compare map 50); Ezekiel "modernized" them by working into his description contemporary geographical names, including several of the Babylonian provinces of his day.





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CLAY BARREL, CYRUS

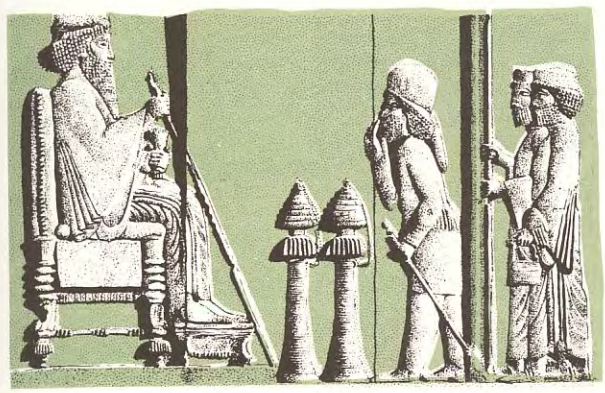
I AM Cyrus, king of the world, the great king, the mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Accad... When I entered Babylon in peace, in joy and jubilation, I set the throne in the palace of the king. Marduk, the great lord, turned the hearts of the noble inhabitants of the city of Babylon towards me.
(Clay Barrel of Cyrus)

THE FALL OF BABYLON

539 B.C.

THE HOPES of the exiles rose with the disintegration of the shortlived kingdom of Babylon. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 B.C., three successors followed over a period of seven years. The first was Evil-Merodach who freed Jehoiachin from prison (2 Kings 25:27-30). Nabonidus of Haran seized the throne of Babylon in 556 B.C. He aspired to weaken the power of the priests of Marduk and busied himself with archaeological excavations more than with affairs of state. Nabonidus moved his capital to the oasis of Tema on the border of Arabia when the danger—in the form of Cyrus the Persian—became apparent, remaining there until about 545 B.C., and leaving the administration at Babylon in the hands of his son Belsharuzur, the Belshazar of the Bible (Dan. 8:1).

The end of the kingdom came quickly. In 550 B.C., Cyrus king of Anshan conquered Achmetha and inherited the vast kingdom of the Medes, the rivals of Babylonia. Four years later he defeated Croesus king of Lydia and captured his capital at Sardis. In 539 B.C. he entered Babylon without even a fight, as the restorer of the ancient worship of Marduk.



Darius enthroned (relief from Persepolis)

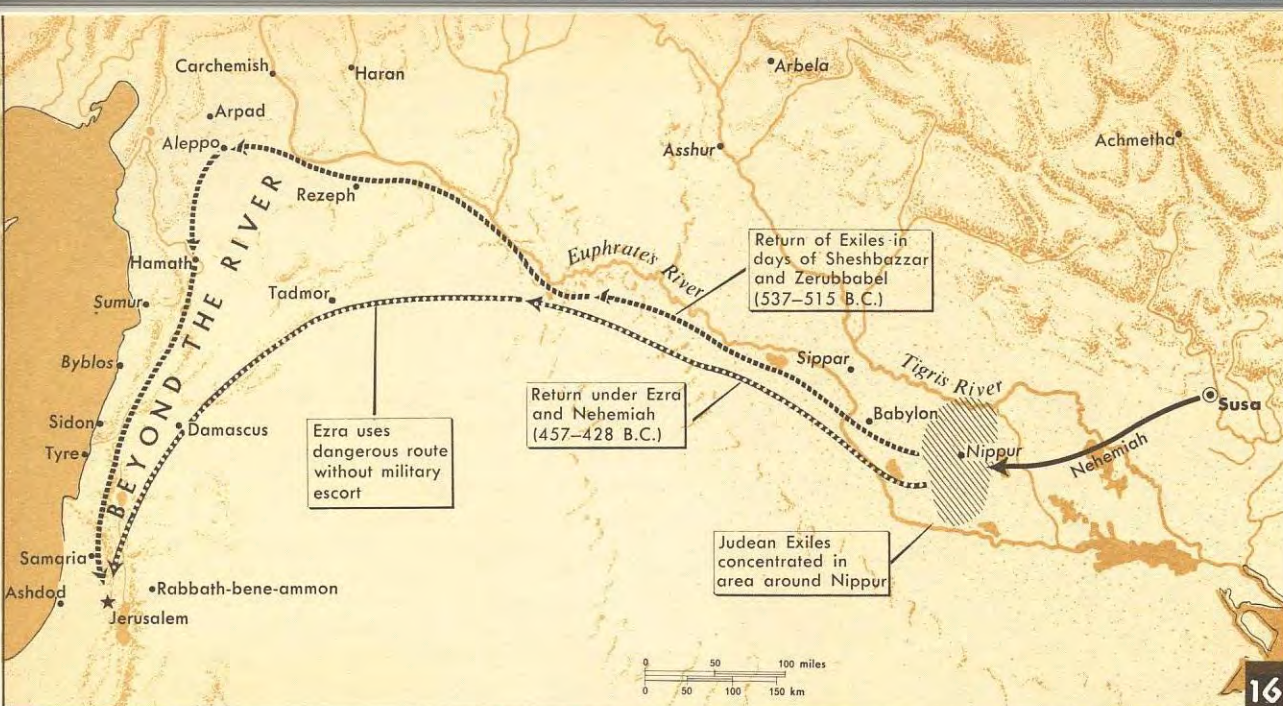
THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

538 TO 332 B.C.

CYRUS founded the largest empire the Ancient East had ever seen. His son Cambyses conquered Egypt, and his successor, Darius I, reached India. The immense empire was divided into provinces (satrapies) ruled by "satraps and the governors and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, a hundred twenty and seven provinces" (Esther 8:9). The fifth satrapy was Abar Nahara, that is, beyond the river Euphrates, and one of its lands was "Yehud"—Judah.



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IN the first year of Cyrus king of Persia... Whoever is among you of his people, may his God be with him, let him go up to Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel...

(Ezra 1:1)

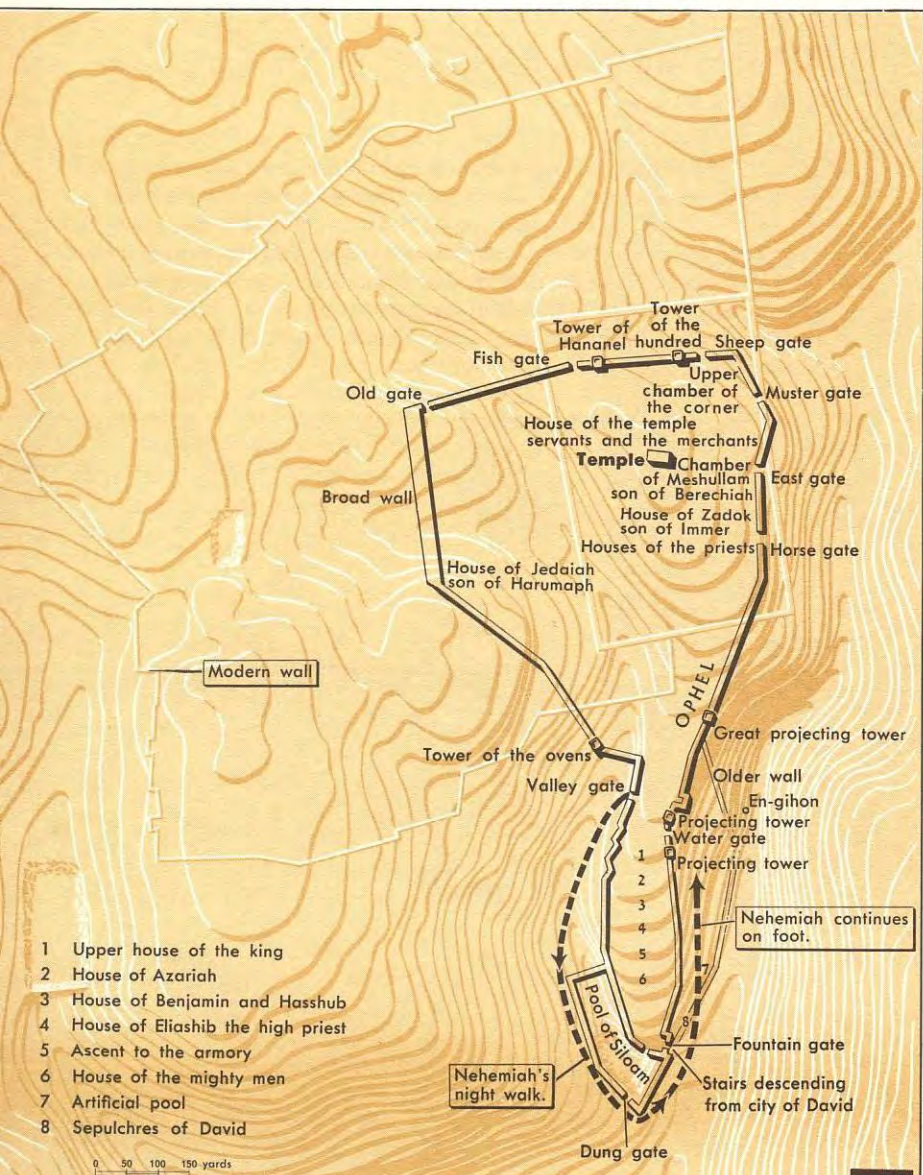
THE RETURN TO ZION 538 TO 445 B.C.

EZRA 1-2; NEH. 1-3

CYRUS desired to win over the peoples of his vast kingdom through tolerance of religious and national feelings; he allowed the renewal of worship in religions which had been suppressed by the Babylonians. In the first year of his reign he published a royal decree concerning the renewal of worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem and the return of the exiles to Judah. In 537 B.C., the first of these returned to Judah under the leadership of the prince Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8; 5:14), probably Shenassar the son of Jehoiachin king of Judah (1 Chron. 3:18). The spiritual uplift of the returning exiles

and the hope of redemption found expression in the magnificent prophecies of Isaiah (40 ff.).

These high aspirations were, however, quickly dashed in the reality of the "day of small things" (Zech. 4: 10). Judah lay wasted, surrounded by hostile provinces on every side, and the returning exiles came up against the inhabitants that had remained, the "remnant" who had seized their lands. Only in 515 B.C. was the Second Temple finished, but to those who remembered the First, disappointment was greater than joy (Ezra 3:12-13).



THEN I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; and I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem.

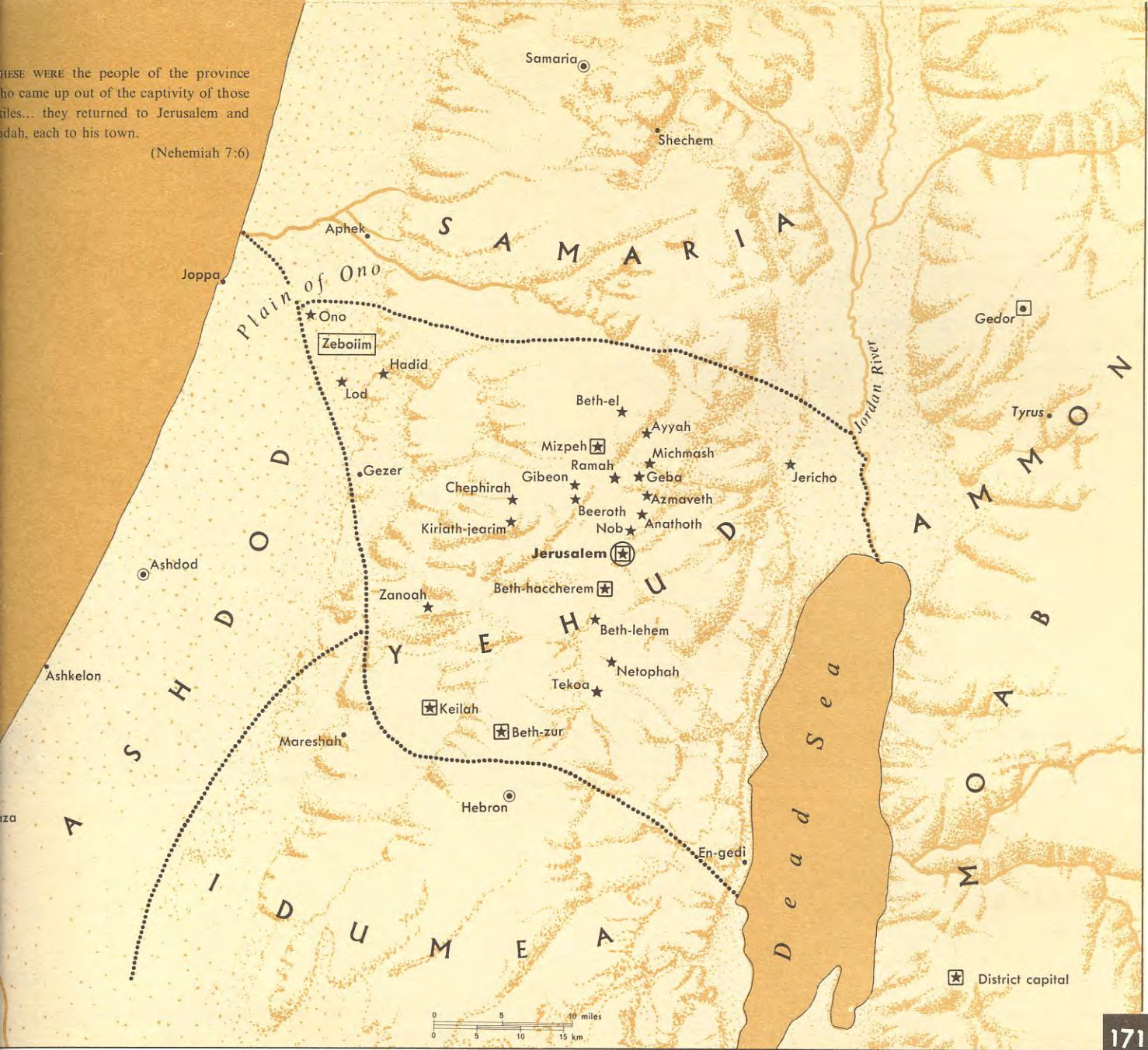
(Nehemiah 2:12)

JERUSALEM IN THE DAYS OF THE RETURN CA. 440 B.C.

WE HAVE no information on the history of Judah during the following 60-70 years, until the return of Ezra and Nehemiah, at about the middle of the fifth century B.C. It was the enthusiastic work of these two leaders, who led waves of additional exiles, that laid the foundations for the renewed kingdom of Judah in the period of the Second Temple. Ezra, priest and scribe, worked mainly in the spiritual-religious sphere; Nehemiah, the governor, confined himself to political-military matters. Nehemiah refurbished the fortifications of Jerusalem, in spite of the extreme opposition of the governors of the neighboring provinces; the description of his night walk along the ruined walls (Neh. 2:12-15) and the listing of the builders of the walls (Neh. 3:1-32) includes much information on the gates, towers, and many buildings next to the wall. The plan of the city of Jerusalem can largely be reconstructed from Nehemiah's description; only the general outlines, especially of several of the gates and the southern sections of the wall, are known from archaeological research. This has revealed that the area of the city was reduced in the southeast, in comparison with the older city, as a result of raising the line of the wall from the side of the slope to its summit. Especially in this section, many houses are mentioned by Nehemiah as being along the newly built wall.

NEH. 2: 12-15; 3: 1-32

THESE WERE the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those cities... they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town. (Nehemiah 7:6)



THE LAND OF JUDAH IN THE DAYS OF THE RETURN CA. 440 B.C.

EZRA 2: 1-34; NEH. 3: 1-32; 7: 6-38



Inscription "Yehud" in seal-impression



Inscription "Yehud" on coins (Persian period)

IN THE LISTS of the returning exiles (Ezra 2:1-34; Neh. 7:6-38) there also appear the names of the major settlements of Yehud-Judah; the list of the builders of the wall gives details of the district governors. Additional evidence of the extent of Judah are the seal-impressions on storage jars—similar to the "(belonging) to the king" seal-impressions of the days of the First Temple—on which appear the name "Yehud" in various forms, often accompanied by a symbol or the name of a priest or governor. The distribution of these sealings reaches from Mizpeh and Jericho in the north to Beth-zur and En-gedi in the south, and Gezer in the west. These were the borders of the reduced Judah of the beginning of the period of the Second Temple, the nucleus around which grew the kingdom of the Hasmoneans.

The Persian Monarchy came into conflict with the Greek nation, settled on the shores of the Aegean Sea, in the fifth century B.C. After two unsuccessful Persian invasions (490 and 480 B.C.), the Greeks took the offensive and restricted Persian power in the Eastern Mediterranean. Internal discord and wars between the two leading Greek cities, Athens and Sparta, again strengthened the hand of the "Great King" of Persia. However, when in the middle of the fourth century B.C. Philip of Macedonia united Greece under his hegemony, he prepared the ground for the great expedition against Persia, which was launched by his son, Alexander the Great.

The last centuries of Persian rule conclude the period for which the Old Testament is our principal authority; from this point on the thread of the story is taken up by the Books of the Maccabees and other apocryphal books, by Josephus Flavius, and then by the New Testament and the Fathers of the Christian Church.