

# Ancient History

A Framework for the Bible

John Stevenson



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To Paula  
my beloved wife,  
who believed in this  
book  
even when  
I did not

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# INTRODUCTION

The Bible is a historical book. Rather than being a “once upon a time” fairytale, it is rooted in history. Ernst Renan once said that “all history is incomprehensible without Christ.” But it is also true that both Christ and the Scriptures are equally incomprehensible without the historical backdrop against which they are framed.

There is a sense in which history is “His story.” Since we have all been created by God and are made in His image, the story of mankind is the story of God’s plan for man being carried out. This means that the Christian has a reason for the study of all of history. But when it comes to the study of that portion of history in which the Bible has its historical and cultural setting, the Christian has even greater motivation for such a study.

## 1. To Aid us in Understanding the Bible.

Each book of the Bible was written to a particular audience.

- Genesis is written to Israelites who have come out of Egypt.
- Judges is written to Israelites living under the monarchy of Israel.
- Chronicles is written to post-exilic Jews returning to the land.
- The epistles are written to various churches throughout the Roman Empire.

In each case, the human author of the book assumes a certain amount of a prior knowledge. He assumes that he can speak of various geographic or cultural areas and that they will be known and understood and applied by his readers.

Our problem is that we are reading ancient Scriptures from a 21<sup>st</sup> century vantage point. A study of Biblical archaeology helps us to step into the sandals of the original readers and to interpret the Scriptures properly. It is only then that we will be able to apply the truths of the Scriptures rightly in our day.

## 2. To Affirm the Scriptural Narrative.

The Bible’s historical accuracy has long been the source of attack.

These attacks have not abated in recent years; they have escalated in intensity. One of the necessary fields of Biblical apologetics will be the defense of the historical veracity of the Bible. The battlefield for this conflict will be the arena of Biblical archaeology.

Make no mistake, this is no easy conflict. There are many archaeologists who reject the Bible out of hand, going so far as to deny the historicity of the patriarchs, the Exodus event and the existence of David or Solomon and their kingdoms.

At the same time, we must realize that there are many things in the Bible which are not substantiated in current Biblical archaeology. That is because we have only found a small fraction of the remains of antiquity. The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. This has been proven time and time again as new finds have substantiated areas which were previously thought to be in error.

3. To Aid us in the Work of Bible Translation and Interpretation.

Language is not a constant. It is always changing. One has only to pick up a King James Bible to see how much the English language has changed over the past 400 years. What is true of the English language is also true of the languages in which the Bible was written.

- a. The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew with a few chapters in Daniel being penned in Aramaic. Modern Hebrew has gone through some changes and there are a number of words in the Old Testament which are “hapax legomenon” - words which appear only once and which appear nowhere else.

How are we to determine the meanings of such words? It is the field of archaeology which provides assistance. Archaeological writings give us other examples of the usage of certain words and are a great help in interpreting the Bible.

- b. The New Testament is written in Koine Greek. The Greek of the New Testament is very different from the modern Greek which is spoken today. Fortunately, we have a great deal of examples of Koine Greek to compare with our New Testament vocabulary.

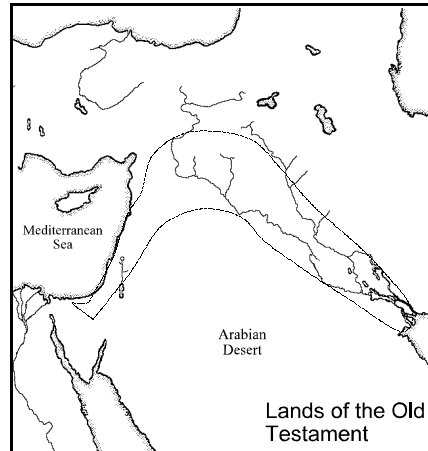
Understanding the Bible is not simply a case of gaining a correct translation. The world and culture of the Scriptures were far removed from our own and that means it is an easy thing to misunderstand the message of the Bible because it comes wearing cultural trappings that are foreign to us.

## THE SCOPE OF BIBLICAL HISTORY

The lands of the Bible go far beyond the tiny borders of the land of Israel. The story of the Bible begins in Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. By the end of the New Testament, our horizons have been stretched westward all the way to Spain. This means that we could divide Biblical History into two distinct parts:

1. Old Testament History.

The lands of the Old Testament would be those around the Fertile Crescent. This is a large band of relatively fertile land stretching from the Persian Gulf northward along the courses of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and then south along the Levant. Though known as the “Fertile Crescent,” much of these lands can only be considered fertile when compared to the surrounding deserts.



2. New Testament History.

Although still centered in the land of Palestine, our focus in the New Testament turns its attention westward. The story of Acts and the Epistles is a movement from Jerusalem to Rome.





Between these two periods is a time known as the “Silent Years.” It is a period when there were no prophets in Israel. But it is not a period which is silent with reference to history.

Old Testament		New Testament
1600+ Years of History	400 “Silent Years”	70-90 Years of History
Centered on the Fertile Crescent		Centered on the Mediterranean World

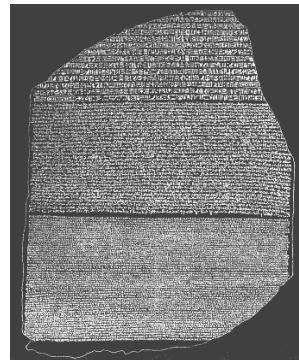
The Jewish writings known as the “Apocrypha” and specifically the books of Maccabees were written during this 400 period. The books of Maccabees are an excellent resource in filling in for us the historical details of what took place in Israel between the close of the Old Testament Scriptures and the beginning of the New Testament.

## MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

We would be hard pressed to talk about Bible History apart from the field of archaeology. It is through the field of archaeology that a great deal of our information can be checked, verified, and understood.

### 1. The Rosetta Stone.

Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt in 1798. He was hoping to cut England’s supply line to her holdings in India. It was an ill-fated expedition for Napoleon and for France, but it also marks the beginning of modern archaeology. Napoleon had brought with him 175 scholars made up of linguists, botanists, naturalists, artists and historians. Though Napoleon left the following year in defeat, this group of scholars eventually succeeded in publishing their findings in the 36-volume study entitled, “Description of Egypt.”



In August 1799, just two months before Napoleon would abandon his

army to escape back to France, a French soldier digging a trench at the fort of St Julien near Rosetta came across a dark red granite stone covered with writing.

It was a dark, irregular-shaped stone

Height	44 inches	111 centimeters
Width	32 inches	81 centimeters
Thickness	10 inches	25 centimeters

One side was polished and inscribed with a text in three different scripts of writing, though they comprised only two languages.

Hieroglyphs	14 lines	These were Egyptian symbols in which each symbol would represent a syllable.
Demotic	32 lines	A shorthand form of hieroglyphics written from right to left like Hebrew, this form of writing dated to 700 B.C. and ultimately developed into the Coptic script.
Greek	54 lines	The commemoration of the coronation of King Ptolemy 5th in the year 196 B.C.

No one living in that day was able to read either the hieroglyphs or the demotic. The Greek, on the other hand, was easily readable. It was evidently a stela of commemoration of the advent of one of the Ptolemies to the throne of Egypt. The Ptolemies were a line of Greek kings who ruled over Egypt from the days of Alexander to Cleopatra (she was the last of the Ptolemies).

As the spoils of war, the Rosetta Stone ended up in the British Museum where it resides to this day. But it was copied and those copies were distributed and made available to all scholars. It was left to a young French scholar to break its secret.

Scholars had recognized immediately that all three inscriptions were differing translations of the same message since the last line of the

Greek text read: “Written in sacred and native and Greek characters.”

Jean Francois Champollion was familiar with Coptic and was able to use his knowledge of that language to decipher the mystery of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. His work was aided by Thomas Yong, an English scholar who had concluded that the symbol representing Ptolemy was phonetic. It had been assumed in the past that hieroglyphics were “picture-writings” in which each symbol represented a single word or concept. Thus a picture of a pig might mean “dirty man” or a lion’s front paws might stand for “strength.” But this proved not to be the case.

There were actually three types of hieroglyphs:

- a. Pictures: Some symbols did indeed represent a single word or concept. For example, a picture of a man with a stick stood for the verb, “to beat.”
- b. Related Sounds: Some pictures came to stand for things which they sounded like. It would be like drawing a picture of a train in order to communicate the idea of “training (teaching) a student.” An actual example is the Egyptian word *wr*. It is the word for a swallow (bird). The hieroglyphic is a picture of a swallow. But it is also the word for “great.”
- c. Syllable Sounds: The symbol for “swallow” came to be used whenever the Egyptians were writing a word which had the sound *wr* as one of its syllables.

## 2. The Behistun Inscription.

In 1833 British officer Sir Henry Rawlinson traveled to Persia to organize the Shah’s army. There he came across a Persian inscription located high up a cliff wall on the Rock of Behistun in western Iran. The rock stands above a spring of water on the caravan route between Ecbatana and Babylon; it is the last peak of a long narrow range of mountains. Today the small village of Behistun lies around the spring.

In 1842, Rawlinson succeeded in climbing the wall and copying a portion of the inscription. It was painstaking work and a portion of



the inscription was inaccessible. It was not until 1847 that he returned with a Kurdish boy who succeeded in spanning the rest of the precipice and making a paper mache imprint of the rest of the inscription. The inscription is composed in three languages:

- a. Old Persian.
- b. Elamite.
- c. Akkadian.

All three languages are written with cuneiform characters. An Aramaic version of the inscription was later discovered at Elephantine in Upper Egypt.

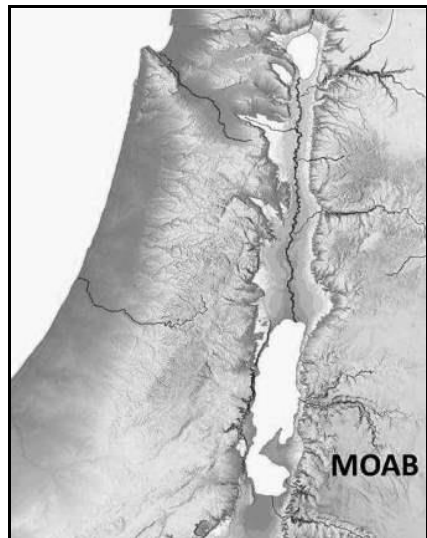
It was ultimately determined that the pictorial relief was of King Darius of Persia. The scene represents Darius receiving the submission of a group of rebels. The king's left foot is placed on the neck of one of his enemies.

Rawlinson managed to decipher the Persian part of the inscription. This was then used to make the first translations of the other two languages. Thus the Behistun Inscription is to cuneiform as the Rosetta Stone is to Egyptian hieroglyphics.

### 3. Moabite Stone.

Made of black basalt, this stela was discovered by a French Anglican medical missionary by the name of F.A. Klein in 1868 in the ruins of the ancient city of Divon in modern Jordan on the east side of the Dead Sea. Klein was unable to read the inscription, but recognized it as being valuable.

The inscription parallels Biblical history as it relates the events described in 2 Kings 1 and 3, though it relates these same events from the Moabite perspective. The stone measures as follows:



Tall	3 feet, 8½ inches	113 centimeters
Wide	2 feet, 3½ inches	70 centimeters
Thick	1 foot, 1¾ inches	40 centimeters
Approximate Date: 830 B.C.		
39 Lines of Writing		

The French consul in Jerusalem commissioned an Arab to make a squeeze of the stela by pressing wet paper into the characters of the inscription. While he was doing this, he was attacked by Bedouin and forced to flee. In his haste to escape, the squeeze was torn into several pieces.

When the Turkish authorities tried to take the stone, the Bedouin responded by setting a fire under the stone to heat it up and then pouring cold water over it, thereby breaking it into fragments. About two-thirds of the pieces were recovered and those, along with the squeeze that had been made before the stela was destroyed, allowed all but the last line to be reconstructed. There are a total of 34 lines, written in Moabite, a language almost identical to Hebrew.

Origins	Erected by King Mesha at Dibon
Discovery	Seen by Clermont Ganneau and Rev. F. A. Klein in 1868. They had a squeeze of the stone made at that time.
	The stone was broken into pieces by Arabs. Two large fragments and 18 smaller pieces were recovered
Today	Resides in the Louvre

4. Gezer Calendar.

Discovered in 1908 at Tell el-Jazari by Irish archaeologist R.A.S. MacAlistar at the site of the ancient city of Gezer about 15 miles to the northwest of Jerusalem, this small limestone rock seems to be a student's homework. The translation reads as follows:

*Two months are harvest  
Two months are planting  
Two months are late (planting)  
One month is hoeing flax  
One month is barley-harvest  
One month is harvest and feasting  
Two months are (vine-)pruning  
One month is summer fruit.*

This inscription dates back to 925 B.C. It serves as evidence that the Hebrews living in Israel at that time were a literary people capable of writing the Old Testament Scriptures. At the time of its discovery, it was the oldest Hebrew inscription to be found.

6000 B.C. - Ugarit founded.  
1800-1400 B.C. - Ugarit comes under Egyptian influence.  
1300-1200 B.C. - Period in which the tablets were written.  
1180 B.C. - City declines suddenly.

5. Ras Shamrah - The Lost City of Ugarit.

In the spring of 1928, Mahmoud az-Zir, was ploughing land he had rented in the south of Minet el-Beida ("white harbor"), Syria. As he was working, his plough struck something hard just under the surface. That evening, he returned to the site with some companions, and they began to clear away a thin layer of top soil. They very quickly came across some man-made paving stones, and on lifting these, they discovered a chambered tomb full of pottery.



When archaeologists were sent in to investigate, they discovered a palace and an entire royal port city buried beneath the tell. Within these ruins were hundreds of cuneiform tablets. It was not until 1932 that it was determined that the name of this lost city was Ugarit.

The style of writing discovered at Ugarit is known as alphabetic cuneiform. This is a unique blending of an alphabetic script (like Hebrew) and cuneiform (like Akkadian); thus it is a unique blending of two styles of writing. Most likely it came into being as cuneiform was passing from the scene and alphabetic scripts were making their rise. Ugaritic is thus a bridge from one to the other and very important in itself for the development of both.

Ugaritic greatly helps us in correctly translating difficult Hebrew words and passages in the Old Testament. As a language develops the meaning of words changes or their meaning is lost altogether. This is also true of the Biblical text. But after the discovery of the Ugaritic texts we found information concerning archaic words in the Hebrew text.

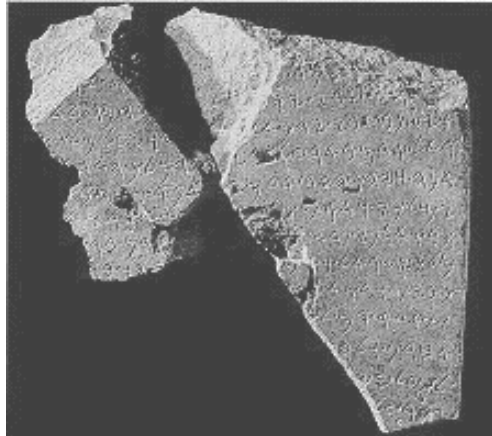
6. Ebla.

In 1964 Italian archaeologists directed by Paolo Matthiae of the University of Rome excavated a mound in northern Syria known as Tell Mardikh. In 1968, Matthiae and his team uncovered ancient Akkadian inscriptions of King Ibbi-Lim. In this text the king identified himself as the ruler of Ebla. During excavations in 1974 and 1975, public and royal archives containing over 15,000 clay tablets came to light. The Eblaite scribes recorded information on clay tablets, inscribed in cuneiform, as developed by the Sumerians, which was found in the ruins of the royal palace in 1974 A.D. The people of Ebla spoke a Semitic language that resembled ancient Hebrew. The most likely date of these archives is about 2500 B.C.

A royal library was found in 1974 consisting of 20,000 clay tablets, 80 percent of which were written in Sumerian and the rest in an unknown Semitic language akin to Hebrew that is now called Eblaite. Located halfway between modern Aleppo and Hama, at the top of the Fertile Crescent, the city was in the heart of Abraham's ancestral home territory of Haran and flourished in 2200 B.C. Names like David, Micah, Jerusalem, Sodom, Gomorrah, Haran, and Ur appear in the texts. The city of Ebla was destroyed around 2250 B.C.

7. Tell Dan Inscription.

In 1994, a team working under Avraham Biran in Upper Galilee discovered three pieces of a single inscription on basalt. It is written in Aramaic and mentions a military victory over *Bth-Dwd* - "The House of David." This is the earliest archaeological mention of King David.



Tell Dan Inscription

8. Tell El-Amarna.

A series of letters were discovered at the ancient Egyptian city of Akhenaton, located on the east bank of the Nile

Amarna is located in the desert north of Thebes where Pharaoh Akhenaton built his pristine royal city, Akhet-aton, "Horizon-of-Aton." It lasted only a few years before being destroyed by those loyal to the old gods of Egypt. But for those few brief years, it was, for Egypt, a kind of mysterious Camelot.

midway between Giza and Thebes. The city has since become known as Tell el-Amarna by the combining of two names:

- a. El-Til is the name of the modern-day village in the area.
- b. El-Amarna is one of the Arab tribes which has settled in the area.

In 1887, a peasant woman digging for fertilizer found some tablets in the ruins of Tell el-Amarna. She sold them for ten piastres. The tablets were offered to European scholars, but were suspected of being forgeries and were rejected. The tablets were taken to Luxor and sold to tourists. By the time that scholars realized the tablets were genuine, a number of the tablets had

been sold. Excavations began in 1891 and a total of 380 tablets were



eventually uncovered.

The tablets date to the 18th dynasty of Egypt, specifically during the reign of Akhenaton. These tablets consist correspondence between the Pharaoh of Egypt at the kings of the cities of Jerusalem, Gezer, Lachish, Jarmuth and Eglon. However, they are written in Akkadian, demonstrating that this was the language of international diplomacy.

In several of these letters, there are complaints and requests for protection from invading Hapiru, a nomadic people who were overrunning the land. Some of these Hapiru had been joined by the Canaanites and some had offered their services as mercenaries (there is a possible correlation here to the Gibeonites).

9. The Dead Sea Scrolls.

In January 1947, a young Arab boy searching for some lost goats happened to throw a rock into one of the hundreds of caves that dot the cliffs overlooking the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. Instead of the bleating of a goat, he heard the crack of breaking pottery. He told this to two of his cousins and the next day the youngest of the cousins returned to the scene and climbed the steep incline up to the cave.

The cave floor was covered with debris, including broken pottery. Along the wall stood a number of clay jars, some with their bowl-shaped covers still in place. Inside they found several bundles of ancient manuscripts.

The seven manuscripts were sold to a shoemaker/antiquities dealer in Bethlehem. They eventually came to the attention of scholars at the American School of Oriental Research. William F. Albright soon announced that the scrolls were from the period between 200 BC to AD 200, making them the oldest manuscripts ever to be found.

Archaeological expeditions back to the caves where the scrolls had initially been found resulted in the discovery of ten additional caves in the surrounding area also containing scrolls. Attention was also directed to a small ruin nearby called “Khirbet (ruins of) Qumran,” which had been thought to be the remains of an old Roman fortress. Today most scholars agree that Qumran was the home of a sect of Jews known as the Essenes who made copies of the scrolls and then

hid them in the caves when the Romans under Titus invaded Judea in 67 AD.

The seven original scrolls of “Cave One” were made up of:

- (1) A scroll of the entire book of Isaiah.
- (2) A fragmentary scroll of Isaiah.
- (3) A commentary on the first two chapters of Habakkuk. The commentator explained the book allegorically in terms of the Qumran brotherhood.
- (4) The “Manual of Discipline” — A book of requirements for those aspiring to join the brotherhood.
- (5) The “Thanksgiving Hymns,” a collection of devotional psalms of thanksgiving and praise to God.
- (6) An Aramaic paraphrase of the Book of Genesis.
- (7) The “Rule of War” — An allegorical work prophesying the battle between the “Sons of Light” (the men of Qumran) and the “Sons of Darkness” which was to take place in the last days which the men of Qumran believed were about to take place.

Over the next eight years, scrolls were uncovered in 11 caves around the Qumran area. Over 600 scrolls and thousands of fragments have been uncovered, including fragments of every Biblical book except Esther.

Prior to this find, the oldest Old Testament Manuscripts known were the Massoretic Texts, dating from the 10th century AD. The Dead Sea scrolls were a thousand years older. When compared, they were found to be very close.

What have we actually learned from the Dead Sea Scrolls? Have they actually contained any astounding discoveries?

- a. They teach us that the Massoretic text of the Hebrew Old Testament was surprisingly accurate and that the Bible has

not notably changed over the course of history. At the same time, they also help us to see that there have been occasional scribal changes that have crept into the Hebrew text and they have furthered the ability of scholars to study that text and determine its original composition.

- b. The scrolls have been helpful in giving us a window into the first century Hebrew language.
- c. They teach us that there was a messianic expectation in the first century as the Jews were waiting for the coming of One who would be both a divine warrior as well as a teacher of righteousness.
- d. They serve to remind us of the Jewish roots of Christianity, especially when we compare the teachings found in the scrolls with those of Jesus.

## **THE FORMING OF ANCIENT TELS**

Ancient cities were sometimes built on a hill. This would allow the natural formation of the landscape to assist in the fortifying of the city. Jerusalem is a good example of this phenomenon. The original Jebusite city was located on a narrow ridge so that three sides of the city were protected by steep inclines. Other cities often found themselves in areas which were originally lowlands, but which began to elevate as each succeeding city was built over top of its predecessor.

The word *tel* in both Hebrew and Arabic means “mound.” What originally appeared to be mere hills in the landscape sometimes turned out to be a series of forgotten cities each built one on top of the rubble of its predecessor.

One example of this phenomenon is Tell el-Husn on the Jordan River, 14 miles south of the Sea of Galilee. This was the site of the Biblical city of Bethshan, the home of those who took the body of Saul after he had been slain in the battle of Gilboa.

This site was excavated from 1921 to 1933 by the University of Pennsylvania. Excavators dug down 70 feet through 18 distinct strata. The history of the city begins as early as 3500 B.C. and continues into the present era.





Tel at Beth Shan with Roman era ruins in the foreground

## **THREE TYPES OF SURVIVING WRITINGS**

1. Monumental: These are texts for public display. They were made on monuments and they were made to last and to withstand the elements.
2. Professional: Texts made by trained scribes. They were often done of clay tablets or on papyrus.
3. Occasional: These were things written in everyday business. They could be written on papyrus, parchment, goatskin, or even upon broken pieces of pottery known as “potsherds” or “ostraca” (the ancient version of “scrap paper”).

# GENESIS AND OTHER CREATION ACCOUNTS

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.  
(Genesis 1:1).*

So begins the text of Genesis 1:1. Though it points back to the creation of all things, it must be understood that this was not the first thing ever to be written. Moses wrote these words in the 15th century B.C. There had already been many books written before this time and some which dealt with the question of creation.

Among the multitude of tablets found in the Library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh were a group of seven tablets known as the *Enuma Elish*. Though the library dates only to the late 7th century B.C., the present form of the epic itself goes all the way back to the days of Hammurabi (1700 B.C.), while the story descends from the days of the Sumerians. The *Enuma Elish* (“When on high”) draws its title from the first sentence of its narrative.

*“When on high the heaven had not been named, firm  
ground below had not been named...”*

The text was found written on seven tablets, but this has no bearing on the seven days of the Genesis account. If the tablets had been larger then there would only have been six.

Tablet 1: Aspu and Tiamat come together to give birth to the primitive forces and gods. However, Aspu turns against his offspring, but is slain by them. Tiamat is enraged at the death of her husband and she prepares to avenge his death.

Tablet 2: Marduk, one of the second generation gods, is elected to fight Tiamat.

Tablet 3: The assembly of gods decrees the outcome of the battle and the glory of Marduk.

Tablet 4: They each create seven assistants to help them. Marduk wins the conflict and dissects the body of Tiamat.

Tablet 5: From the body of Tiamat, Marduk creates heaven and earth. The moon and the stars are established to mark the seasons.

Tablet 6: Tiamat's second in command, Kingu, is slain and from drops of his blood Marduk creates man so that there will be one to sacrifice to the gods.

*My blood will I take and bone will I fashion  
I will make man, that man may be his name,  
I will create man who shall inhabit the earth,  
That the service of the gods may be established, and that their  
shrines may be built.  
But I will alter the ways of the gods, and I will change their  
paths;  
Together shall they be oppressed and unto evil shall they....*

Tablet 7: Marduk advances from the chief god of Babylon to become head of the entire pantheon. He is given 50 names representing the power of the various deities.

It can be seen from this brief outline that this account is only superficially related to the Genesis account.

Similarities and Differences with the Genesis Account			
Similarities		Differences	
(1)	Both accounts speak of a time when the earth was without form and void.	(1)	One account is grossly polytheistic while the other is strictly monotheistic.
(2)	Both accounts have a similar order of events in creation.	(2)	One accounts confuses spirit and matter while the other carefully distinguishes between the two.
(3)	An emphasis is placed upon naming that which was created.		

Since the initial discovery of the seven tablets, other copies have been found relating the same story but on ten tablets. This suggests to us that there is nothing in particular to the parallel of the seven tablets with the seven days of Genesis 1-2.

There is a real difference between the Genesis account and the creation accounts of other pagan religions. In other religious systems, the natural world was seen as a manifestation of all of the deities — the sun, moon, stars, oceans, storms. The cosmos always had the status of deity. The Bible is unique in that the cosmos is merely creation. Only the Lord is God.

Another difference between the Genesis account versus the creation accounts of other religions of antiquity is underscored in an observation by C.S. Lewis:

*...creation, in any unambiguous sense, seems to be a surprisingly rare doctrine; and when stories about it occur in Paganism they are often religiously unimportant, not in the least central to the religions in which we find them. They are on the fringe where religion tails off into what was perhaps felt, even at the time, to be more like fairy-tale (1994:171).*

At the same time, there are enough similarities in the Mesopotamian creation accounts with those of the Bible to make us wonder if these similarities are not deliberate. The simple truth is that two authors do not normally express thought alike if they are acting independently. It is for this reason that I would propose the similarities between the Genesis account and the various Mesopotamian creation stories are deliberate. The Bible purposefully sets forth its creation account in a way that reflects something of the Mesopotamian stories, yet showing that creation did not come about through the random happenings of various gods and cosmic forces, but rather that it was the purposeful and deliberate act of God.

## THE NATURE OF THE TWO CREATION ACCOUNTS

A reading of Genesis 1-2 will show immediately that we have two separate and distinct accounts of creation.

GENESIS 1	GENESIS 2
The heavens and the earth are created in six days.	Creation of the man and the woman (no time element mentioned).

Shows man in his cosmic setting.	Shows man as central to God's purpose.
A panoramic view of creation as a whole.	A detailed view of one particular aspect of creation.
Centers on God creating the heavens and the earth.	Centers on man as the crowning of God's creation.

Rather than being contradictive, these two accounts are complimentary. Indeed, this method of first giving a panoramic view and then coming back to focus on important details is found all through Genesis.

For example, in the account of Jacob and Esau, it is Esau's story that comes first, but it is Jacob's which is more fully developed and which holds the place of higher importance to the theme of the book.

## **THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION**

The six days of creative work are topical in nature. This does not rule out a literal interpretation, but the topical nature should also be realized.

DAY 1: Light.	DAY 4: Light-givers (Sun, moon & stars).
DAY 2: Water & sky divided.	DAY 5: Fish and birds.
DAY 3: Land & Vegetation	DAY 6: Land animals & man.

Light is made on Day 1 while, corresponding to that, light-givers are placed into the heavens on Day 4. The water and sky are divided on Day 2 while the water and sky are filled with fish and with birds on Day 5. Dry land appears on Day 3 and that dry land is inhabited on Day 6.

The Jews delighted in this sort of parallelism; it was akin to poetry. This does not take away from its inspiration or its value as an authoritative historical account of creation as other forms of parallelism from historical passages of the Bible are also to be found containing parallelism.

## THE CREATION OF MAN

*Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

*And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27).*

Throughout this chapter, God is referenced by the title *Elohim*. This was a familiar designation to those who spoke Semitic languages. The Canaanite pantheon viewed one of their gods as *El*. The plural of *El* is *Elohim*, but that does not mean we are to take this as an example of polytheism, since it appears throughout most of this chapter accompanied by singular modifiers. Thus we could translate verse 26, “Then God, He said...”

The creative work of God reaches a crescendo when it reaches the creation of man.

### 1. The plurality of the Planner.

Notice the use of the plural pronoun (“*Let US make man in OUR image*”). This is a change from the way we have seen God referenced throughout the first part of the chapter. The Jews held this to be a conversation that the Lord was having with the angels. However, the fulfillment of the plan in verse 27 does not say that God created man in the image of God and the angels. Indeed, angels are nowhere mentioned in the first half of the book of Genesis.

It has been suggested by some that this may be a foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Trinity. On the other hand, it may also be a literary device known as a “plural of majesty.” Even today in the English language, it is customary for edicts coming from a royal personage to speak in the plural even though it is a single person doing the speaking.

### 2. In the image of God.

In what way was man created in the image and likeness of God? The context suggests only one way — the area of rulership. As God was

sovereign over all that He had created, so now man was placed into a position of relative sovereignty over all that was upon the earth.

## THE GARDEN OF EDEN

*And the Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. (Genesis 2:8).*

*Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.*

*The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.*

*And the gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there.*

*And the name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush.*

*And the name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14).*

This passage has been a source of great confusion because it seems to join geographical areas which are far removed from one another.

The word *edenu* in Akkadian means “garden” or “paradise.”

Verse 10 says literally, “*from there it divided and became four heads.*”

1. Pishon — “Full flowing.”

The Pishon “*flows around the whole land of Havilah.*” Havilah is a reference to lands in northern Arabia where the descendants of Ishmael made their homes (Genesis 25:18).

In the 1990's, Boston University scientist Farouk El-Baz used photos from satellites orbiting the earth and space Shuttle Imaging Radar to locate an underground river which now runs under a portion of the desert of Saudi Arabia (James A. Sauer, “The River Runs Dry,” Biblical Archaeology Review, Vol. 22, No. 4, July/August 1996, pp. 52-54, 57, 64 and Molly Dewsnap, “The Kuwait River,” Biblical Archaeology Review, Vol. 22, No. 4, July/August 1996, p. 55.).

In Kuwait, a dry riverbed (Wadi Al-Batin) cuts through limestone and appears to disappear into the desert of Saudi Arabia. Actually, the river ran underground along a fault line under the sand. From the Hyaz Mountains in Saudi Arabia, this river carried granite and basalt pebbles 650 miles northeast to deposit them at its delta in Kuwait near the Persian Gulf.

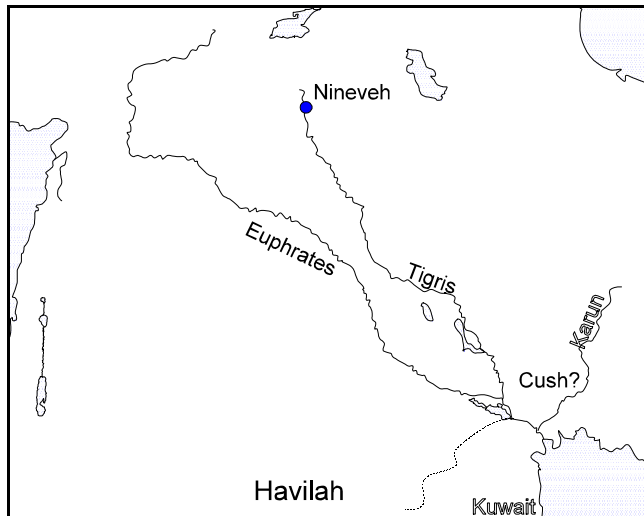
Some have theorized that this lost river corresponds to biblical descriptions of the Pishon River. This one discovery was enough to make Sauer, the former curator of the Harvard Semitic Museum's archaeological collections, reverse his previous skepticism regarding the historical accuracy of the Bible.

2. Gihon – The root word from which this name is taken means “to bring forth, gush.”

The Gihon is said to flow around the whole land of Cush (Genesis 2:13). This presents a difficulty in that Cush was the land to the south of Egypt. However, there was also an area to the east of the Tigris River which was known as Cush. If this is the case, then this could be a reference to the Karun River which flows into the Tigris and Euphrates just before they enter the Persian Gulf.

3. Tigris (Hidiqel).

The Hebrew name seems to have been taken from the Akkadian *Idiklat*. The Persian word *tir* also means “arrow” and is the designation for the Tigris River.



4. Euphrates.

The name of the Euphrates was used, borrowed, and adapted by many different people groups to the point that we cannot be certain as to its



origins.

The last two rivers are known to us. The first two are not. However, they come with geographical identifiers. This perhaps indicates that they were not well known to the readers of this account as they are not well known to us. The location of the last two river points to a location for the Garden of Eden at the northwest end of the Persian Gulf. There is the possibility that the first two rivers can also support such a location.

## THE FALL INTO SIN

### 1. The Gilgamesh Epic and the Temptation Account.

The Gilgamesh Epic is a long story recounting the adventures of Gilgamesh, the king of Erech in Mesopotamia. The first tablet tells the story of how Gilgamesh, the god-man and king is a harsh ruler over his people. They pray to Anu, the sky god who fashions a rival for Gilgamesh in the person of Enkidu, the wild man of the forests who is given superhuman strength. A trapper's son finds Enkidu running in the forests with the animals and, per the instructions of his father, he goes to the city and engages the aid of Shamhat, a temple prostitute, to come and entice Enkidu. He yields to her charms and loses his strength, but he gains knowledge. Shamhat subsequently takes Enkidu to the city to meet Gilgamesh.

There are certain parallels in this story with the opening chapters of Genesis and the fall in the Garden of Eden.

<b>Gilgamesh Epic</b>	<b>Bible</b>
Anu, the sky god, creates Enkidu, the wild man of the forest	The Lord God creates Adam and places him into a garden
Enkidu is naked in the forest	Adam and Eve are both naked in the garden
Enkidu is tempted by Shamhat, the temple prostitute	Adam is given the forbidden fruit by the woman

Enkidu falls to Shamhat's charms, loses his strength but gains knowledge	Adam eats the fruit given to him by Eve, his eyes are opened with the knowledge that they are naked and he is removed from the garden
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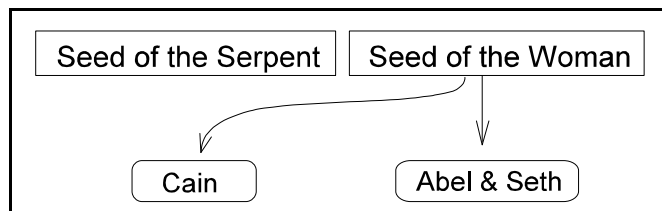
While there are parallels between the two accounts, there are also some obvious differences. The Gilgamesh Epic is not giving us an account of the creation of the human race, but only of a particular individual. Neither does the temptation and fall affect other members of mankind.

## 2. The Prophecy of the Seed.

The first prophecy of a coming Messiah was not made to either the man or the woman, but to the serpent.

*“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.” (Genesis 3:15).*

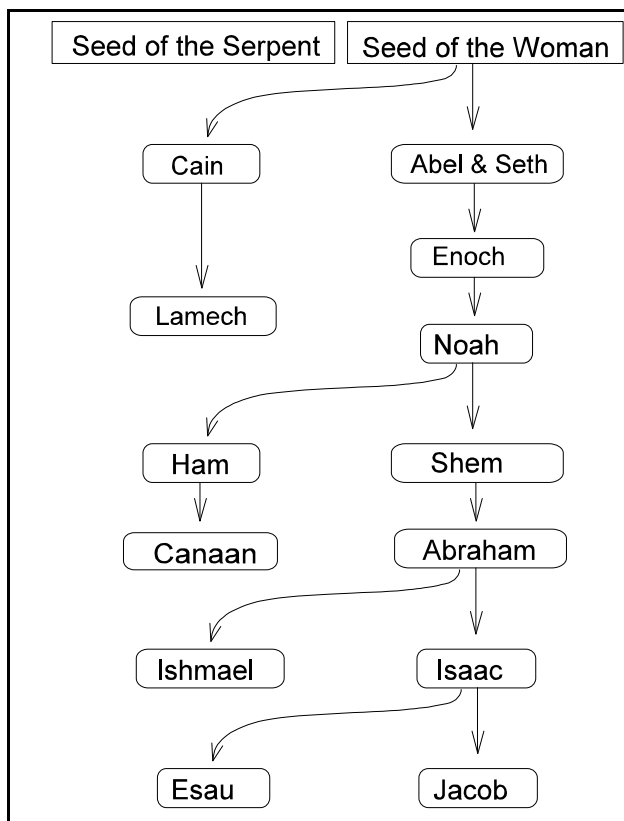
This verse provides the theme of the rest of Genesis. This will be a book about two seeds:



Even though Cain was descended from Eve, he eventually follows the way of the Serpent in rebellion against God. While he is the physical descendant of Adam and Eve, he shows by his actions that he is really the spiritual descendant of the Serpent. Like the Serpent, he rebels against God. And like the Serpent, he is cursed for his rebellion. The story continues as we are given two separate genealogies representing each of these two seeds.

Lamech is the culmination of the Seed of the Serpent through Cain.

He takes Cain's sin and compounds it, threatening to do seven times the damage that Cain had done. In contrast, Enoch walks with God and Noah obeys the Lord in the building of an ark. But after Noah, there is again a departure of a seed to follow after the Seed of the Serpent.



Ham sins and shows by his sin that he is of the Seed of the Serpent. His son Canaan is cursed and continues to be a curse to the Israelites. The pattern continues as Ishmael is cast out while Isaac shows himself to be the son of faith. And again when Esau despises the promises of God, it is to Jacob that the promise is given.

Moses writes the book of Genesis to the Israelites in the wilderness. It is much more than a mere history book. It is a call to be a seed and a generation and a people. The question before the Israelites in the wilderness is which seed they will be a part of - the seed of the serpent or the seed of the woman?

Genesis will be a book about a line of children. Thus, a key word in

Genesis will be “generations.”

- The Hebrew word for “generations” is *toledoth*.
- It is taken from the root word *yalad*, “to give birth.”

Each new generation will determine which seed it is. Will it continue in the covenant relation to God and show itself to be a part of the promised seed? Or will it turn from God to join and be a part of the seed of the serpent?

# THE FLOOD

*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. (Genesis 7:11).*

Genesis presents itself as a historical book. Absent is the “once upon a time” formula of fairytales. Instead we are given the language of precise historical records.

## GENEALOGIES AND KING LISTS

Even a cursory look at the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 indicate a great difference in the average life span of mankind before the Flood to what it is today.

PATRIARCH	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE AT BIRTH OF SON	AGE AT DEATH	YEAR OF DEATH	MEANING OF NAME
Adam	1	130	930	930	<i>Man</i>
Seth	130	105	912	1042	<i>Appointed</i>
Enosh	235	90	905	1140	<i>Sickly</i>
Kenan	325	70	910	1235	<i>Smith</i>
Mahalaleel	395	65	895	1290	<i>Praise of God</i>
Jared	460	162	962	1422	<i>Descent</i>
Enoch	622	65	365	(987)	<i>Dedication</i>
Methuselah	687	187	969	1656	<i>Man of the Javelin</i>
Lamech	874	182	777	1651	<i>Conqueror</i>
Noah	1056	500	950	2006	<i>Rest</i>

Noah is said to have lived to be a total of 950 years old. A notable and dramatic change takes place after Noah. Was this one of the judgments of God upon the post-diluvian world? Was it the result of different ecological conditions? We do not know. The Bible does not tell us.

It is perhaps significant that the oldest names from the Sumerian King lists also reflect very lengthy ages among those kings (some of the kings were said to have lived for over 20,000 years).

The meaning of the name “Methuselah” has been the subject of some disagreement among scholars.

- *Methi* is the word “when.”
- *Selah* can have one of two meanings:
  - (1) A weapon (Javelin).
  - (2) To send.

Thus, the name can either mean, “When the weapon is used” or else it can mean, “When he sends.” Still another possibility is that there is a double meaning to the name.

Notice that, if we read this as a strict chronology, the Flood came the same year that Methuselah died. Perhaps his name was a prophecy, that his death would send the avenging weapon of the Lord upon the earth.

## EARLIEST CIVILIZATION

Genesis 4 gives us a brief glimpse into the society and culture of mankind before the Flood.

1. Cities (Genesis 4:17).

*And Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son. (Genesis 4:17).*

After the murder of his brother, Cain was banished from society; so he went out and formed a new society with a city of his own. This city

and other cities of the antediluvian world are unknown to archaeology.

One of the earliest cities found by archaeologists to date is Jericho. Its ruins have been estimated at 7000 B.C. in the pre-pottery era. This early city consisted of a single wall, a tower and several round huts. There does not seem to have been a written language at that early date. Later settlers at this site were not more advanced. Indeed, they were less advanced, except that they used pottery.

2. Polygamy (Genesis 4:19).

*And Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. (Genesis 4:19).*

Although polygamy had not been expressly forbidden, it was evidently contrary to the divine design. God did not create Adam, Eve and Hilda. The creation pattern was one man and one woman. The Mosaic Law would prohibit kings of Israel from multiplying wives (Deuteronomy 17:17).

3. Nomadic herdsmen (Genesis 4:20).

*And Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. (Genesis 4:20).*

Tent-dwellers represented an advancement to stationary living. They were the equivalent of the travel-trailer. They were able to pull up stakes and travel to greener pastures.

4. Musical instruments (Genesis 4:21).

*And his brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. (Genesis 4:21).*

Does this mean that the lyre and the pipe were invented by Jubal? Not necessarily. But it does mean that Jubal was the world's first musician and all who came after him were in that sense following in his footsteps.

5. Bronze and iron (Genesis 4:22).

*As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubalcain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron. (Genesis 4:22a).*

Bronze is an alloy of copper mixed with about 10% tin which increases its strength (the greater the ratio of tin, the lower the melting point). Examples of copper implements date back as early as 6000 B.C. while bronze artifacts have been dated at 3700 B.C.

Iron, on the other hand, is a more recent discovery. Iron beads have been found in Egyptian jewelry as early as 3400 B.C. and iron thought by many to have been used even earlier. But it was not until 1400 that the Hittites developed a closely guarded monopoly of smelting the iron ore which they mined from the mountains of eastern Anatolia. The Iron Age would not begin until 1200 B.C.

## THE ARK

*“Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.*

*“And this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height thirty cubits.*

*“You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.” (Genesis 6:14-16).*

There have been a number of reports in the last hundred years of people claiming to have seen the Ark on Mount Ararat. Unfortunately, not a single one has been substantiated with clear photographs and some of these claims are contradictory as to the Ark’s location.

1. The Word “Ark.”

The Hebrew word is *Tebah*. This same word is used in Exodus 2:3-5 to refer to the

This is different from ‘*aron*, which is used to describe the ark of the covenant.



ark that the mother of Moses used to hide her child. *Tebah* is thought to be an Egyptian loan-word to describe a box.

## 2. The Size of the Ark.

The dimensions of the ark are given in cubits. A cubit was the distance from a man's elbow to the tip of his fingers - generally about 18 inches. There was also a royal cubit which was a few inches longer (kings suffered from the same malady known to Texans - they liked to be thought of as bigger than everyone else).

Assuming the standard cubit, we are left with the following dimensions:

	Cubits	Feet
Length	300	450
Width	50	75
Height	30	45

It has often been noted that these are the dimensions of an ocean-going barge.

## 3. The Building Materials.

The ark was to be made of “gopher” wood. The translators were not sure how to render the Hebrew text, so they simply gave us a transliteration. It is the Hebrew word *gopher* and has nothing to do with furry little creatures. To make matters worse, this word is a hapax legomena, meaning that it is not used elsewhere in the Bible. This makes it difficult to determine what type of wood it is.

It has been suggested that the Hebrew *gopher* is a textual error which should read *kopher* (meaning, “to cover”), but there is no textual evidence for this. It is more likely that this is either an Akkadian or a Sumerian loan word, a term that was borrowed from a different language group.

Noah was also told to “cover it inside and outside with pitch” (6:14). This literally reads “**cover** it within and without in **covering**.” As

noted above, the word for “cover” is *kaphar*. It is the same word which describes the act of atonement. Indeed, we still use the same word today when we speak of the Jewish Festival of Yom Kippur.

## THE NATURE OF THE FLOOD

*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. (Genesis 7:11).*

It is evident from the chronological formula given that we are meant to understand this as an actual historical event. But what is the nature of this event?

The phrase that NAS has translated “floodgates of the sky” (*Aruboth haShama'im*) is more properly “windows of heaven.” This exact same term is found in Malachi 3:10 where the Lord is pictured as opening the windows of heaven to pour out blessings on His people (this kind of usage is also seen in 2 Kings 7:2,19). The idea of the windows from above being opened in order to bring destruction is pictured in Isaiah 24:18.

*Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit, and he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare; for the windows above are opened, and the foundations of the earth shake. (Isaiah 24:18).*

In the same way, “all the fountains of the great deep” has its parallels such as Deuteronomy 4:18 where we read of fish that are “in the water below the earth.” Thus, the picture is that of the sky and the ocean loosening their bonds so that their waters fall upon the land.

Was this a world-wide flood or was it merely limited to the geographical area of Mesopotamia?

1. Arguments for a Universal Flood.
  - a. The depth of the flood.

Genesis 7:19-20 says that all the high mountains which were under all the heavens were covered by the waters of the flood.

The peak of Mount Ararat extends to an elevation of around 17,000 feet. If only this one single peak was covered, then most of the world would also be covered.

- b. The duration of the flood.

The flood is said to have lasted 371 days, a little over a year. Local floods do not last this long.

- c. The need for the ark.

If the flood was to be merely confined to a certain isolated area, it would not have necessitated Noah spending all that time and effort in building the ark. He could have moved to high ground.

- d. The testimony of the Apostle Peter.

*...the world at that time was destroyed,  
being flooded with water.*

*But the present heavens and earth by  
His word are being reserved for fire, kept for  
the day of judgment and destruction of  
ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:6-7).*

Peter's words imply a total destruction of the enter world both in Noah's day and in the future parallel.

2. Arguments for a Local Flood.

- a. *HaAretz* is "the land."

The Hebrew word which is translated "the world" throughout the flood narrative can be translated "the land."

*"The LAND of Nod" (Genesis 4:16).*

*"In the LAND of Shinar" (Genesis 10:10).*

*"Out of that LAND went forth Asshur" (Genesis 10:11).*

*"Go forth from your COUNTRY, and from your  
relatives and from your father's house, to the LAND  
which I will show you..." (Genesis 12:1).*

*“And in you all the families of the EARTH shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).*

Each of these instances uses the same basic word. It can refer to the entire world, or it can merely refer to a certain area of land.

By the same token, when the Bible says that the world was covered by water, we need not take this to refer to the entire planet earth. It could merely be a reference to that land area.

- b. Universalist terms can be used in a limited sense.

The Scriptures sometimes use terms like “all” and “every” in a way which is understood to be a

limited sense. We need not go very far to prove this point. Note the following verses:

*And all flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beast and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth; and all mankind; 22 of all that was no the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. (Genesis 7:21-22).*

*The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of ALL living (Genesis 3:20).*

Was Eve the mother of all life? Or merely the mother of all human life? If we are to understand her to be the mother only of human life, then we must agree that this universal term is used in a limited sense.

*“Of EVERY living thing of ALL flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark...” (Genesis 6:19).*

Most people who advocate a universal flood do not take this command to refer to ocean animals (no goldfish bowls on the ark). Thus even the universalist understands that there are times when universal language is used in a limited sense. Therefore when we read of every living thing being destroyed in the flood, we can understand it to refer to the living land

animals in that particular area, not necessarily to a flood which covered the entire planet.

c. Where did the water go?

Mount Everest rises more than five miles above sea level. There are many other mountains in the world which are over the three mile height.

For flood waters to completely cover the earth would mandate that either the mountains were not there (thus they would have to be very recent in origin) or else that water came from some supernatural source and then went away again. Another possibility would be that the ocean beds somehow sank to collect the excess water.

It is interesting to note that sediment deposits have been found underneath the Sumerian ruins at Ur, at Fara and at Kish, lending some credence to the theory of a local flood.

A more recent theory has been suggested linking the rising of the Black Sea with the flood stories of antiquity. McIntosh makes this connection:

*One recent theory moves the Flood away from Mesopotamia to the Black Sea. Here underwater reconnaissance has revealed that the Mediterranean and the Black Sea were once separated by a narrow land bridge between Asia and Europe. Rising sea levels in the Mediterranean cause this to be breached around 5500 B.C., pouring water into the much lower basin of the Black Sea and drowning a huge area of land around the Black Sea shores, with catastrophic effects (2005:307).*

3. Summary.

UNIVERSAL FLOOD	LOCAL FLOOD
The Biblical account says that the waters covered the whole earth.	The word <i>aretz</i> is often used to describe a local area.

The Biblical language goes out of its way to use language of totality.	The account is given from the viewpoint of the narrator is from his perspective the destruction is total.
The size of the ark indicates that this was no local flood. A vessel of this size would not have been needed to escape a local flood.	The size of the ark is not related to the extent of the flood. The building of the ark was a matter of faith, not of pragmatism.
The purpose of the ark was punishment of world-wide sin. In a local flood some could have escaped.	God could have made certain all flesh was destroyed without flooding the entire globe.
There are world-wide traces of a flood to be found in ocean fossils on mountaintops.	The evidence is scattered and sometimes seemingly inconsistent.
The promise of no future floods (Gen. 9:15) is not true if this is only a local flood.	The promise is for no flood to “destroy all flesh.”

## PAGAN FLOOD MYTHOLOGY

A number of “Flood Traditions” have come down to us from a number of ancient cultures. The most popular of these is the one found in the Gilgamesh Epic.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is a long Akkadian poem on the theme of human beings’ futile quest for immortality. A number of earlier Sumerian stories about Gilgamesh, the quasi-historical hero of the epic, were used as sources, but the Akkadian work was composed about 2000 BC. It exists in several different rescissions, none of them complete.

In the story, Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu seek immortality through fame, but when Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh finds that fame to be hollow.

Unable to accept the finality of death, he goes to Utnapishtim, the Babylonian counterpart of

Utnapishtim means “the joining of *nephes*,” the soul.

the biblical Noah, to learn the secret of his immortality.

This interview takes place on the 5th of seven tablets. Utnapishtim tells the story of how he was spared the destruction of the great flood through the building of a giant square barge.

- The boat consisted of seven decks and was overlaid with pitch.
- It took only seven days to build it.
- Utnapishtim saved his family and relatives along with animals and craftsmen.
- The flood began when “the gods of the abyss rose up; Nergal pulled out the dams of the nether waters, Ninutra the war-lord threw down the dykes, and the seven judges of hell, the Annunaki, raised their torches, lighting the land with their livid flame.”
- The storm lasted for 6 days and nights after which “the surface of the sea stretched as flat as a roof-top.”
- The boat landed atop the mountain of Nisir. After seven days on the mountain, Utnapishtim released a dove, then a swallow, and finally a raven before leaving the boat and making a sacrifice to the gods.

Utnapishtim goes on to explain that he received eternal life due to the unique circumstances of the flood, but he consoles the dejected Gilgamesh with news about a plant of life. A snake swallows the plant before Gilgamesh can use it, however, and he finally returns home, reluctantly accepting death without future resurrection as inevitable.

What are we to make of the fact that a document predating the book of Genesis by hundreds of years also contains a story of the flood with many of the same aspects of the Biblical account? Some have argued that this is proof that the Biblical narratives were adopted from pagan myths and have no bearing on the truth. I believe that it demonstrates just the opposite. It is an independent testimony to the truth of the actual events.

# EARLY MESOPOTAMIA

*“Where is the man who can clamber to heaven?  
Only the gods live forever with glorious Shamash, but as  
for men, our days are numbered, our occupations are a  
breath of wind.” (Gilgamesh Epic, Tablet 2).*

*“Thus it was that the gods took me and placed me  
here to live in the distance, at the mouth of the rivers.”  
(Gilgamesh Epic, Tablet 5).*

The greatest mountain region in the world stretched in a long line from the Pyrenees on the edge of the Atlantic through the Alps, the Balkans, the Anatolian Highlands, the Zagros and the Himalayas. To the south of this great mountain chain runs a series of dry lands and deserts.

This desert system is interrupted by a narrow crescent-shaped oasis created by three major rivers and several minor ones. The three major rivers are the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates. It is these last two rivers which will concern us in this chapter, for they run parallel to each other, emptying out into the warm waters of the Persian Gulf.



The land between these two rivers was known to the Jews as *Aram Naharaim*, meaning “Aram of the two rivers.” The Greeks knew it as *Mesopotamia*, the “land between the rivers.”



## **THE GEOGRAPHY OF MESOPOTAMIA**

### **1. The River Valley Concept.**

It is a fact of history that people tend to settle along rivers and waterways. The relatively fertile land which was produced by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers attracted settlers to this area. They learned to irrigate the lands around these two rivers and a whole system of canals and waterways began to be constructed. Thousands of years later, the Psalmist would sing of the “Rivers of Babylon.”

The Euphrates and Tigris, along with their tributaries, carry a great deal of sediment down along their courses. This sediment is deposited in the southern areas of the valley, bringing a higher fertility to the soil.

### **2. The Isolation Concept.**

The Mesopotamian Valley is hemmed in on the east by the Zagros Mountains of Iran and on the west by the vast Arabian Desert. To the north, the valley opens up into the wide Syrian plains. It is from this quarter that most of the outside invaders have come.

This easy access into the Mesopotamian Valley had a very striking effect upon the attitudes, the culture, and the outlook of the inhabitants. They learned early on that their very existence was a struggle.

### **3. The Climate Concept.**

The climate of Mesopotamia is haphazard. Summer temperatures range from 110 to 130 degrees Fahrenheit. Eight months out of the year are dry and the Tigris and Euphrates turn to muddy eddies of sluggish brown. The winter is the rainy season. In the spring, melting snows from the Taurus and Zagros Mountains add their waters so that the Tigris and Euphrates flood, often in a destructive manner.

In Northern Mesopotamia, the channels of the rivers have cut deep into the limestone riverbeds and the course of the rivers has remained unchanged throughout antiquity. On the other hand, the riverbeds of Southern Mesopotamia have laid down thousands of years of

sediment. These soft riverbanks are often overrun in times of flooding, changing the entire course of the rivers.

The irregular flooding of the Mesopotamian Rivers can be seen in contrast to the Nile River which had a system of regular flooding. The people looked at the Nile as a benevolent river. As a result of this outlook, the gods of the Egyptians were seen as benevolent. On the other hand, the gods of Mesopotamia were untrustworthy and to be feared.

## **CONTRAST BETWEEN EGYPT VERSUS THE LAND OF MESOPOTAMIA**

<b>Mesopotamia</b>	<b>Egypt</b>
Legalistic in their religious outlook, looking more to the letter of the law.	More of an ethical outlook on life with a focus on the spirit of the law.
Art and literature reflects a gloomy, pessimistic outlook on life.	Demonstrates a cheerful resignation to the problems of life.
Euphrates and Tigris flooded unexpectedly and often killed those who were caught. These rivers came to be feared.	The Nile flooded on a regular cycle and the Egyptians came to expect and depend upon its flooding. They eventually began to worship the Nile.
Surrounded by hostile forces on all sides. People lived in constant fear of invasion.	Egypt has natural boundaries in the sea and the desert which usually kept out invaders.
Lived from day to day always in fear of invasion and death.	Looked forward to immortality and a life after death.
Selfish and practical.	Giving and idealistic.

Both of these cultures progressed in ethical theory and social justice (systems of morality) to the extent that they codified laws. At the same time, both became involved in the evils of polytheism, slavery, imperialism, oppressive kings and greedy priests.

## **EARLY MESOPOTAMIAN HISTORY**

### **1. The Pre-literary Period.**

The earliest sources of information of human habitation come to us from the study of tools and pottery. It can be difficult to establish dates exclusively by these means since later cultures might exhibit primitive styles due to lack of proper materials in times of war, flooding or other catastrophe.

### **2. Proto-Literary Period.**

Our earliest samples of writing begin around 3500 B.C. This writing is found in the form of round cylinders which were impressed with a message and then baked. There are two main uses:

- a. Religious and cultic uses.
- b. Cooking recipes.

This tells us something about the people of the ancient world. They are essentially like us. Even though the product of differing cultures and times, they have the same basic needs and desires. And that is why the gospel of Jesus Christ is relevant to people in all cultures.

The earliest writing was in the form of pictographs where a single picture would represent a single object. These developed into ideographs and from there to a system of wedge-shaped characters made on soft tablets of clay with a triangular stick or cunios. This writing became known as cuneiform.

### **3. Early People Groups.**

There were four major people groups which settled in and around the Mesopotamian Valley.

- a. Sumerians.

They were a Hamitic race who tended to be dark-skinned, but not Negroid. They settled in the southern end of the valley. It was the Sumerians who demonstrated the first cultural achievements.

b. Akkadians.

This was a Semitic group who were concentrated in the north end of the valley.

c. The Medes.

An Indo-European tribe which settled in the Zagros Mountains to the northeast of Mesopotamia.

d. The Elamites.

The Elamites called themselves *Haltamti*. They were a Semitic group which settled south of the Medes and to the southwest of the Mesopotamian Valley, though the language they spoke was not Semitic. They were strongly influenced by Sumerian culture and were originally under Sumerian dominance. But they later became independent and formed their own kingdom, establishing their capital at Susa.

The word Elam means "highlands."



These people groups were not unified at this early date. They consisted of a number of independent city-states. Each city-state held domain over its small area.

4. The Early Dynastic Period.

From 3000 B.C. to about 2300 B.C. various city-states gained

supremacy over their neighbors, establishing short periods of suzerainty.

- Kish - located in central Mesopotamia near Babylon.
- Erech - Neighbor to Ur.
- Ur - City from which Abraham came.
- Lagesh - 35 miles northeast of Erech.

It was during this period that Gilgamesh became king of Erech (2650 B.C.). Myths and legends grew of his exploits. The “Gilgamesh Epic” recounts his quest for immortality and his conflicts with monsters and enemies along the way.

This was the “golden age” of Sumerian civilization. Its works of art were unparalleled in later ages. Woolley has this to say about this period:

*“So far as we know, the fourth millennium before Christ saw Sumerian art at its zenith. By the First Dynasty of Ur, if there is any change, it is in the nature of a decadence, and from later ages we have nothing to parallel the treasures of the prehistoric tombs.” (1965:44).*

As there were advances in the arts, so there were also advances in the modes of war. Infantry tactics developed which involved phalanxes of soldiers carrying short spears and supported by lightly armed skirmishers.

5. Sargon the Great (Died 2330 B.C.).

A text written in the 7th century B.C. describes Sargon’s birth and early life in terms very similar to that of Moses:

*Sargon, the mighty king, king of Agade, am I.  
My mother was a changeling, my father knew me not.  
The brothers of my father loved the hills.  
My city is Azupiranu, which is situated on the banks of the Euphrates.  
My changeling mother conceived me, in secret she bore me.  
She set me in a blanket of rushes, with bitumen she sealed my lid.  
She cast me into the river which rose up over me.*

*The river bore me up and carried me to Akki, the drawer of water.*

*Akki, the drawer of water lifted me out as he dipped his water.*

*Akki, the drawer of water, took me as his son and reared me.*

According to the legend, his mother placed him in a pitch-covered basket in the Euphrates River. By chance a farmer drawing water to irrigate his field found the basket and raised the child as his own.

Sargon went on to become the cup bearer to the king of Kish and eventually overthrew the king and placed himself on the throne, taking for himself the name “Sargon.”

- *Sar* is Akkadian for “prince.”  
You will remember that Abraham’s wife was named “Sarah” and that this means “princess.”
- *Gon* is the Akkadian word for “bastard.”  
As in the Greek, so also in Akkadian, the “a” prefix negates the implication of the word.



Sargon the Great of Akkad

Sargon means “legitimate prince.” Why did he call himself this? Perhaps it is because he wasn’t. He was evidently a usurper who had taken the throne by force.

Over the next few years, Sargon conquered all of the cities of Mesopotamia marching southward to “wash his weapons in the Lower Sea” and then turning westward to the Mediterranean and capturing the silver mines of Tarsus and sending ships to Cyprus and Crete.

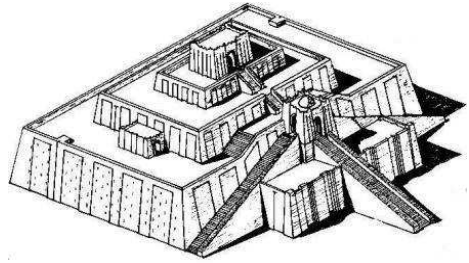
His empire continued to be ruled by his son and his grandson, but eventually fell prey to a group of invaders known as the Gutti who held sway over Mesopotamia from 2220 to 2120 B.C. This marked the Dark Ages of Mesopotamia and came to an end with the rise of the city of Ur.

6. The Third Dynasty of Ur.

This was to be the last Sumerian dynasty to rule in Mesopotamia. It would rule from 2100 to 2000 B.C. Under these kings, Sumer was restored to much of her former glory. All branches of the arts saw a period of renaissance as economic prosperity became the order of the day.

a. The Ziggurat.

The Ziggurat of Ur was a giant, semi-pyramidal structure of brick covering an area of 200 by 140 feet. It was composed of three terraced stages and crowned by a small shrine towering 90 feet above the city.



Although it looked something like the pyramids of Egypt, the purpose of the ziggurat was widely different. The pyramid was a dark, musty tomb for a dead pharaoh. The ziggurat was a sunbathed ladder to the gods, connecting heaven and earth.

This seems to have been what was in view in the Biblical account of the building of the Tower of Babel. Ziggurats were not unique to Ur. They were found throughout Mesopotamia. The original seems to have been the one described in the pages of the Bible.

*Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.*

*And it came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.*

*And 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.*

*And they said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad*

*over the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:1-4).*

The phrase *whose top will reach into heaven* can be translated, “its top unto the heavens” and have the sense, not of a means to get into the sky, but a temple which would align itself to the worship of celestial bodies. More than a mere astronomical observatory, it was a statement about man dealing with the heavens on his own terms.

The ziggurat was a man-made mountain in a land where the mountain was to their religion what the cross was to Christianity and what the west was to Egypt. It was a holy place; a place of worship.

b. The Law-code of Ur.

Ur developed a law code with four essential ingredients which would later carry over into the famous Code of Hammurabi.

- (1) Lex Talionis: This was the law of retaliation in kind. It was the idea expressed in the phrase, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”
- (2) Semi-private administration of justice: It was the job of the victim and his family and friends to bring the offender to justice. The court served only as a referee in the disputes. There was no police system to maintain public safety or security.
- (3) Inequality before the law: The law code divided people into three distinct classes.
  - Aristocrats
  - Commoners
  - Slaves

Penalties were graded according to the rank of both the victim and the offender. The killing of an aristocrat was considered a much more serious offense than the killing of a slave. Moreover, an aristocrat was punished more severely than a man of inferior caste would be for the same crime.

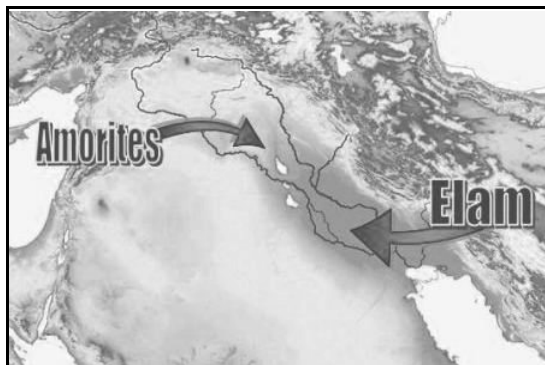


- (4) Distinction between accidental and intentional homicide: In the case of an accidental death, the offender had to pay a penalty to the family of the victim.

c. The Fall of Ur.

Near the close of the 21st century, a people known as the Amurru (Biblical Amorites) began to move into Mesopotamia from the northwest, conquering the cities of Babylon, Isin and Larsa. The armies of Sumer managed to hold them off for a time, but then the Elamite provinces in the east declared their independence.

Many of the provincial governors took this opportunity to revolt. Thus weakened, Ur fell to the assault of Elam and her king carried off into captivity.



Routes of invasion for the Amorites and Elamites

With the destruction of Ur, the dominance of the Sumerian people came to a close. But their culture lived on as it was adopted by the Assyrians in the north and the Amorites in the south. These and succeeding kingdoms adopted the Sumerian pantheon as well as their cuneiform methods of writing, adapting it to their own languages.

7. Sir Leonard Woolley (1880-1960).

Nearly everything that we know of Ur was discovered by Sir Leonard Woolley during his twelve year excavation of the site. He began excavating in 1922.

A few nights after Woolley set up camp, a group of six armed Arabs robbed the camp, killing one of Woolley's guards in the process. When the murder threatened to start a blood feud, the thieves turned themselves. Woolley's possessions were returned, and the thieves were put in jail for two years, after which Woolley hired them as

workers. Woolley's finds included:

- The ziggurat of Ur, the largest of all of the ziggurats of Mesopotamia.
- The Royal Cemetery. This was filled with gold artifacts and valuable jewelry, including rare blue gems. This was dated at 3400 B.C.
- Flood strata: Below the Royal Cemetery, Woolley discovered vast quantities of silt – evidence, he believed, of a great flood. He felt this was the flood from the days of Noah, albeit a local flood.

*“The total destruction of the human race is of course not involved, nor is even the total destruction of the inhabitants of the delta - thus some at least of the antediluvian cities survive into historic times - but enough damage could be done to make a landmark in history and to define an epoch.” (1965:32).*

- Sumerian king lists containing a total of 29 dynasties. The first 10 of these dynasties were reputedly prior to the flood and over a period of up to 456,000 years. Because some of these dynasties were prior to the flood, Woolley reasoned that the Sumerian civilization predated that disaster.

# THE PATRIARCHS

*“The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.” (St. Stephen; Acts 7:2).*

The first 11 chapters of Genesis are global in nature. Though we read of individuals like Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah, their actions and their narratives had global consequences which affected all of mankind. When we come to Genesis 12, there is a change. Though the person of Abraham will ultimately affect all of mankind, it is not immediately apparent as he is viewed within his circumstances. Because of this, the remaining chapters of Genesis are more personal in nature. Our perspective is not upon the ancient world, but upon one small family. At the same time, it is only as we widen our perspective to see the world in which they lived that we will come to have a greater appreciation of how God has moved in history to use this one family as a fulcrum on which to move the world.

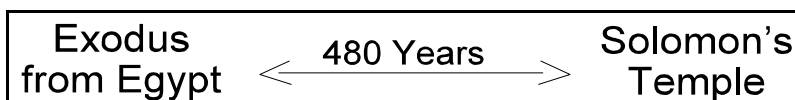
## DATING THE PATRIARCHS

It is possible to determine the approximate date of Abraham’s birth by examining certain chronological statements presented in the Scriptures.

1. From Solomon to the Exodus.

*Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 6:1).*

We are told here that from the exodus to the beginning of the construction of Solomon’s Temple was a period of 480 years.



With the help of archaeology and corresponding astronomical records, scholars have placed the building of Solomon's Temple at about 966 B.C. This would give us a date of 1446 B.C. for the Exodus.

However, there are some textual problems of which we should be aware. The Septuagint translation of this passage lists the length of time as 440 years between the exodus

Judges 11:26 mentions 300 years from the time that Israel had entered the land to the days of Jephthah.  
Acts 13:20 speaks of 450 years from the entrance into Egypt to the final conquest of Canaan.

and the building of the Temple (LXX - 3 Kings 5:17; in our English Bible this is 1 Kings 6:1). This would place the Exodus at 1406 B.C.

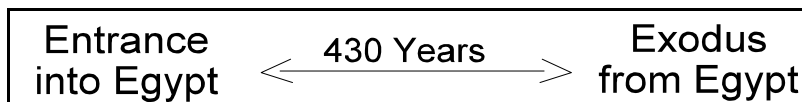
## 2. The Length of the Sojourn in Egypt.

The prophecy given to Abraham in Genesis 15:13 states that the Israelites would be enslaved and oppressed in Egypt for 400 years. This is repeated in Acts 7:6.

Exodus 12:40 specifically says that *the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years*. Galatians 3:17 repeats this period as Paul speaks of the time between the ratification of God's covenant and the giving of the Law.

- The additional 30 years could be the time that the Israelites were in Egypt before the beginning of any oppression.
- It could be that we are meant to understand the first number as being rounded off. For example, I am not considered incorrect if I say that it has been 500 years since Columbus discovered America, even though the number is slightly higher.

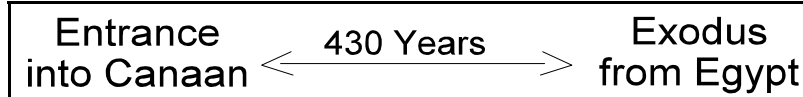
### Masorite Text



Once again, there is a divergent reading in the Greek Septuagint. The

Greek translation reads, “*And the sojourning of the children of Israel while they sojourned in the land of Egypt AND THE LAND OF CANAAN was four hundred and thirty years*” (Exodus 12:40, LXX).

**Septuagint Text**



The Septuagint reading makes for a much shorter period in Egypt while compressing both the period of the Patriarchs in Canaan as well as the sojourn in Egypt into a period of 40 years.

Josephus follows the Septuagint reading in his chronology of Jewish history.

*They left Egypt in the month Xanthicus, on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt. (Antiquities 2:15:2).*

Both the prophecy of Abraham (Genesis 15:13) as well as the words of Stephen (Acts 7:6) support the Masorite reading. In addition to these, there is also the statement of Paul in Galatians 3:17.

The Masoretic Text is that group of Old Testament texts which were passed down through the ministry of the Masorets, a group of Jewish scribes. This has been the traditionally accepted text of the Scriptures. The Dead Sea Scrolls suggest that there may have been an early alternate reading to some of these passage.

*Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.*

*What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. (Galatians 3:16-17).*

At first glance, Paul seems to be saying that the period between the giving of the promise to Abraham and the exodus from Egypt was 430 years.

However, we need not read this into his testimony. He is speaking of the ratification of the covenant. When was the covenant ratified?

Was it when Abraham first entered the land in Genesis 12?

Was it when the promises were given and the animals cut in two in Genesis 15?

Was it when the seal of circumcision was given in Genesis 17?

Was it when the Lord appeared to Isaac and confirmed him as the heir of the promise in Genesis 26?

Was it when Jacob saw the vision of the ladder reaching up to heaven and was given the promise for him and his descendants in Genesis 28?

Was it when Jacob passed on the promises of God to his descendants in Genesis 49?

There is a sense in which each of these instances was a ratification of the covenant. And there is also a final instance recorded in Genesis when Joseph passed on the promises of God to the next generation (Genesis 50).

The Talmud lists a total of seventeen cycles of the Year of Jubilee from the entrance of the Israelites into the land under Joshua until in Jubilee that took place 14 years after the destruction of Jerusalem that took place at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (Arakin 12b). That helps to place the date of the Exodus to around 1446-1445 B.C.

### 3. The Days of the Patriarch.

The following passages assist us in developing a chronology of the period from Egypt to the Patriarchs.

- Presuming a 1446 date for the exodus and adding 430 years, this would place the entrance into Egypt at 1876 B.C.
- Jacob was 130 years old when his family entered Egypt (Genesis 47:9). This would make the date of his birth 2006 B.C.

- Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob and Esau were born (Genesis 25:26). This would make the date of Isaac's birth 2066 B.C.
- Abraham was 100 years old at the birth of Isaac (Genesis 21:5). This would put Abraham's birth at around 2166 B.C.

2166 B.C. -	Birth of Abraham
2091 B.C. -	Abraham leaves Haran to enter Canaan
2066 B.C. -	Birth of Isaac.
2006 B.C. -	Birth of Jacob and Esau
1876 B.C. -	Israel enters Egypt
1446 B.C. -	The Exodus from Egypt

We are not told how old Abraham was when he and his family left Ur of the Chaldees, but in Genesis 12:4 we find that he was 75 years old when he departed from Haran to enter Canaan. This would have taken place in 2091 B.C. - in the days of the Third Dynasty of Ur.

## UR OF THE CHALDEES

*Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abraham, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot.*

*And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. (Genesis 11:27-28).*

Sir Leonard Woolley spent from 1922 to 1934 excavating the city of Ur. He found an ancient metropolis numbering 34,000 people in the inner district and as many as a quarter of a million in the outlying districts.

### 1. The Political Situation in the Days of Abraham.

The Gutti were ruling over Mesopotamia when Abram was born in 2166 B.C. This was the darkest era of history for Sumer. It was during his lifetime that the Sumerians and the Akkadians sought to throw off the yoke of their Gutian oppressors. It is even possible that Abram fought in the Sumerian army against the Gutti.

2. The Third Dynasty of Ur.

Once again independent, Ur experienced a renaissance in art and culture. It was in the midst of this great economic prosperity that the Lord came to Abram and commanded him to leave his home in Ur and to travel to a faraway land.

Abram was not called out of a country that was on the verge of destruction, but from one that was at its very peak of prosperity.

3. Social Conditions in Ur.

Ur contained a number of schools where students were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. They learned to write in Sumerian cuneiform, pressing their wedge-shaped markers into the lumps of soft clay.

The religion of Ur involved the entire pantheon of Sumer. The city itself was home to the patron god Nanna, the moon god. Abram and his family originally participated in this pagan worship.

*“From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.” (Joshua 24:2b).*

Even the name Abram reflects his pagan origins. It means “exalted father,” or “father of high places.” It is possibly a reference to the regular worship atop the Ziggurat of Ur.

How did Abram and his family move from polytheism to the worship of the Lord? We do not know. At some time and in some way, the Lord revealed Himself to Abram.

4. A Northern Location for Ur?

Several problems arise in the identification of Southern Ur as the city of Abram's birthplace.

Southern Ur was not associated with the Chaldeans until the 10th century B.C. It is possible that the mention of the Chaldeans in our Genesis text is a scribal insertion to assist us in determining the



location of Ur (it would be like speaking of the Ancient Mayans of Mexico).

The Septuagint reading of Genesis 11:31 does not say that Abram came from Ur.

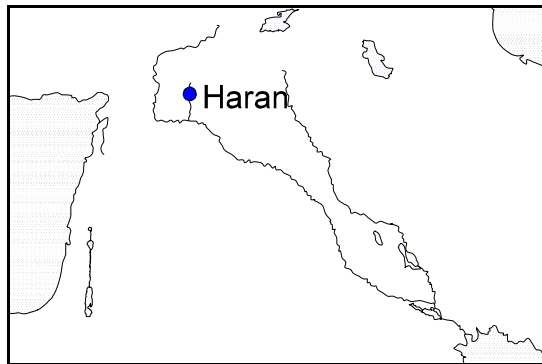
Instead of “*they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans...*” the Greek translation reads “*led them out of the land of the Chaldeans...*”

The Hebrew for Chaldea is *kasdim*.

Furthermore, when Abraham was going to send for a wife for his son Isaac, he gave his servant the following instructions:

*“But you shall go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” (Genesis 24:4).*

The phrase translated “my country” is the same term that elsewhere is translated “my land.” This was not just the people of Abraham. This was also his land. Where did the servant go? He went to Haran.



- Finds at Ugarit suggest that there was a city in Northern Mesopotamia also known as Ur.
- This area of Northern Mesopotamia is where the original Chaldeans are said to have come from.
- An examination of the Nuzi Tablets indicate that the Patriarchs reflect more of northern Mesopotamian culture than that of the Sumerians.

Both the southern and northern locations would qualify as “the land beyond the River.”

## ABRAHAM

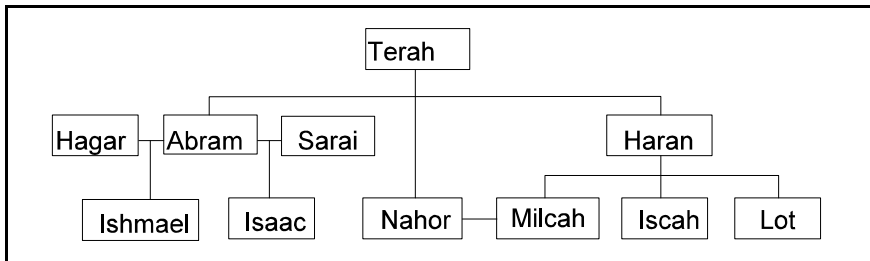
Abram, or as he is later called, Abraham, is seen in history as the father of both the Jews and the Arab nations. Judaism, Christianity and Islam hold him up as a spiritual leader.

### 1. The Family of Abram.

*And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.*

*And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milah and Iscah. (Genesis 11:28-29).*

The laws of incest in that day were not nearly so strict as they are today. It was considered commonplace for an uncle to marry his niece. The family tree of Abram looks like this.



Terah, the patriarch of the family, was involved in the initial move from Ur. We have already mentioned that Abram was an idol - worshiper before leaving Ur. There is no indication that Abram's family ever stopped worshiping these pagan gods.

In the case of Laban, the nephew of Abram and the uncle of Jacob, the most that we can say is that he considered Yahweh to be one of many tribal gods. Only in Abram do we find a man who worshiped Yahweh exclusively.

### 3. Haran.

*And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's*

*wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.*

*And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran." (Genesis 11:31-32).*

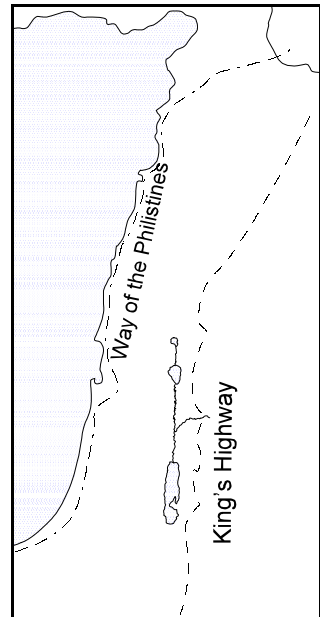
Haran was at the crossroads of the main highways from Mesopotamia to the west. Indeed, the name Haran means "crossroads." The city sits at the crossroads of three different continents. It is a central hub with spokes leading out to Europe, Asia and Africa. From Haran, a traveler desiring to go down into Canaan can take two different roads.

a. The King's Highway.

This road ran down through Damascus. From there, its course ran along the west bank of the Jordan River Valley, past the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and down into the Sinai Desert, which it reached Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba.

b. The Way of the Philistines.

This route ran along the Mediterranean Sea, past the Phoenician cities of Sidon and Byblos, along the Plains of Sharon and the cities of the Philistines, and then into Egypt.



The central location of Haran made it a major trading city. It was also a center of worship of Nanna, the moon god which was also worshiped at Ur.

## THE LAND OF CANAAN

*And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.*

(Genesis 12:5).

If Haran is the hub of the wheel, then Canaan is one of the major spokes of that wheel. The land of Canaan acts as a narrow land-bridge between Mesopotamia and the continent of Africa.

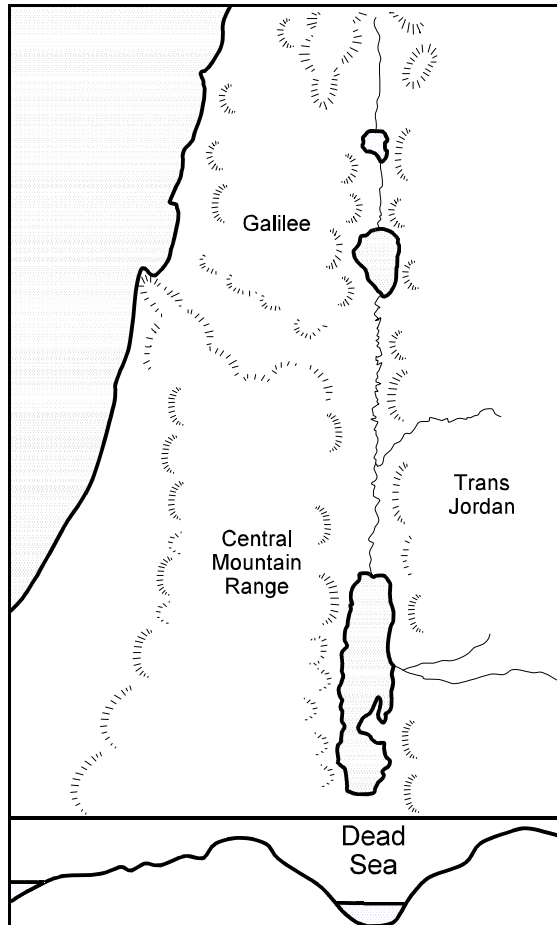
This is a relatively small area of land, no larger in area than Lake Erie or the state of Maryland. The name Palestine takes its name from the ancient name Peleset, meaning “land of the Philistines.”

1. The Topography of Canaan.

Canaan is one of the most diverse lands in the world. Within its small area, one can find snow-capped mountains, fertile plains, steaming deserts and even forests. It is home both to sparkling waterways as well as the most desolate body of water in the world. As one moves from west to east, there are four distinct regions encountered.

a. The Coastal Plain.

The coastline of Canaan is devoid of any natural harbors from Tyre all the way down to Egypt. The plain itself is generally low, fertile and open. It is broken only once where the Mount Carmel Promontory juts out into the



Mediterranean.

b. The Central Mountain Range.

A long ridge of mountains run parallel to the Coastal Plain from the Mountains of Lebanon all the way down to the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. The lowest point of this ridge is 1500 feet and many of its segments rise to twice that height.

This Central Spine is a natural impediment to east-west travel. At some places it consists of up to five parallel ridges, each separated by deep valleys. This Mountain Range is broken only once by the long Valley of Jezreel, also known by the more popular name of Armageddon.

c. The Jordan River Valley.

This valley is a part of the Afro-Arabian Rift Valley, one of the longest and the deepest fissures in the world, following a geological fault line from the Amanus Mountains of southeastern Turkey through Syria, Lebanon and Israel, down the Gulf of Aqaba and then running the entire length of the Red Sea to Ethiopia and then continuing southward to become a part of the Great African Rift Valley.

The Jordan River finds its major source in the melting snows of Mount Hermon which towers 9,200 feet above sea level. Hundreds of small streams cascade down to flow into Lake Hula. In Abram's day, Lake Hula was a shallow marsh. Since the formation of the nation of Israel in 1948, the lake has been drained for farmland. This has created an ecological imbalance in the Sea of Galilee. The swamp used to act as a natural filter, straining out any impurities from the waters which flowed southward into the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee rests in the crater of an extinct volcano which, in ages past, spewed out its lava over the Golan Heights to the east. The Sea is 600 feet below sea level and is surrounded on all sides by steep hills.

From the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River runs south down the

sunken rift. This narrow valley used to be a fertile forest full of wildlife, including lions and boar.

The name Jordan derives from a verb meaning “to descend.” It flows downhill in its long, meandering course until it reached the Dead Sea.

The shore of the Dead Sea is the lowest point on the surface of the earth, lying 1300 feet below sea level. The salt level of this sea is six times that of the ocean and, as a result, no fish can live in its waters.

d. The Transjordan Plateau.

Rising up sharply from the Jordan Valley is a high, fertile tableland between 30 to 80 miles in width and stretching from Damascus to the Gulf of Aqaba. The northern regions of this tableland are well-watered and fertile. To the east of this plateau, the land gives way to the impassible Desert of Arabia.

The Arabian desert was not nearly so impassible in antiquity as it is today. Several trade routes dissected its breadth.
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2. The Climate of Canaan.

In Egypt, the chief deities were the sun and the Nile River. The most important deity of the Canaanites was Baal, the storm god of wind and rain.

It never needed to rain in Egypt or Mesopotamia, since their river systems were fed by mountains hundreds of miles away. Canaan, on the other hand, had no great rivers and depended heavily upon the regular rainfall to feed the small mountain streams which irrigated the land. The chief deity of the Canaanites was Baal, the god of rain and thunder.

The “Early Rains” begin in October and the rainy season continues through until the “Latter Rains” of April and May. The heaviest rainfall comes during the winter months. There is not a drop of rain from June to September.

The topography of the country is broken enough to provide some striking local variations in temperature. In summer along the Coastal Plains, the winds tend to hold down temperatures from reaching oppressive levels. Further inland, where the wind has lost its affect, the temperatures can rise to stifling degrees.

In the winter months along the Coastal Plain the climate is mild and frost is virtually unknown, due to the incoming wind of the Mediterranean Sea. As one travels up into the mountains, temperatures decrease markedly with height. The winter months in the mountain region produce a long-lying snow cover.

## **ABRAHAM IN CANAAN**

As Abraham first entered the land of Canaan, he traveled down the Central Mountain Ridge to the site of the ancient town of Shechem.

*And Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land." (Genesis 12:6).*

The town of Shechem would later be built in the pass that runs between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It would be on this site that Jesus would later hold an afternoon discussion with a woman by the well.

When the Scriptures says that *the Canaanite was then in the land*, it is a reminder that the land of Canaan was not some uninhabited wilderness. It was a land of cities and towns, of merchants and farmers and shepherds.

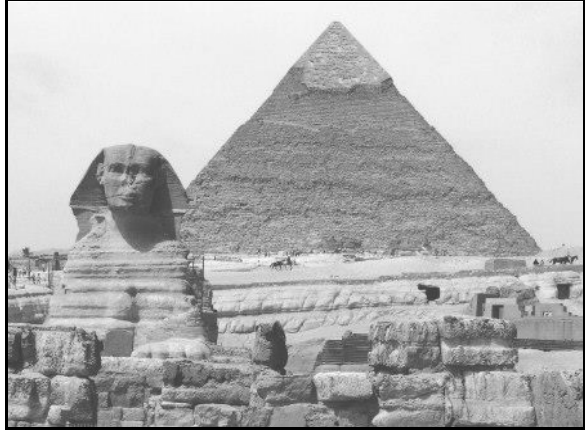
In Genesis 9 a curse was placed upon the descendants of Canaan. Now we see a promise that Abraham and his descendants would inherit their land.
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Abraham came into this land as a nomadic shepherd-merchant. He did not take up residence in any of the Canaanite cities, but remained a pilgrim and a nomad. This led to some seasonal migrations, especially in times of famine. One such famine took place soon after he had come into the land and resulted in a sojourn in Egypt.

## ABRAHAM IN EGYPT

*Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. (Genesis 12:10).*

Upon finding a famine in the land of Canaan, Abraham moved his family south to Egypt. The pyramids and the Great Sphinx were already hundreds of years old as Abraham entered Egypt.



This was the First Intermediate Period of Egypt's history. It was a time of disunity as Egypt was broken up into several small feudal kingdoms, each attempting to gain power over its neighbor. During this period, it was not uncommon for foreigners to be permitted entrance into the country.

While Abraham is in Egypt, he falls into sin. Fearful of his life, he plots with his wife, Sarai, to pretend that she is his sister.

The reason for this deception is understood when we examine an Egyptian papyrus which records a pharaoh murdering the husband of a beautiful woman so that he could marry her.

## SODOM & GOMORRAH

Upon returning to Canaan, Abraham has a falling out with his nephew, Lot. They go their separate ways and Lot moves down to the southern part of the Jordan Valley.

*And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere - this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah - like the garden of*



*the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. (Genesis 13:10).*

The implication of this and other passages of the Bible is that the area of the Dead Sea was not the desolate wasteland that it is today. In that day, it was a fertile land.

Genesis 14 records the military campaign of an alliance of kings from the east.

- a. Amraphel, king of Shinar.

Shinar was the general term for Mesopotamia. This may have been an Akkadian king.

- b. Arioch, king of Ellasar: Ellasar was another name of Larsa, a Sumerian city to the east of Ur.
- c. Chedorlaomer, king of Elam: The Elamites were located to the east of Sumer and were one of the most powerful countries in the world at this time.
- d. Tidal, king of Goiim: “Goyim” is the Hebrew word for “nations.” Tidal, on the other hand, is a Hittite name and might reflect an early Hittite participation in this alliance.

A coalition of these kings from the east invaded Canaan, conquering the cities of the Jordan Valley, and taking Abraham's nephew, Lot, in the process.

Genesis 14:14 says that the pursuit went “as far as Dan.” Considering that Dan initially settled in the south and did not move to northern Palestine until the days of the Judges, this is evidently the modernized addition of a later scribe (like changing “New Amsterdam” to “New York”).

Abraham gathered his own alliance of Canaanite chieftains and set out in pursuit, catching the invaders in a pincer movement in what is the first night attack recorded in history. Lot was rescued along with the spoils of the kings of the Jordan Valley.

However, this served as only a temporary respite for the cities of the plain. Sodom was the major city of the Jordan Valley in the days of Abraham. It was a beautiful, well-watered area. It had been for this reason that Lot had chosen to live there.

The Bible records that Lord destroyed both these cities and everything else in the Valley.

*Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, 25 and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground. (Genesis 19:24-25).*

The Dead Sea today in the lowest spot on the face of the earth. The north part of the Sea is more than 1300 feet below sea level. Today the southern part has dried up completely. Scholars generally place the location of Sodom and Gomorrah in what is today this shallow, southern part of the Dead Sea.

I am not certain, but I have sometimes wondered if it is possible that these cities originally lay in what today is the northern portion of the Dead Sea.

1. The evidence from Scripture.

The Bible speaks of the Jordan Valley, but seems to carefully avoid describing the Dead Sea as a geographical body in Abraham's day.

Instead, it speaks of “the valley of Siddim which is the Salt Sea” as being the location of the battle with the eastern alliance (Genesis 14:3).

2. The evidence from Archaeology.

A Phoenician inscription had this to say about the destruction of the “Vale of Sidimus.”

*The Vale of Sidimus sank and became a lake, always evaporating and containing no fish, a symbol of vengeance and of death for the transgressor. (Attributed to Sanchuniathon, prior to the Trojan War).*

This indicates that there was a time when the Dead Sea was not there and when the Jordan Valley was unbroken.

3. The evidence from Geology.

Genesis 14:10 says that the valley was full of “tar pits.” Petroleum

and asphalt deposits still exist around the Dead Sea today. This is a burnt-out region where nothing grows.

We have already mentioned that this area holds a massive fault zone. Throughout its history, it has been the scene of many severe earthquakes. It is possible that an earthquake combined with the explosive petroleum and asphalt deposits to cause a great explosion of “brimstone and fire.”

## **OTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES FROM ABRAHAM’S DAY**

### **1. Lot’s Door.**

In Genesis 19:6, 9-10 we find several mentions of the door to Lot’s house in Sodom. It is described in terms of having been shut to keep out the men of Sodom.

Houses within cities did not always have doors in antiquity. A door would interfere with any cool breeze, making the heat of the land intolerable. Archaeologists have noted that there are different styles of doors for differing eras:

Middle Bronze (2200-1600 B.C.)	Strong, sturdy wooden doors	No strong, centralized government
Early Iron II (800-600 B.C.)	Doorways consisted of archways and curtains	Kings of Judah and Israel provided centralized government

The smaller the police force, the greater the need for a stout wooden door.

### **2. Abraham’s Purchase of a Tomb.**

In Genesis 23:16 we read that Abraham paid 400 shekels of silver.

While today a shekel is a form of currency, in that day it was a weight designation. We think in terms of pounds or kilograms, they weighed in terms of shekels. It was not until around 700 B.C. that money began to be coined.

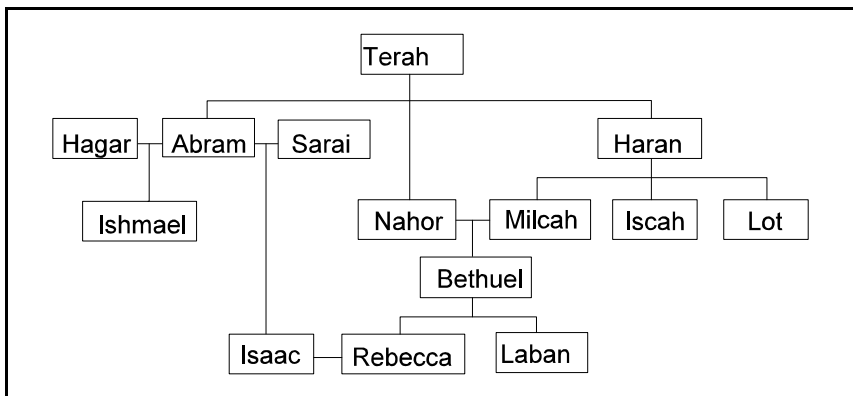
## ISAAC

The name Isaac means “laughter.” It points to the laughter of Sarah when she first was given the promise of a son. Hers was the laughter of unbelief. But it was God who had the last laugh.

### 1. Quest for a Bride.

When it came time for Isaac to marry, Abraham sent his servant back to the city of Haran to find a wife from his own kindred. Abraham’s brother, Nahor, had continued to live here after Abraham’s departure. Rebekah, the sister of Laban was chosen to be Isaac's bride. Why was Abraham so insistent that his son’s wife be from his kinsmen and not from the Canaanites?

I want to suggest that it was because of the peculiar promise of a seed that God had given to Abraham. For Isaac to intermarry with the Canaanites would be for him to be quickly amalgamated into their culture and people, instead of becoming the beginning of a separate and distinct nation of people.



### 2. In the Land of the Philistines.

When famine came over the land of Canaan, Isaac moved down into

the south coastal plain. This area was home to a settlement of non-Semitic people known as the Philistines.

This brings up a problem. The Philistines are known to us through archaeological digs. They did not enter Canaan until much later. During the days of Rameses III, they were a part of the “Sea Peoples” who attempted to invade Egypt. They were fought to a standstill and, as a result, were permitted to settle along the coast of what is today known as the Gaza Strip. But there were no Philistines as we know them in Isaac’s day.

The original inhabitants of this area started as coastal trading colonies of the Minoan Civilization. Indeed, there are several times in the Scriptures that the Philistines are referred to as “Cherethites” or “Cretans” (1 Samuel 30:14; Ezekiel 25:16; Zephaniah 2:5). It was the later Sea Peoples who came in and amalgamated this group into their own and who adopted the same name.

Isaac’s life among the Philistines was difficult and trying at times. The Bible records several conflicts that arose over water-rights.

Throughout these times, Isaac remained faithful to the Lord and saw an increasing prosperity.

## **JACOB**

The story of Jacob is, on the one hand, a story of a conniving scoundrel, and on the other hand, the story of God’s chosen one.

### **1. Jacob & Esau.**

Isaac’s two sons by Rebekah were twins. The Bible tells us that these two brothers began their struggle in the womb. It was a struggle that was to continue through their descendants for two thousand years.

#### **a. Esau.**

Even though they were twins, it was Esau who was born first. He grew up to be a hunter, an outdoorsman. From his descendants would come the Edomites.

b. Jacob.

When the two brothers were born, the second-born son was holding onto the heel of the first-born. This was considered to be a significant omen and this child was named Jacob, meaning “heel-grabber.” This was an idiom for a con-artist. We have a similar idiom today when we speak of pulling someone’s leg.

If Esau was a hunter and an outdoorsman, then Jacob was a “mamma’s boy.” Jacob’s role as a heel-grabber is seen in his bargaining away the birthright from his older brother and then stealing his father’s blessing at the urging of his mother. The result of this deception was that Jacob was forced to leave his home, fleeing from the wrath of Esau, never to see his beloved mother again.

Nuzi Tablets (excavated in 1925-31) indicate that oral blessings & death-bed wills were not only legal & binding, but also irrevocable.

On the way to Haran, Jacob stops for the night at a place called Luz. It is here that he has a vision of a ladder reaching to heaven.

*And he came to a certain place, and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place.*

*And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven: and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. (Genesis 28:11-12).*

This picture of the angels of God ascending and descending is found in only one other place in the Bible. It is John 1:51 when Jesus speaks to Nathanael.

*And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:51).*

In the words of Jesus, there is no mention of the ladder. The angels are ascending and descending on the Son of Man. He IS the ladder. Thus, if the ladder represents God’s presence upon earth, then Jesus

is seen as the One who is “God with us.”

God goes on to pass on his covenant with Jacob. This is the same covenant which he made with Abraham and Isaac.

<b>Abraham</b>	<b>Isaac</b>	<b>Jacob</b>
"I am God Almighty" (Gen 17:1).	"I am the God of your father Abraham" (Gen 26:24).	"I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac" (Gen 28:13).
"For all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever" (Gene 13:15).	"For to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands" (Gen 26:3).	"The land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants" (Gen 28:13).
"And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth" (Gen 13:16).	"And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven" (Gen 26:4).	"Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth" (Gen 28:14).
"And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3).	"And by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 26:4).	"And in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen 28:14).
"Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you" (Gen 15:1).	"Do not fear, for I am with you" (Gen 26:24).	"And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go" Gen 28:15).

However, there are also some differences. Isaac had been told by God to stay in the land (Genesis 26:2). Jacob, on the other hand, is told that the Lord will be with him and shall accompany him on his extended journey out of the land and that ultimately he shall be brought back to the land of promise.

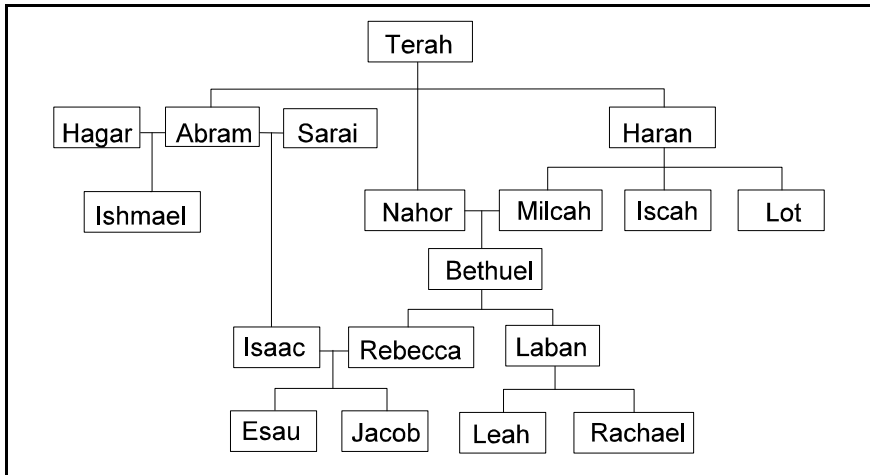
At the end of the night, Jacob names the place *Beth-el*, “House of God.”

## 2. Jacob in Haran.

Jacob found temporary refuge with his uncle Lagan in Haran.

Rebekah and Laban were brother and sister - they each engaged in deception.

This was a time when Jacob the con-artist was conned himself as he sought to marry Rachel and was given her sister Leah instead. He finally ended up marrying both of Lagan's daughters.



Jacob worked for Laban for 21 years. During the last seven years, Jacob managed to maneuver Laban out of a great deal of his wealth. Following this, Jacob left Haran with his family and possessions and returned to Canaan. In the process, Rachel had stolen her father's household gods.

These gods had more than just a religious significance. According to the Nuzi Tablets, they were also used to establish the family inheritance. A son-in-law who possessed his father-in-law's images could go to court and claim his father-in-law's estate.

Laban followed Jacob and even searched his caravan, but was unable to find them. They parted on semi-cordial terms, making a covenant in which each party agreed to stay in his own land.

### 3. Jacob in Canaan.

Returning to Canaan, Jacob was intercepted by Esau at the Jabbok River. The name "Jabbok" means "to wrestle." It was here that Jacob wrestled with an angel.

The two brothers made their peace together and Jacob settled in the area of central Canaan. The descendants of Esau would eventually become known as the "Edomites" and would settle in the arid lands to the south of the Dead Sea.



By this time, Jacob had sired a rather large family by his two wives and their handmaidens.

<b>MOTHER</b>	<b>SON</b>	<b>Meaning of Name</b>
Leah	Reuben	"Behold, a Son"
	Simeon	"Hearing"
	Levi	"Attachment"
	Judah	"Praise"
Bilhah (Rachel's)	Dan	"Judgment"
	Naphtali	"Wrestle"
Zilpah (Leah's)	Gad	"Good Fortune"
	Ashur	"Happy"
Leah	Issachar	"Reward"
	Zebulun	"Abode"
Rachel	Joseph	"He adds"
	Benjamin	"Son of the right hand"

For the most part, these sons are described as jealous, self-seeking, hateful and murderous. This is a picture of the destructive effects of polygamy. The exception to the lack was Joseph.

## THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

The Joseph narrative begins with an account of the favoritism Jacob showed for the firstborn son of his beloved Rachel and the hatred Joseph received from his older brothers. They plot to murder him and instead sell him into slavery.

Having thus introduced the Joseph narrative, the writer of Genesis turns in chapter 38 to tell a story of Judah and to his affair with his daughter-in-law which led to the birth of Perez and Zerah. While the story follows an overall chronological sequence, it seems that the purpose for the insertion of the story at this point in the narrative is to set forth a contrast between Joseph and Judah. While Joseph is the favored son of Jacob, it will be Judah who will eventually receive the leadership of the Israelites.

<b>Judah</b>	<b>Joseph</b>
Went to a foreigner of his own will.	Taken to Egypt against his will.
Sexual immorality: went in to his daughter-in-law (38:12-18).	Sexual morality: resisted seduction (39:6-12).
Left his seal & his cord.	Left his garment.
Accuser (38:24).	Falsely accused (39:13-20).
Judgment of God (38:6-10).	Blessing of God (39:20-23).
True accusation of woman (28:25).	False accusation of woman (39:13-20).

Moses is contrasting the moral character of Judah as the head of his tribe with the moral character of Joseph as the head of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Why is this important for the Israelites in the Wilderness to know? Because it explains why Joseph's tribes receive a double portion, both here in the Wilderness and when they enter the promised land.

1915 B.C. - Birth of Joseph.  
1898 B.C. - Joseph sold into Egypt.  
1885 B.C. - Joseph exalted.  
1876 B.C. - Israel enters Egypt.  
1446 B.C. - The Exodus.

Jacob demonstrated that Joseph was his favorite son and heir to the double-portion inheritance by awarding him a "coat with sleeves." This was the sign of one who was to be the leader of the clan.

These chapters serve as a warning to the rest of Israel not to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors as they see Joseph's tribes receive the double portion.

1. Sold into Egypt.

The hatred of the brothers had its climax in a murderous plot which ended only when Joseph had been

Jacob had deceived his father with a goatskin. His sons deceived him with a robe dipped in goat's blood.

sold to some passing slavers. Joseph found himself being sold to an official of Egypt.

*Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard. (Genesis 37:36).*

The word translated “officer is *seriys* and is usually translated “eunuch.” The problem with this is that eunuchs were not married men and Potiphar clearly had a wife. However, *seriys* seems to be an Akkadian loan-word which went through a change of meaning between the first and second millennia. In the 2nd millennia is described a court official. By the 1st millennia it had come to mean a eunuch.

## 2. Egypt in the Days of Joseph.

Joseph entered Egypt in the days of the Middle Kingdom. It is always problematic to attach a specific pharaoh to the Biblical account unless the Scriptures actually give the name of the pharaoh, but it may have been Pharaoh Amenemhat II who was upon the throne of both Upper and Lower Egypt at this time.

The pyramids were already ancient monuments when Joseph came to Egypt.

Egypt during this period was ruled by a strong, centralized government. The pharaohs of this period had their power held somewhat in check by the individual governors. Mines in the Sinai and in Ethiopia brought precious metals and ivory to the courts of the pharaoh and a line of military fortresses were established around the borders of Egypt to protect from outside invaders.

Joseph's coat had gotten him into slavery in Egypt in the first place. Now it is again his garment which gets him into trouble.

Just prior to Joseph entering Egypt, the capital was moved from Thebes to Ith-tawi, near the Delta.

## 3. Joseph's Imprisonment.

For a time, Joseph prospered in the house of Potiphar. This time of

prosperity was brought to a close in the attempted seduction by Potiphar's wife. When Joseph rebuffed her, she falsely accused him of attempted rape.

The account of Joseph and Potiphar's wife has an interesting parallel in the Egyptian Tale of the Two Brothers, found in an eleventh century papyrus. The story recounts two brothers, Anubis and Bata. The wife of Anubis attempts to seduce Bata, but he refuses her advances, so she makes a false accusation against him. Anubis hears and believes the accusation and sets out to kill his brother and Bata is forced to flee. The brothers finally meet and Bata convinces his brother of his innocence so that Anubis returns home and executes his wife. Meanwhile, Bata marries a woman who is so beautiful that she attracts the attention of the Pharaoh and he has Bata killed so that he can take her for himself. Anubis finds the heart of his murdered brother and brings him back to life. Bata takes the shape of a bull and confronts his wife, but she has him killed. His blood waters two trees and when he becomes the tree and again confronts his wife, she has it chopped down. A splinter from the chopping flies into her eye and she becomes pregnant, giving birth to a new incarnation of Bata, who ultimately grows into a man and becomes the new pharaoh.

One need not look too far to see elements, not only of the Joseph-Potiphar narrative, but also of the account of Abraham, Sarah, and the Pharaoh as found in Genesis 12. The point can be made to show that these sorts of activities were not unknown in Egypt. At the same time, one cannot help but wonder whether these mythological stories were not derived from the real life events of Abraham and Joseph.

Joseph was taken and thrown into the royal prison where political prisoners were held. It was there that he befriended the pharaoh's butler. This friendship, along with a God-given gift of interpreting dreams, would result in Joseph's promotion to the Court of Pharaoh.

#### 4. Joseph's Exaltation.

In a single day, Joseph found himself propelled up to the position of Viceroy over all Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh. Joseph's economic plan called for him to store up grain and food supplies for a coming time of famine. When that time came, Joseph was able to heighten the Pharaoh's political hold over the nobility and the land-

owners of Egypt by allowing the people to sell all of their lands to him in return for food.

*So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. Thus the land became Pharaoh's.*

*And as for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other.*

*Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not sell their land. (Genesis 47:20-22).*

From this time on, Egypt became a virtual feudal state with the Pharaoh owning the land and allowing the people to work it and keep 80% of the profit.

5. Israel's Entrance into Egypt.

After several dramatic encounters with his brothers, Joseph invited the entire clan to move into Egypt.

The immediate reason for Israel's entrance into Egypt was because of the famine; but there were some underlying reasons. God's plan and purpose for Israel was to maintain a pure people, set apart for the purpose of loving and serving Yahweh as their God, eventually spreading His name throughout all the earth.

When we examine the Patriarchs with this concept in mind, we are able to note a startling contrast among them.

a. Altars & Worship.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob each would move to a new place within the land and build an altar there, proclaiming the name of the Lord.

b. A Sense of Purpose.

Each of these Patriarchs had a sense of purpose, a sense of destiny because of the promises that God had given. The altars were

symbolic of that purpose in the land.

c. Unity.

Because of that distinctive purpose, they also had a sense of unity that there would be no division between the worshipers of Yahweh. Thus, when strife arose between the servants of Abraham and the servants of Lot, a peaceful means was found to co-exist.

d. Racial & Religious Purity.

Their sense of unity led them to a realization of the need for separation from the Canaanites in whose midst they were dwelling.

This unity was a part of the purpose of God that they would be a distinct and separate people from the nations around them.

Thus, when it came time for Isaac to take a wife, Abraham took great pains to make certain that it would not be a Canaanite woman.

*And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of the household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh. <sup>3</sup> And I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that **you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites**, among whom I live." (Genesis 24:2-3).*

In the same way, Jacob was sent to Haran with the express purpose of finding a wife from his own people.

*So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. <sup>2</sup> Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Lagan your mother's brother." (Genesis 28:1-2).*

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob each followed these principles. However, when you come to the sons of Israel, you find a very big generation gap.

They built no altars and are never said to proclaim the name of Yahweh. They show no sense of purpose. They seem only interested in filling their own fleshly desires. They have absolutely no concern for the unity among their family. Quite the contrary, they are motivated by jealousy and strife. This is best demonstrated when they sell their own brother into slavery. They recognize no need for separation from the Canaanites. Instead, we see them intermarrying with the people of Canaan and going off to live with them. This manifests itself in a number of ways.

- (1) Lack of chastity in Dinah.
- (2) Simeon & Levi murder the population of an entire city.
- (3) Reuben sleeps with his father's concubine.
- (4) Judah has a child by his own daughter-in-law.

Only in Joseph do we find anyone within that generation who demonstrates a sense of unity and purpose and faith.

Therefore, God moves in history to bring the Israelites out of Canaan and into Egypt. Why Egypt? Aside from the obvious fact that Egypt was the breadbasket of the world and could support and feed the growing embryo of the nation that would one day be Israel, there was a very significant reason for Egypt to be the host-mother of Israel.

The Canaanites followed a policy of integration. They were constantly seeking to intermarry and form family alliances with those around them (Genesis 19:14, 26:10; 26:34; 27:46; 34:8-103). This would have resulted in the breakdown and the absorption of the Jewish nation before it had even begun.

The Egyptians, on the other hand, were extremely strict segregationists (Genesis 43:32; 46:34). Thus in the Joseph narrative when Joseph has his brothers eat in his presence, they

are actually seated at a separate table.

Thus the Israelites in Egypt would have no choice but to remain a pure and undefiled and separated nation as God prepared them in Egypt. Four hundred years later, God would lead them out of Egypt and into the land that He had prepared for them.

*All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13).*



# EGYPT - THE LAND OF THE NILE

*Hail to you, O Nile, sprung from the earth,  
Come to nourish Egypt,  
Food-provider,  
Bounty-maker,  
Who creates all that is good. (Ancient Hymn).*

Egypt is a land of shifting desert sands, a land of giant pyramids and a place of great rulers from the past. It is the land of the Nile. The Hebrew term for Egypt was Mizraim, a form of which is still used today in the Arabic name for Egypt, *Misr*. It is thought by some that the name is taken from the Hebrew word *tzar*, meaning “narrow” or “tight.” The ancient Egyptian name for their country was *Kemet*, or “black land.”

## GEOGRAPHY OF EGYPT

If it can be said that nature plays favorites, then Egypt was her favorite child. There are several geographical features which combine to make this a unique land.

### 1. An Isolated Land.

Ancient Egypt was isolated from the rest of the world by its topography. To the west was a vast desert. To the north was the Mediterranean. To the east was the Red Sea. There were only two points of entry into Egypt aside from sea routes.

#### a. The south.

The Nubians to the south of Egypt often proved to be troublesome, but they were rarely a match for the more advanced military of Egypt.



b. The Northeast.

Most of the invaders who came against Egypt moved down through Palestine and then across the northern section of the Sinai Peninsula. To counter this threat, the Egyptians built a line of fortresses along the western edge of the Sinai. While copper mines have been located in the Sinai that supplied copper to Egypt, Baines and Malek point out that “these were probably worked by the local population under Egyptian control; there is no evidence that the Egyptians themselves mined copper anywhere in the Sinai” (1985:19).

2. The Nile River.

The Nile is the longest river in the world. It flows from three branches: The Blue Nile, the White Nile and the Atbara. They join far south of Egypt to become a single river a mile wide.

The Nile was the lifeline of Egypt. It fashioned the nation’s economy, determined its political structure, and molded the values it chose to live by.

Just as the surrounding deserts and oceans gave Egypt security, so the Nile gave Egypt prosperity. The Nile was almost wholly responsible for Egypt’s economy.

a. It made Egypt an agricultural nation.

The Nile River flooded on a regular basis each year, depositing rich sediments on the plains. Crops were planted in the fertile soil as soon as the river had receded. The result was a full harvest.

b. It determined all real estate values.

The value of land was determined by how close to the Nile it was located and whether or not it was flooded annually.

c. It provided transportation.

Ancient Egypt was made up of a long narrow strip of land over 700 miles long and only a few miles wide. The Nile was the unifying factor of Egypt. It provided the best means of

north-south transportation. This factor led to the political unity of Egypt very early in her history.

The Nile might have also served as a path for invading forces from the south, had it not been for the many waterfalls to the south of Egypt.

### 3. The Climate of Egypt.

Because of the warm climate and the rich, fertile soil, the Egyptians were able to take life rather leisurely. This gave them time to engage in philosophy, religion, and developments in architecture, astronomy and mathematics.

Egypt sees very little rainfall. Its water comes from the mountains of Central Africa, many hundreds of miles to the south. This dry climate has brought the added benefit in the preservation of thousands of monuments and papyrus scrolls.

Many archaeologists used to mistakenly believe that the people of Palestine were mostly illiterate. The truth is that, except for a few areas around the shores of the Dead Sea, papyrus has a very short life span in Palestine due to its high humidity. The absence of papyrus documents in Palestine is not a sign of illiteracy, but only the lack of longevity in the documents.

Egypt did not suffer from this problem. The dry climate was perfect for the preservation of papyrus. It is for this reason that some of our oldest copies of the Bible were found in Egypt.

We have already contrasted the geography of the Mesopotamian River Valley with that of the Nile, but it would be well to repeat some of those points of contrast.

<b>Mesopotamia</b>	<b>Egypt</b>
The flooding of the Euphrates and Tigris was irregular and destructive.	The flooding of the Nile was both predictable and beneficial.
No natural borders to keep out invaders.	Bounded by natural borders of desert and sea.

Ruled by a vast succession of rulers of differing nationalities.	Most of Egypt's history saw a dynastic succession of domestic rulers.
People tended to have a pessimistic outlook on life.	Literature demonstrates a cheerful outlook on life.
The gods of Mesopotamia were cold and cruel and could not be trusted.	The gods of Egypt were considered to be good and benevolent.

## PROBLEMS IN EGYPTIAN CHRONOLOGY

There are several key problems that the archaeologist faces as he attempts to unravel the history of ancient Egypt.

### 1. The Lack of a Fixed System for Reckoning Time.

Like many people of the ancient world, the Egyptians had no unified time scale or way of referring to dates. Instead of having numbers to describe their years (May 7, 2000), they used several alternate means.

#### a. The naming of years.

In the earliest years of Egypt's history, the years were named according to significant events.

- The year of the great hailstorm.
- The year of fighting and smiting the northerners.
- The year of the second enumeration of all large and small cattle of the north and the south.

The Bible also uses this kind of numbering system.

- *In the year of King Uzziah's death (Isaiah 6:1).*
- *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month...(Genesis 7:11).*
- *And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah (Jeremiah 52:31).*

b. Regal years.

The next method of reckoning time was to align it with the reigning monarch.

- The 12th year of Amenhotep.
- In the fourth year of king Darius (Zechariah 7:1).
- In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah (Daniel 1:1).
- Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1).

This meant that you had to know the name of every Egyptian king who ever ruled and the order in which they ruled. Another problem with the fact that many kings had sons who were given the same name. They did not call themselves Thutmose I, Thutmose II, Thutmose III. We add these numbers for our own benefit.

c. Priestly records.

It was not until the Hellenistic Period that the Egyptian priests began to compile and to record detailed lists of kings, their names and the number of years in which they reigned. These were inscribed on temple walls where they can be found today.

2. The Lack of any Objective Egyptian Historians.

Egypt has yielded more in archaeological finds than any other area of the ancient world. Yet in spite of this, we have been somewhat limited in our understanding of Egyptian history.

The Egyptian did not emphasize originality or individuality. In his style of writing, he attempted to be like all other Egyptians and their ancestors as much as possible. It is not that we are unable to read his diary, it is that he writes the same thing that everyone else has written in their diaries.

The Egyptians never produced a native historian to evaluate or to give an objective account of their civilization. It was not until the Hellenistic Age when the Greek Ptolemies were ruling Egypt that her history began to be analyzed and interpreted by her own people.

3. The Use of Astronomical Dating Methods.

The Egyptians used a solar rather than a lunar calendar. They had 365 days in their year and divided their year into 360 days of twelve equal 30-day months and then added five additional feast days at the end of each year. It was this same calendar that was adopted by Julius Caesar and made the official calendar of the Roman Empire. It is essentially the same calendar that we use today.

There was only one difference. They had no leap year. This meant that their calendar would have the beginning of the year move a quarter of a day out of alignment each year. Multiply this by 365 days and you find that it would constitute a cycle of 1460 years for the calendar to come back into alignment.

The Egyptian months were grouped into three seasons each of 4 month duration:

- *Akhet*: Inundation
- *Peret*: Growing
- *Shemu*: Harvest

Inundation, taking place in the early summer when the Nile flooded, therefore marked the new year. The Egyptian astronomers were able to calculate and to keep records of three events.

- a. The rising of the sun.
- b. The rising of Sothis (Sirius, the dog star <sup>1</sup>) after several months of invisibility. This takes place on July 19th every year.
- c. The start of Inundation (the beginning of the Egyptian new year).

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<sup>1</sup> The Egyptians used this star as a symbol of Osiris whose head was regularly pictured in the form of a dog. Sirius sets in the spring and remains hidden for 70 days during which it was thought to be journeying through the underworld (the rite of embalming normally took 70 days). The star rises again in the summer and was therefore thought by the Egyptians to bring the summer heat, hence bringing us the phrase “the dog days of summer.”



These three events took place simultaneously once every 1460 years. Modern research has established that this event took place between 1325 and 1322 B.C. during the 19th dynasty of Egypt. This fact is confirmed by ancient scribal records (the previous cycle would have begun the Pyramid Age in 2785-2782 B.C.).

An Egyptian astronomer living in the second century A.D. by the name of Claudius Ptolemaeus developed a list of various kings of antiquity in conjunction with a very exact list of lunar eclipses. Modern computations have allowed us to verify the accuracy of these dates.

#### 4. The Translating of the Hieroglyphics.

Until the 1800's everything that historians knew of Egypt came from Herodotus and the Bible. This began to change in 1798 when Napoleon invaded Egypt with a fleet of 328 warships. The expedition was a military failure, but led to an archaeological victory with the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. This small stone contained an inscription in three scripts, two of which were in Egyptian.

- a. Hieroglyphs.
- b. Demotic ("people's writing").
- c. Greek.

It was thought at first that the hieroglyphs were a form of picture writing where each picture represented a complete thought. Thus, a picture of an  means the word "ear." It did not immediately occur to scholars that  might merely stand for the sound "ear." It was left to Jean Francois Champollion to painstakingly decipher the Egyptian hieroglyphs using the key in the Rosetta Stone.

## **AN OUTLINE OF EGYPTIAN HISTORY**

Manetho, an Egyptian historian who studied in the days when the Ptolemies were ruling Egypt, divided the rulers of Egypt into 30 dynasties. This list goes back to the earliest king and ends with the conquest of Alexander the Great.

PERIOD	Dynasty	YEARS
The Archaic Period	1-2	3100-2686 B.C.
The Old Kingdom	3-6	2686-2181 B.C.
1st Intermediate Period	7-11	2181-1991 B.C.
Middle Kingdom	12	1991-1786 B.C.
2nd Intermediate Period	13-17	1786-1567 B.C.
New Kingdom	18-20	1567-1085 B.C.
3rd Intermediate Period	21-24	1085-712 B.C.
Late History	25-30	712-332 B.C.

## PRE-DYNASTIC PERIOD

Early in Egypt's history, the people living along the Nile River polarized into two distinct kingdoms that we know as Lower and Upper Egypt.

### 1. Lower Egypt.

This was the northern kingdom. It was called "Lower Egypt" because it lay in the lowlands of the Delta region. Its capital was Pe.

The symbol for Lower Egypt was the papyrus reed which grew throughout the Delta. The king of Lower Egypt wore a red crown.

### 2. Upper Egypt.

The southern kingdom was called "Upper Egypt" because it lay in the highlands to the south of the Delta. It stretched over a greater area, all the way to the First





Cataract. Its capital was Hierakopolis.

The symbol for Upper Egypt was the white lily and the king of Upper Egypt wore a white crown. It was Upper Egypt that tended to have the greater wealth. Though we have images and likenesses of these two crowns in wall paintings and statues, no actual Egyptian crown has ever been found.

This division of Upper and Lower Egypt remained throughout antiquity. Even when one pharaoh ruled over all the land, his title was “Pharaoh of Upper and Lower Egypt” and he wore a combined red and white crown.

The word “pharaoh” is derived from the Egyptian phrase *per aa*, meaning “great house.”

Robert Brier points out that no Egyptian crown has ever been located and he suggests that there was only a single Egyptian crown that was passed from one pharaoh to the next (1999:16).

## ARCHAIC PERIOD

### 1. The Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Around 3000 B.C. Lower and Upper Egypt were finally welded into a single kingdom under one ruler. This was the result of conquest, but it served to bring peace and prosperity to the land.

Tradition has it that this new ruler was Pharaoh Menes, also known as Pharaoh Narmer. He was from Upper Egypt and the Narmer Palette depicts him with a war mace, vanquishing his foes. Discovered north of Aswan, this ceremonial palette contains the first real hieroglyphs.

The capital of this new kingdom was Thebes (located near Abydos), but was soon moved north to Memphis, 20 miles south of the Delta, where it remained for the next 600 years. The advantage of this location was that it was midway between Upper and Lower Egypt.

### 2. Achievements of the Period.

This period saw the building of many brick temples and palaces. Hieroglyphic writing was fully formulated and several fragmentary inscriptions from this period still exist.

## **OLD KINGDOM: 2666 - 2161 B.C.**

Now began one of Egypt's most prosperous periods in history. Within just a few years, Egypt moved from a few city-states into a great kingdom, producing architectural feats which have amazed even modern engineers of today.

The Old Kingdom was seen as the Golden Age of Egypt. The Pharaohs, ruling from Memphis, divided the country into provinces and appointed governors of royal blood to oversee them.

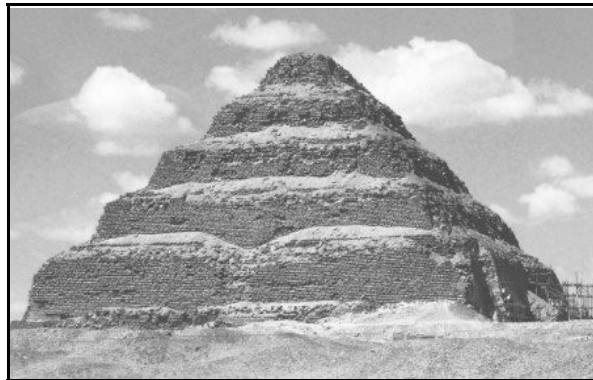
The Egyptians were not by nature a warlike people. At this period they had no standing army, but only a civilian militia which could be drafted in times of national troubles. This militia was also used in peacetime for peaceful enterprises such as building or trading. When its task was completed, it was disbanded.

### **1. The Third Dynasty.**

The Pharaoh was considered to be a god. He was worshiped throughout the temples of Egypt. Because of this, no expense in serving the Pharaoh was considered too great, both in life and in death.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasties, the Pharaohs had been buried in small brick structures called “mastabas” (Arabic for “bench”).

With the advent of this dynasty began the building of the pyramids.



Step Pyramid at Saqqara

The first Egyptian pyramid was the famous Step Pyramid. It was built by the imperial architect for Pharaoh Zoser, first ruler of the Third Dynasty. With its series of six terraces, it more closely resembled one of the ziggurats of Mesopotamia. However, the ziggurats were temples; the pyramids served as tombs.

2. The Fourth Dynasty.

This Dynasty saw the height of Egypt's prosperity. Pyramids assumed their more regular shape. One of the early trials was the Bent Pyramid built by Sneferu. It begins to rise from the ground at an incline of 54 degrees, but it was built on an inadequate foundation and was in danger of toppling, so midway up, it reduces its rate of inclination, giving it a bent shape.

It was left to Sneferu's son Khufu (called Cheops by the Greeks) to build the largest and most famous of the pyramids. It stood 480 feet high and was overlaid with a smooth facing of limestone. It was constructed with more than 2 million blocks of stone, most weighing about 2½ tons. These stones were mined at nearby quarries to avoid long transportation distances.

Our English word "sarcophagus" is taken from two Greek words meaning "flesh eater." The Greeks who first saw a sarcophagus looked within, saw a decomposed body, and perhaps thought this was the work of the structure in which the body was held.

The sarcophagus was measured and found to be larger than the entrance into the pyramid, indicating that it was placed into the pyramid as it was being constructed.

3. Decline of the Old Kingdom.

With the advent of the Fifth Dynasty, Egypt began to show signs of trouble. The last two dynasties of Egypt would see a growing decline.

a. Religious problems.

Prior to this time, the king had been a god, equal to all of the other gods of Egypt. Now the priests declared that the king was only the son of god and a power struggle between the king and the priests ensued.

b. Economic problems.

Egypt had paid a great price to build the pyramids and now found them very expensive to maintain. The pyramids built during this dynasty were only half the size of the Great Pyramid and had a central core of such poor construction that most have collapsed into low mounds of rubble.

- c. Political problems.

In addition to the priests, there were other high officers and officials that began to be a threat to the king's omnipotence. This culminated in the very long reign of Pepi II, the last pharaoh of the Old Kingdom.

## **FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD: 2181 - 1991 B.C.**

With the death of Pepi II, Egypt rapidly broke up into several small feudal kingdoms. These kingdoms were constantly at war with each other, each trying to conquer his neighbor. This was a period of anarchy as the ruling classes lost their wealth and power.

1. Rival Dynasties.

While the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> dynasties of Egypt maintained their seat of power in Memphis, a rival 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty was established to the south in Thebes. There were frequent clashes between these two dynasties with both sides utilizing Nubian mercenaries.

2. Entrance of Bedouins.

During this period, various bedouins began to filter into Egypt, pushed from the northeast by migration pressures that were taking place throughout the ancient world. It was during this period that Abraham visited Egypt during a time of famine in Canaan (Genesis 12:10).

3. Pessimistic Literature.

It was during this First Intermediate Period that Egypt began its Pessimistic Literature. Ann David describes one such work entitled: *The Dispute between a Man and his Soul*:

It presents a unique theme by addressing the personal conflict of a man whose life has been devastated by the collapse of society. It is written in terms of a dialogue between the man and his soul: the man, because of his personal problems, longs for death and

perhaps even contemplates suicide, but his soul eventually persuades him to live and await the advent of a natural death (2000:19).

Finally one of the kings of the 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty at Thebes succeeded in overcoming the other kingdoms and uniting Egypt once again under one government.

## **MIDDLE KINGDOM: 1991 - 1786 B.C.**

While the Eleventh Dynasty united Egypt into one kingdom, the Twelfth Dynasty consolidated and strengthened the kingdom so that it achieved a form of stability.

### **1. Accomplishments of the Twelfth Dynasty.**

#### **a. Political power.**

These pharaohs curbed the power of the individual governors by installing their own loyal nobles from Thebes.

#### **b. Economic growth.**

By the Twelfth Dynasty, the building of royal pyramids had ceased. The resources of the country were now put to other uses.

The pharaohs rebuilt canals, dikes and catch basins which were so important to Egypt's agricultural economy.

#### **c. Military advances.**

They expanded the military, sending expeditions into Nubia in the south and into Palestine in the northeast.

#### **d. Growth in trade: They organized regular trade with the Minoans and the Phoenicians.**

### **2. Entrance of Joseph and the Israelites.**

It was during this period that Joseph became the Prime Minister of

Egypt and, under his influence, the Israelites were allowed to settle in the area of Goshen, on the eastern edge of the Delta.

Pharaoh Amenemhat II might have been upon the throne of both Upper and Lower Egypt while Joseph was in the house of Potiphar. It could have been Amenemhat II who had his butler and baker throne into prison with Joseph.

Sesostris III became pharaoh in 1887 B.C. It may have been this new pharaoh who released the butler restoring him to service in the court while condemning the baker to death.

Two years later, Joseph was released from prison and instituted as the Prime Minister of Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh. It is noteworthy that the forces of Sesostris III were the first to campaign in Palestine, raiding the region of “Sekmem in Retenu” (Shechem in Canaan).

Sesostris III also invaded Nubia, bringing back such wealth that gold became more common and therefore of less value than silver. When Joseph’s brothers were accused of stealing a silver cup, it was the most valuable on in the household. Sesostris III reigned until the year 1849 B.C., well after the Israelites had settled in Egypt.

As the years passed and the Israelites began to prosper and multiply, a new king came to the throne of Egypt who was suspicious of these foreigners. There were several reasons for these suspicions:

- a. They were foreigners.

The Egyptians were very race conscious and naturally looked upon foreigners with suspicion.

- b. They were shepherds.

The wild border tribes who lived in the deserts around Egypt were also shepherds. Shepherds were persona non grata in Egypt.



- c. They lived in Goshen.

Goshen controlled the northeastern frontier. It was the doorway to Egypt and whoever controlled Goshen had a stranglehold on Egyptian security.

- d. Religious differences.

The Israelites did not honor the gods of Egypt. They sacrificed bulls which the Egyptians held to be sacred.

3. Amenemhet III.

Amenemhet III took the throne at the death of his father in 1849 B.C. His primary achievement was in developing an irrigation system. He ordered his officials at the Fortress of Senineh at the Second Cataract to record the height of the Nile each year so that he could more accurately plan for the economic needs of his country.

He developed a plan to irrigate the entire Fayum Basin, building a wall 27 miles long to control the flood waters and adding 27,000 acres of farmland. The following song, praising his benevolent accomplishments has been found:

*He makes the two lands green more than a great Nile,  
He has filled the two lands with strength. He is life, cooling  
the nostrils.  
The treasures which he gives are food for those who are in  
his following;  
He feeds those who tread his path.  
The king is food and his mouth is increase.*

As we read these words, we cannot help but wonder if this preoccupation with the agricultural economy looked back to the famine in the days of Joseph.

## **SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD: 1786 - 1567 B.C.**

Egypt's period of political strength did not last after the advent of the Thirteenth Dynasty. The ineffectual reign of the Thirteenth Dynasty failed

to provide any central authority. Before long, Egypt had split and Upper and Lower Egypt were once again at war with each other.

Upon this scene, a dynasty of foreigners arose to take over the Delta region. They were known to the Egyptians as Heka Khasewt (“Chieftains of a foreign hill country”), but are known in history as the Hyksos (“Rulers of Countries”). Manetho identified them as Phoenicians and Arabs. We know only that they were Semitic foreigners.

## 1. Identity of the Hyksos.

The Hyksos seem to have been a Semitic people who began filtering into Egypt near the end of the Middle Kingdom, about the same time that the Israelites were settling in Goshen. Though he was of no relation to the Biblical patriarch of the same name, Breasted makes mention of a Hyksos pharaoh named Jacob:

*“The scarabs of a pharaoh who evidently belonged to the Hyksos time give his name as Jacob-her or possibly Jacob-el, and it is not impossible that some chief of the Jacob-tribes of Israel gained the leadership in this obscure age” (1909:220).*

If we are correct in viewing the Exodus as having taken place during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, then the Bible treats this Second Intermediate Period as silent years, telling us nothing of the history of the period. On the other hand, this may help to explain the strong anti-Semitic mood that we see in the book of Exodus on the part of the Egyptians.

## 2. Conquest over Egypt.

With Egypt greatly weakened by the civil war, the Hyksos were able to move in and take control of the leadership of Lower Egypt. They were able to do this because of several military advantages.

The Egyptians were not advanced in the art of war. They fought almost nude, carrying heavy, man-sized shields. Their two primary weapons were the small axe and the light bow.

The Hyksos had the finest weapons in the world. They had come down from Padam-aram where they had enjoyed much contact with the Hittites who were the largest arms manufacturers in the ancient world at that time. Thus, they came into Egypt with the latest in



modern weaponry.

- a. Body armor which the Hittites had obtained from the Mycenaeans.
- b. Long, slim swords and short daggers.
- c. Powerful bows made of wood and horn.
- d. The six-spoked, light, horse drawn chariot.

The result was the equivalent of matching a modern tank corps against a tribe of African Bushmen.

3. Resistance at Thebes.

In spite of all their advances in warfare, the Hyksos did not succeed in advancing past Thebes. A resistance movement at Thebes managed to hold off the Hyksos for over a hundred years.

4. The Hyksos Dynasty.

The Hyksos now set up their own dynasty, ruling from Avaris. They set up military garrisons all along the Nile to protect their new holdings.

Other than this, they erected no monuments of which we are aware. Quite the contrary, they burned many books and objects of art.

Egyptian inscriptions describe the Hyksos as being a destructive race, matched only by the Assyrians for their cruelty. This is not too surprising when we consider that the Hyksos and the Assyrians were probably from the same stock. They are described as torturing their captives, cracking heads open, smashing teeth, gouging eyes out and hacking off arms and legs.

5. The Expulsion of the Hyksos.

During this period of Hyksos domination, the Theban nobles had not been idle. Learning from their Semitic enemies, they began to train an army in the use of the war chariot and the short sword.

- a. Senekenre.

Their leader was a Theban nobleman named Senekenre. He was killed in one of the early battles and for a time the revolt was quieted.

b. Kamoses.

The son of Senekenre was Kamoses. He was recognized as the leader in Thebes and he decided to fight a naval battle against the Hyksos. Gathering a fleet of warships, he sailed down the Nile, meeting and defeating the Hyksos forces who were poor sailors. The defeat of the Hyksos marked the beginning of the New Kingdom in Egypt. The first and greatest part of this period was ruled by the Eighteenth Dynasty.

## THE EIGHTEENTH DYNASTY

Egypt had beaten off the Hyksos in a major battle, but they still held onto many of their garrisons and their capital at Avaris.

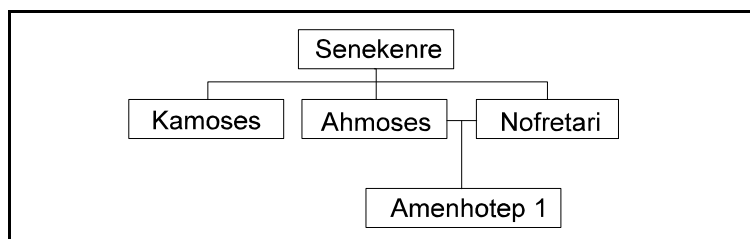
1. Ahmoses (1570-1546 B.C.).

Ahmoses was the younger brother of Kamoses. After the death of his brother, Ahmoses completed the systematic expulsion of the Hyksos, driving them up into Palestine.

Returning to Egypt, Ahmoses found the country once again racked by civil war. Putting down all opposition, Ahmoses made himself the pharaoh of all Egypt.

2. Amenhotep I (1546-1526 B.C.).

Amenhotep was the son of Ahmoses. When he came to the throne following his father's death, he was faced with rebellion by the Nubians in the south and the Libyans in the west.



First, he marched south and defeated the Nubians, pushing them back to the third cataract. Then he swung back around, conquering the Libyans in the west.

Back in Egypt, Amenhotep proved himself to be an able administrator. The government of Egypt was reorganized and order began to be restored. No trace of the old feudalism of the past was left in this reorganization. The rule of the pharaoh became absolute. After 21 years of rule, he died and his son came to the throne.

3. Thutmoses I (1525-1512 B.C.).

During the first year of his reign, Thutmoses had to put down a revolt in Nubia, marching all the way to the 4th cataract. Next, he led an expedition into Palestine, setting a precedent in the years to come.

The chariot became a regular part of the Egyptian military at this time (riding a horse was always repulsive to the Egyptians).

The pyramids had long since been abandoned as far too costly. Thutmoses began a new tradition, having a tomb for himself built in an area which



Entrance to the Valley of the Kings

was to become known as the Valley of the Kings. Thebes lay on the east bank of the Nile; the Valley of the Kings was on the west bank, in the direction of the setting sun.<sup>2</sup>

The kings of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> dynasties were buried here. A second valley to the southwest became known as the Valley of the Queens. It became the resting place of both queens, princes and other nobility.

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<sup>2</sup> The modern name Luxor is said to have come from the Arabs who referred to the great temples as el-Uqsur, "the palaces."

Thutmoses had no surviving male heirs, but he did have a daughter named Hatshepsut and an illegitimate son who took for himself the name Thutmoses II, marrying Hatshepsut to legitimize his right to the throne.

4. Thutmoses II (1512-1504 B.C.).

Thutmoses II was only 20 years old when he came to the throne. He was totally dominated by his energetic and ambitious wife. When the Nubians revolted, Thutmoses II stayed home while his army went out and put down the revolt.

a. Moses.

If we are correct in dating the Exodus at 1446 B.C., then it may well have been either Hatshepsut who found the child Moses in the Nile River and who adopted him and raised him as her own. On the other hand, there would have been other daughters of the pharaoh who could have been possible candidates for this identification.

Josephus tells of an account how it was Moses who let the armies of Egypt to put down the revolt of the Nubians. The fact that there is no mention of either Moses or the Exodus from Egypt in any of the extant inscriptions should not surprise us. The Egyptians did not record their own defeats and would have carefully edited anything in the way of the exodus event. A similar sort of denial was seen in the 2003 American invasion of Iraq when the Iraqi minister of propaganda stood before the newsmen and announced that the American forces had all been defeated in the desert. Two minutes later, the American tanks rolled down the same street where he stood.

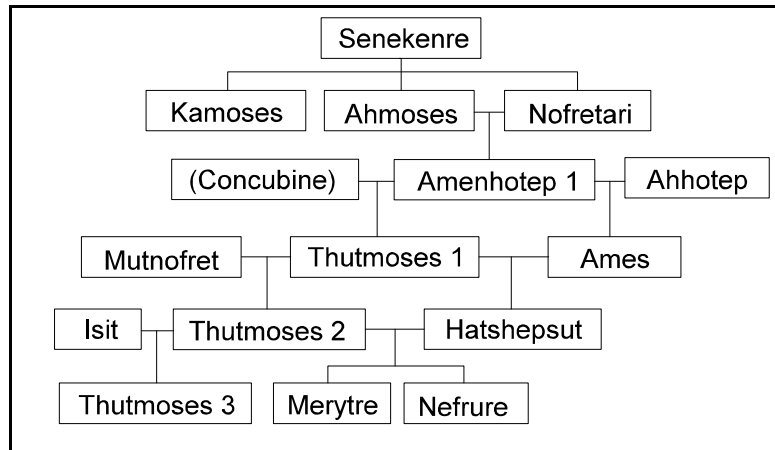
Furthermore, James Hoffmeier points out that “the Nile Delta where the Bible says the ancient Israelites lived has produced no historical or administrative documents that might shed light on any period.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Out of Egypt: The Archaeological Context of the Exodus,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol 33, No 1; Jan-Feb 2007 Page 33.

b. Quest for an heir.

Thutmoses II and Hatshepsut had no legitimate sons, but they did have two daughters. Thutmoses II also had a son by a concubine. This son took the name Thutmoses III.



Thutmoses III was still under age when his father died after a short reign. Therefore his mother assumed the throne in his place, taking the position of regent, but effectively acting as pharaoh and even wearing the ceremonial beard of the pharaohs (Egyptians were clean-shaven, so the wearing of a ceremonial beard was not unusual).

5. Hatshepsut (1503-1482).

Following the death of her husband, Hatshepsut ruled as the regent for the next 21 years. She engaged in at least four military campaigns, leading one of the campaigns herself. However, she is best remembered for her peaceful quests to bring economic prosperity to Egypt.

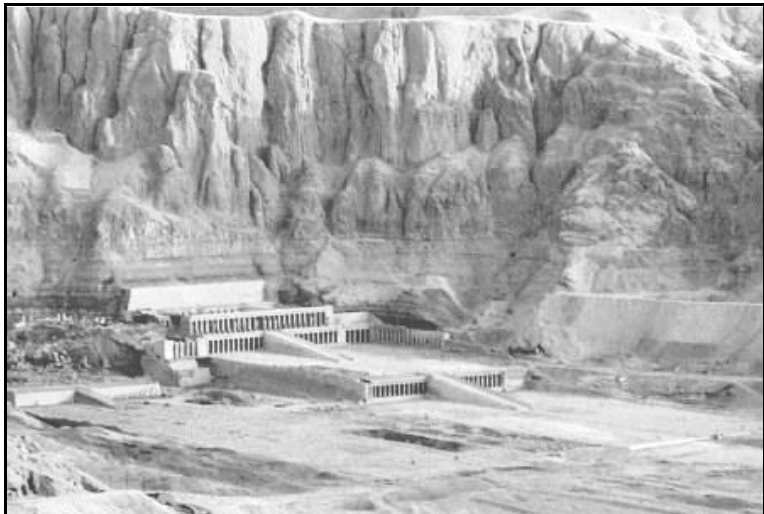
a. Building programs.

Hatshepsut built great monuments all over Egypt. Her mortuary temple was carved out of the mountainside at Thebes.

*I have restored that which was ruins,  
I have raised up that which was unfinished.  
Since the Asiatics were in the midst of Avaris of the  
northland,*

*And the barbarians were in the midst of them,  
Overthrowing that which has been made,  
While they ruled in ignorance of Re. - Hatshepsut*

She adorned the great temple of Karnak with four huge granite obelisks, cut out of the quarries at Aswan and floated down the Nile. One of them, which is still standing, is the tallest in the whole of Egypt, being nearly ninety feet high.



Mortuary temple of Hatshepsut

b. International trade.

She also opened up the trade routes to other countries which had been closed since the Hyksos domination. The reliefs at the beautiful mortuary temple of Deir el-Bahri depict her voyage to Punt and show an extremely fat queen of that land as well as the plants and animals to be found there.

c. The decision of Moses.

It would have been at this time that Moses made a decision which was to affect the rest of his life.

*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin: <sup>26</sup> considering the reproach of Christ greater*

*riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. (Hebrews 11:24-26).*

Moses could have lived a life of ease and luxury in the palaces of Egypt. Instead, he chose to identify himself with the people of Israel who were still enslaved in Egypt.

6. Thutmoses III (1482-1450).

There had been no love lost between Thutmoses III and his step-mother. The first thing he did upon her death was to destroy or obliterate all of her monuments. We would know nothing of her at all were it not for the fact that some of the concealing plaster had fallen off certain monuments.

If Moses was still in Egypt at this time, then we could understand how the incident of the murder of the Egyptian taskmaster might be all that Thutmoses III needed in the way of an excuse to rid himself of this past rival.

Thutmoses III has been called the Napoleon of Egypt. Like Napoleon, his mummy shows him to have been a short man in stature. Also like Napoleon, he was the greatest military strategist that his country ever produced. In a period of 19 years, he made 17 military campaigns into Palestine and Syria, defeating the Kingdom of Mitanni and beating the cities of Syria into submission. Unlike Napoleon, he never lost a battle.



6. Amenhotep II (1450-1425 B.C.).

Amenhotep II was tall and broad in physique. He was reputed to be one of the best charioteers in all of Egypt. It was said that no man could draw his bow.

a. Campaign into Palestine.

When the princes of Syria heard of the death of Thutmose III, they stopped payment of their annual tribute to Egypt. Amenhotep II personally led his army into Syria, crossing the Orontes, crushing the revolt, and bringing the seven ringleaders back to Thebes.

Here, he sacrificed them alive and hung the bodies of six of them on the walls of the city. The seventh he sent to be similarly arrayed on the walls of the southernmost fortress in the south as a warning to the Nubians.

b. Building projects.

He entered into a vast building project including a court, colossal statues, a funerary temple for himself and temples in many other cities.

We have already noted that the Egyptian records make no mention of Israel's presence in Egypt of their exodus from that land. It is also noteworthy that the Bible makes no mention of the name of the pharaoh of the Exodus, even though elsewhere in the Scriptures there are names given of various foreign kings. For example, in Genesis 14 we are told the names of a number of invading kings from the east. Much later, in the days of Rehoboam, we are given the name of Shishak, the Egyptian pharaoh who plunders the temple in Jerusalem. But we are never given the name of the pharaoh of the Exodus. He is described either as "the king of Egypt" or as "pharaoh."

The term "pharaoh" is not a Hebrew word. It is Egyptian for "great house" and was originally used for the royal palace. It was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egypt that the term came to be used as a designation for the kings of Egypt. Hoffmeier observes that "from its inception until the tenth century, the term 'Pharaoh' stood alone, without juxtaposed personal name. In subsequent periods, the name of the monarch was generally added on" (1999:87).

If we are to accept the chronology indicated in the Massoretic text, then it seems that it would have been early in the reign of Amenhotep II when Moses and Aaron entered his courts with the demand that the



people of Israel be released.<sup>4</sup>

It was against this Egypt, an empire at the very peak of its glory and strength — that the Lord sent the ten plagues which would leave Egypt a ruin from which she would never fully recover.

There were three primary purposes that God had for sending these terrible plagues upon Egypt.

- First, these were to be a judgment upon the false gods of Egypt.

These plagues were directed specifically against the various gods which Egypt worshiped

*“For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord.” (Exodus 12:12).*

*So Jethro said, “Blessed be the Lord who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. <sup>11</sup> Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods (Exodus 16:10-11a).*

*...the Lord had also executed judgment on their gods. (Numbers 33:4b).*

The following chart is only a partial breakdown of the Egyptian gods who were judged in the plagues.

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<sup>4</sup> One of the major problems with the traditional date of the Exodus are the references to the land of Rameses (Genesis 47:11) and the city of Rameses (Exodus 1:11; 12:37; Numbers 33:3-5). This city has been commonly identified as Pi-Rameses (“House of Rameses”) and this city did not rise until 1275 B.C. There are several possible answers to this dilemma. One is that the name might be an anachronism in the same way that we speak of the early history of New York, even though its original name was New Amsterdam. Another possibility is that there was a different city of the same name.

<b>Plagues</b>	<b>Corresponding Deities of Egypt</b>
Nile turned to blood	Hapi, spirit of the Nile.
Frogs	Heqt, the god of resurrection had the form of a frog.
Dust and Gnats	Directed against the priests who were required to be clean.
Flies in swarms	The Ichumeuman fly was considered a manifestation of the god Vatchit.
Death of cattle	Hathor, the mother goddess had the form of a cow. Apis, the bull-god of Ptah was a symbol of fertility.
Boils	Imhotepwas was the god of medicine. Sekhmet, a lion-headed goddess was supposed to have the power to begin and end plagues.
Hail	Nut was the sky goddess.
Locusts	Seth was the protector of crops.
Darkness	Re was the sun god.
Death of firstborn	The pharaoh himself was worshiped as a god.

- Secondly, the plagues were to encourage and build up Israel's faith.

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, <sup>2</sup> and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians, and how I performed My signs among them; that you may know that I am the Lord." (Exodus 10:1-2).*

God had beaten Egypt when she was at her strongest. This

was to teach Israel that the God they worshiped was the omnipotent Lord of all creation.

- Finally, the plagues served as a means of worldwide evangelism.

*“But indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.” (Exodus 9:16).*

When Joshua sent two spies to look over Jericho, they found a woman named Rahab who had heard of what the Lord had done to Egypt and who had become a believer (Joshua 2:6-9). Hundreds of years later, the Philistines still remembered that the God of Israel had brought plagues against Egypt (1 Samuel 4:8).

This is the God that we worship today. He is not a little God who can only answer little prayers. He is not a God who has taken a long walk and who hasn't come back yet. We worship a God who is there and who is not silent and who has intervened in history.

Egypt never fully recovered from the disasters which she had met in the ten plagues. From this point onward, she would begin to decline. His army devastated in the Red Sea, Amenhotep II never against led a campaign out of the boundaries of Egypt.

7. Thutmoses IV (1425-1417 B.C.).

Thutmoses IV remained on the throne for only eight years, dying at the young age of thirty.

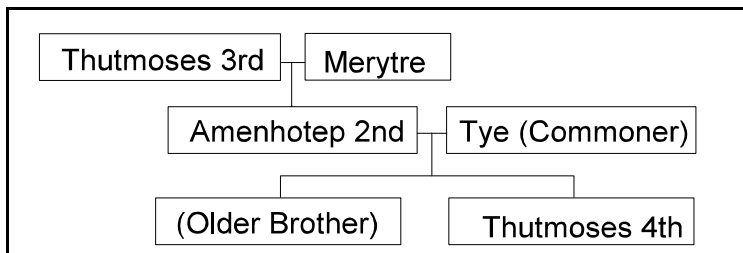
His best known monument is a stone which he erected between the paws of the Great Sphinx during the first year of his reign. On the



Sphinx with monument stone

stone he records how a prophet had appeared to him many years before in a dream and told him that he would someday rule Egypt in place of his older brother. He was also told that when he had become a pharaoh, he must remove the mountain of sand which almost covered the Sphinx. It is interesting to note that the older brother of Thutmoses IV would have died in the plague of the firstborn.

Thutmoses IV found himself facing the rising power of the Kingdom of Mitanni, located on the plains of northern Syria. Instead of attempting a dangerous war, Thutmoses entered into a political alliance with Mitanni, sealing it with his marriage to Mutemwiya, a princess of Mitanni. He also entered into a treaty with Babylon.



8. Amenhotep III (1417-1379 B.C.).

The military power of Egypt continued to decline during the reign of Amenhotep III. In fact, he conducted only one campaign during his reign. The was against the Nubians in the fifth year of his reign.

The Tell el-Amarna Tablets date from his reign. Among these inscriptions are a number of letters from the king of Jerusalem to Amenhotep III asking for help against invaders known as the Habiru.

*The Habiru are plundering all the lands of the king. If no troops come in this very year, then all the lands of the king are lost. (King of Jerusalem).*

The Habiru were not a specific racial group, but rather were thought of as barbarians. These particular Habiru may have been the Israelites under Joshua who were now moving into Canaan and taking the land. Because of her military decline, Egypt made no attempt at intervention.

Amenhotep III went against tradition by marrying Tiye, the daughter of a commoner. It was highly unusual for a commoner to be chosen

as the wife of a pharaoh and Queen Tiye was expressly called the First Wife of the King. They named their son and heir Amenhotep IV.

9. Akhenaton (1379-1362 B.C.).

Amenhotep IV has the distinction of being the first pharaoh of Egypt to be a monotheist. He chose to worship only one god Aton, the sun god, as the creator and sustainer of the universe.

a. Physique and character.

Amenhotep IV was a teenager when he came to the throne. The

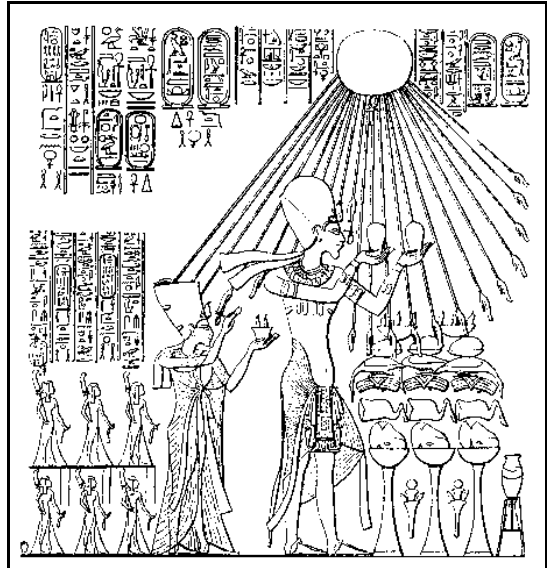
Tell el-Amarna inscriptions show his physical appearance to be sickly and effeminate. However, his strong personality made up for his weak physique.

b. A new name.

He changed his name from Amenhotep ("Amon is satisfied") to Akhenaton ("He who is beneficial to Aton").

c. Religious reform.

Aton was declared to be Egypt's national god and all other temples were closed down. Anyone still holding to the old gods was pronounced a heretic.



Akhenaton

Most of the priests of Egypt did not share in the support of the

new religion. The following power struggle brought Egypt to the brink of civil war.

d. Incest.

When his wife, Nefertiti, fell into disgrace and was banished, Akhenaton married his 13-year old daughter, Ankhesenpaton.

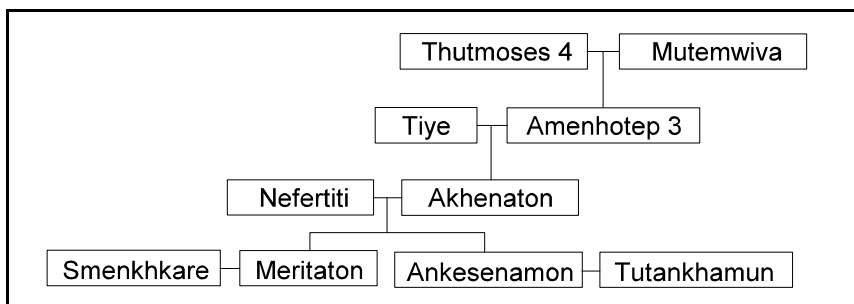
e. His death.

It seems that Akhenaton was killed in a revolt against the new religion. The details of his death have been lost to history.

Akhenaton had no sons to succeed him, but he had seven daughters who were married to various Egyptian nobles. Disputes over succession arose and the country was plunged into civil war.

10. Tutankhamun (1361-1352 B.C.).

The civil war came to a close when the new husband of Ankhesenpaton was placed upon the throne by the priests of Egypt. The young king Tutankhaton was only nine years old. His bride and queen, Ankhesenpaton, was fourteen.



With the new boy-king and his bride upon the throne, Egypt returned to modicum of stability.

a. Religious return.

The first order of business was to turn back to the traditional religion of Egypt.

- Ankhesenpaton's name was changed to Ankhesenamun ("She lives for Amon").

- Tutankhaton now became Tutankhamun (“Beautiful is life in Amon”).

The new religion which had prospered under Akhenaton was now outlawed. The name of Akhenaton was erased from the official king list. His name and figure were struck from the monuments.

b. Political strength.

The military prestige of Egypt had been lost and no attempt was made to regain it at this time.

c. An archaeological treasure.

The tomb of Tutankhamun was discovered in 1922 by Howard Carter. He had already dug methodically in the Valley of the Kings for many years and had only one location left to explore when his sponsor, Lord Caernarvon, decided to pull out.

Carter sailed back to Britain and personally pleaded with Lord Caernarvon for one more year, offering to pay all the expenses himself and Caernarvon generously consented to underwrite one more expedition. Within days of starting work the head of a flight of steps was uncovered. Fearful of looters, Carter covered them up again while waiting for Caernarvon to come out from Britain by ship.

Together the two men pried a stone out of the blocking and then Carter cautiously held a candle up to the opening and peered into the tomb. “What do you see?” Carnarvon demanded after a long silence.

“I see wonderful things!” Carter replied in a hushed whisper. There was an enormous quantity of gold in the tomb. The coffin alone weighed nearly a ton. Secular historians and archaeologists had been used to dismissing the Biblical record of the tabernacle as myth because it was thought that there was not that much gold in all the world at that time. Now, however, we see that in Egypt at least, there was plenty of gold and other precious metals.

d. Death.

Tutankhamun died after a short reign of only nine years. The young king was 18 years old and had produced no heir to the throne. Therefore his co-regent, Ay, tried to take the throne.

11. Ay (1352-1348 B.C.).

Although Ay had been the co-regent of Tutankhamun, his position on the throne of Egypt was somewhat unstable. In order to secure that position, he tried to marry Ankhesenamun, the wife of the late pharaoh.

Queen Ankhesenamun had other ideas. She sent a letter to Suppiluliumas, king of the Hittites, requesting that he send one of his sons to Egypt to marry her and thereby become pharaoh. We have recovered a portion of the letter.

*My husband, Nibkhururia [the official name of Tutankhamun], has recently died and I have no son. But your sons, they say, are many. If you will send me a son of yours, he shall become my husband.*

After the Hittite king had thoroughly investigated the situation, a Hittite prince was sent to Egypt. Before he arrived, his company was ambushed and he was killed. Soon after this, Ankhesenaraun was murdered.

Egypt now stood balanced on the brink of collapse. The last few pharaohs had shown little interest in the administration and this only served to add to the troubled situation. Only a small spark would have been necessary to plunge Egypt into revolution and civil war.

12. Horemheb (1348-1320 B.C.).

Into this picture stepped a deliverer who was to prove strong enough to stabilize the desperate situation. Horemheb was the Commander-in-chief of the Egyptian army; he may also have been responsible for the death of both the Hittite prince and his bride-to-be. Following the assassination of Ay, he marched his army to Thebes where he had himself crowned king. As pharaoh, he began a campaign designed to restore to Egypt the power and prosperity that she had enjoyed in the days of Thutmose III.



a. Legal reforms.

He passed many new laws which would guarantee the freedoms, the property and the privacy of the citizens of Egypt. He set strict penalties for all violations of the law.

b. Military career.

He began a series of military campaigns to the south, designed to drive back the Nubian tribes who had invaded the southern frontier.

c. Economic policies.

He restored trade relations with the land to the south. This trade had been disrupted during the reigns of Akhenaton and Tutankhamun.

Horemheb died after a long reign and was succeeded on the throne by the commander of the Egyptian army, Rameses.

## **NINETEENTH DYNASTY OF EGYPT (1320-1200 B.C.)**

The advent of Rameses marks the beginning of the 19th Dynasty of Egypt. This family would rule over Egypt for the next 100 years.

1. Rameses I (1320-1318 B.C.).

Rameses was an old man when he came to the throne. He died after a short reign, and was succeeded by his son Seti.

2. Seti I (1318-1304 B.C.).

Seti began his reign with a project designed to build up the sagging military. The Bedouin tribes in the Sinai desert had been threatening the borders of Egypt.

After driving back the Bedouins, Seti advanced northward along the coast of Canaan, defeating several cities in northern Palestine and Syria, including Tyre and Kadesh. It was only a matter of time before the Egyptians clashed with the Hittites.

When Seti did clash with the Hittites, the result was indecisive. A temporary truce was made and both sides withdrew to prepare for future warfare. When the war finally did come, it was not Seti who was the pharaoh of Egypt, but his son, Rameses II.

3. Rameses II (1304-1237 B.C.).

Rameses II was to be the most colorful leader that Egypt ever produced, not because of his great military prowess (which is questionable) or even his building accomplishments (which are extensive), but because he had an excellent public relations program. He had monuments and statues of himself erected throughout Egypt and even resorted to having his name placed upon existing statues.

a. The Battle of Kadesh.

Early in his reign, Rameses personally led his army north to meet the Hittites on the Orontes River, to the north of Palestine. Near the city of Kadesh, he was hit by a surprise attack that nearly wiped out the Egyptian army.

Rameses himself escaped and made it back to Egypt with the remnants of his army. He staged a great triumphal entry, declaring that he had defeated the Hittites by his own great strength. Huge monuments were built to commemorate this great Egyptian “victory.”

b. The results of the Battle of Kadesh.

The Battle of Kadesh had ended with an expensive stalemate between the Egyptians and the Hittites. As a result, both kingdoms pulled back, halting the expansion which had brought them into conflict. Because of this resulting power vacuum, Israel would be left free to grow up into a great nation under Saul, David and Solomon.

Eventually, an Egyptian-Hittite treaty was agreed upon and confirmed by the marriage of Rameses to a Hittite princess and her elevation to the rank of “Royal Wife.”

c. Building programs.

Rameses conducted more building programs than any other

pharaoh. These projects ranged from the Delta to Thebes and included gigantic images of himself.

- d. The beginnings of decline.

One interesting indication of decline during the reign of Rameses began when the government fell two months behind on the payment of wages. The Egyptian workers in Thebes threw down their tools and walked off the job. They marched to the Temple of Rameses and sat down outside the walls, refusing to move until they were paid. This is the first recorded labor strike in history and it lasted eight days. Other strikes followed this initial one as discontent grew and people took to robbing the royal tombs by night.

- 4. Merenptah (1236-1223 B.C.).

Since Rameses had outlived many of his 79 sons, it was his 13th son who came to the throne under the name Merenptah.

- a. Conflict with Libyans.

In his fifth year, Merenptah repelled an attack of Libyans from the west, driving them from the Delta which they had attempted to enter.

- b. The Merenptah Stele.

One of the earliest Egyptian references to Israel is seen in the Merenptah Stele. It is a large granite stele, located in the mortuary of Merenptah in Thebes. It is a poetic description of the conquests of the pharaoh. Near the end of the text, it lists the various cities and countries which had been invaded.

*The princes are prostrate, saying,  
"Mercy!" Not one raises his head among the  
Nine Bows. Desolation is for Tehenu; Hatti is  
pacified; plundered is the Canaan with every  
evil; carried off is Ashkeloni; seized upon is  
Gezer; Yenoam is made as that which does  
not exist; ISRAEL is laid waste, his seed is  
not; Hurru is become a widow for Egypt.*

This inscription indicates that the tribes of Israel were already a recognized entity in the land of Palestine at this time.

## **TWENTIETH DYNASTY OF EGYPT (1200-1085 B.C.)**

The years following the reign of Merenptah were times of civil strife. For a time, there were two kings in Egypt, one ruling in the south at Thebes, and the other in the north at the city of Rameses.

Finally, a ruler arose by the name of Sethnakht. His rule only lasted three years, but he made certain that his son was able to take the throne upon his death. Sethnakht is reckoned as the founder of the 20th Dynasty and his son was Rameses III.

### **1. Rameses III (1198-1166 B.C.).**

Rameses III came to the throne at a time in history when the Dark Ages were beginning to sweep over the ancient world. Indo-European tribes had begun to migrate down into Greece from the north, destroying the Mycenaean Civilization. They then poured across the Hellespont and into Anatolia, shattering the Hittite Empire.

As the inhabitants of these lands saw these murdering invaders marching down upon them, they quickly packed up and moved to the south, eventually coming to Egypt. Finding themselves repulsed by the Egyptians, they came to the realization that they were hemmed in by enemies on either side. Choosing to fight the lesser of two evils, they regrouped and attacked Egypt.

Rameses III refers to these invaders as the “Sea Peoples.” Their force was made up of Minoans, Mycenaeans, Hittites, and even Berber tribes from the west who sought to take advantage of this opportunity. He had two decisive advantages in the Battle of the Sea Peoples which was fought in the Delta:

#### **a. Superior weapons.**

The invaders had only swords, spears and, shields. Chariots were of little practical use in the marshes of the Delta.

The Egyptian army had reorganized into a system much like the later Persian army in that it had a huge archery corps. Thus, they were able to kill many of the enemy before they were even within striking distance.

b. Naval maneuverability.

The ships of the Sea Peoples were powered only by sails, while the Egyptian vessels were powered by both oars and sails. They were able to out-maneuver the invading ships.

Because of these two factors, Rameses III was successful in driving back the invaders from the north. However, he had paid a dear price. Egypt was completely exhausted by the war. Weakened as she was, she was not able to reassert her authority in Palestine. In compromise, she invited the Sea Peoples to settle among the Philistines, thereby making them a buffer-state to the outside world.

2. Decline of the 19th Dynasty.

Every pharaoh of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to succeed Rameses III took for himself the great name of Rameses, that being their only claim to fame. The remainder of this dynasty saw Egypt decline as a world power.

## **THE THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD (1085-712 B.C.)**

The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty saw a new low era for Egypt as the country disintegrated into anarchy with first one and then another outsider rose to power.

1. Treaty with Israel.

Solomon made a treaty with Egypt, sealing it by a diplomatic marriage with a daughter of Siamun, the reigning pharaoh. The city of Gezer was given to Solomon as a dowry.

Normally it was the practice of the pharaohs to receive the daughters of other rulers into their own harem. For Solomon to take the pharaoh's daughter as his wife indicated that Israel was being treated

as a political superpower.

2. Pharaoh Shishak and the Invasion of Israel.

Shishak, a chief of the Libyans, was also the founder of the 22nd Dynasty. Rising to power at the death of a previous pharaoh, he managed to bring all of Egypt under his rule by appointing one of his sons as the high priest.

He granted refuge to Jeroboam, a political refugee from Israel, and learned of the divisive attitudes that were growing in Israel.

Shortly after the nation of Israel divided, Shishak invaded the Southern Kingdom under Rehoboam.

*Now it came about in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak the king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.*

*And he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house, and he took everything, even taking all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. (I Kings 14:25-26).*

The south wall at the Temple of Amon in Karnak names many of the towns in Palestine which were plundered in this invasion.

3. Later Dynasties.

The later Dynasties of Egypt were still weaker. For a time, Ethiopia ruled over Egypt and an Ethiopian pharaoh sat upon the throne. During the days of Asa, the armies of the Ethiopians attempted to invade Judah, but were driven back with heavy casualties (2 Chronicles 14:9-13).

The Third Intermediate Period ended, but instead of bringing a time of strength, it brought further troubles for Egypt. This was the Era of the Empires. A steady succession of empires now arose from Assyria, Babylon, Persia and finally Greece. Armies from each of these empires would march across Egyptian soil until Egypt would become a mere vassal state.

As we close, we are reminded of the words on an inscription which appears on the pedestal of a shattered statue, attested in a poem by Shelley. In an

attempt to awe the world with its might, it serves to remind us that all such strength is fleeting.

*I met a traveler from an antique land  
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.*

*And on the pedestal these words appear:  
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

# ISRAEL IN EGYPT AND THE WILDERNESS

*When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt  
I called My son. (Hosea 11:1).*

The Exodus Event is perhaps the most significant single event in the Old Testament. It represented, not only the birth of the nation of Israel, but the very redemption of God's covenant people. There are three things which are necessary for the formation of any nation that is to call itself a nation.

1. A People: For a nation to exist, there must be citizens who will make up that nation.
2. A Constitution: Just a group of people is not enough to make a nation. They must have some type of constitution to bind them together, or else they are just a lawless mob without purpose or unity.
3. A Land: Those people must have a certain geographical area which they inhabit and which limits the boundaries of their domain.

In the first section of the book of Exodus, we see God's acquisition of His people from the land of Egypt. In the rest of the book of Exodus, we see God giving the constitution of the new nation. When we come to the book of Joshua, we find the taking of the land.

## ISRAEL IN EGYPT

The birth of Israel is especially unusual in that it took place within the womb of a hostile nation. Egypt was a reluctant mother who sought to retain and to rule over her hated son.

1. The Entrance of Israel into Egypt (1876 B.C.).

In the latter chapters of Genesis, we have the record Of Israel's entrance into the land of Egypt. According to the Massoretic Text, this would have taken place during the 12th Dynasty of Egypt.



The 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty was an extremely prosperous period of Egypt's history. The pharaohs of this dynasty concentrated on building both a strong military and a strong economy. Thus, when Joseph became the Prime Minister of Egypt, he would have been one of the most powerful men in the ancient world.

The village of Beni Hasan lies 150 miles south of Cairo on the east bank of the Nile. Within one of the cliff tombs of that area is a tomb dating to this period. Within is a large wall painting in which two Egyptian officials are meeting with a procession of Asiatics. The hieroglyphics state that 37 Asiatics are coming to trade in eye-makeup. Their chief is named "Abishai." The men are bearded and accompanied by donkeys and other animals. All of the adults wear garments with elaborate designs.



Beni Hasan Mural, 19th Century B.C.

2. The Israelites Enslaved (1846 B.C.).

Only 30 years after Israel's entrance into Egypt, a new pharaoh came to the throne who was not favorable to the Israelites who were now living in Goshen.

Jacob had already died by this time, but Joseph was still living. This is why the Israelites had been free to bury Jacob in Canaan but had to place Joseph's corpse in a coffin in Egypt.

We must also be reminded that at this early date, the tribe of Israelites was very small. There had only been 75 people in the entire tribe when they entered Egypt. Therefore, it was no big thing for them to be enslaved.

3. The Hyksos Dynasties (1674-1567 B.C.).

Following the end of the 12th Dynasty, Egypt was ruled by several

weak, petty kings who managed to divide and weaken Egypt.

The result was that Egypt was left vulnerable to outside attack. This attack came in the form of the invasion of a Semitic people known as the Hyksos. Using superior weapons and military tactics, the Hyksos overwhelmed the Egyptians and set up their own dynasty, ruling over Egypt for the next 100 years.

The 15th and 16th Dynasties of Egypt were Hyksos. They began their official reign in Egypt with the fall of Memphis in 1674 B.C.

4. The 18th Dynasty (1567 B.C.).

Finally, after many years of war, the Egyptians succeeded in driving the Hyksos from the land of Egypt.

The kings of the 18th Dynasty now proceeded to embark on an era of conquest and during the next 100 years they proceeded to make Egypt the strongest nation in the world. It was at this peak of military strength that God chose to deliver Israel out of bondage in Egypt.

5. A Growing Anti-Semitism.

The Hyksos had been Semitic. Although they had been driven out of Egypt, the Israelites were still in the land and, to the Egyptian way of thinking, there was little difference between Israelites and Hyksos.

To make matters worse, the Israelites lived in Goshen and thus held the “back door” to Egypt. It was important that they not be allowed to become too strong, lest they become another source of conflict.

The answer to this problem was the same answer that was used by Hitler in the 1940's. A decree was made that all Hebrew male children be put to death. It was in this situation that Moses was born.

## **THE EARLY CAREER OF MOSES**

Although born as the third child to a poor Hebrew family, a social outcast and condemned from birth, God preserved Moses through a magnificent process of events to become the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

1. Birth and Infancy.

Moses was born in troubled times. The pharaoh of Egypt had issued a decree that all newborn Hebrew males were to be killed. Moses was hidden at first by his parents and then placed in a box of reeds and set to drift of the Nile River. There he was found by one of the daughters of the Pharaoh who had come down to bathe. It is even possible that this daughter was Hatshepsut. She had no children of her own, so she would have taken this Hebrew infant and raised him as her own, giving him the name Moses, which means “one drawn out.” As a pagan Nile worshiper, she perhaps attributed this infant to a gift from the Nile River.

2. Education.

There is only one verse in all of the Bible which even mentions the education of Moses in Egypt. *“And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.”* (Acts 7:22).

Moses was given the finest education available in what was at that time the most advanced nation on earth. This would have included math, astronomy, engineering, literature and military science.

His teachers had all of the learning of the engineers who designed the pyramids and the sphinx. Notice that the fame of Moses was both “in words and deeds.”

Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived in the days of the New Testament, tells a story of an invasion of Ethiopian tribes to the south which threatened to overwhelm the land of Egypt. According to Josephus, it was Moses who led the armies of Egypt southward to meet the Ethiopian hordes, driving them back to their own lands.

3. The Decision of Moses.

*“But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.”* (Acts 7:23).

The children of Israel had settled in the area of Goshen, located on the eastern side of the Delta region of Egypt. They lived here in their own villages because the Egyptians did not hold to integration. To the

contrary, they were perhaps the most bigoted segregationists in all of history.

Though he had been raised as an Egyptian, there came a day when Moses decided to visit the people of Israel.

I think that it was at this time that Moses began to learn of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He heard the promises that had been given to these people. And, having heard this message, Moses made a decision.

*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; <sup>26</sup> considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26).*

Moses made a decision to reject his Egyptian heritage. This man was "the son of Pharaoh's daughter" and possibly the crown prince of Egypt. Yet he gave it all up. And for what? To be identified with a group of slaves without homes or possessions, a people who had nothing but a promise.

#### 4. The Murder.

It was some time after this that another event took place in the life of Moses that was to become a turning point in his life.

*Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. <sup>12</sup> So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." (Exodus 2:11-12).*

Moses had already made one decision. He had already decided to throw in his lot with the Israelites. Now, he comes upon an injustice. An Egyptian is beating a Hebrew. Moses makes another decision. He decides to stop the injustice permanently.

*“And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand.” (Acts 7:25).*

Somehow Moses had come to recognize that God was going to use him in delivering the Israelites. He had heard the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that the people of Israel would be delivered from Egypt. He recognized that God had chosen him and protected him. And so, he figures that this is as good a time as any to begin the work of deliverance.

Do you see what he was doing? He was trying to do God’s work in his own way. He was very sincere. But he was sincerely wrong. Being sincere is never a substitute for righteousness. It is true that God is going to use Moses to deliver the people of Israel. But it will not be by Moses’s strength or power or wisdom that this will be accomplished.

5. Flight to Midian.

Moses had thrown in his lot with the hated Israelites and no longer had the throne of Egypt to protect him. If our chronology is correct, then this murder took place near the end of the reign of Hatshepsut as Thutmose III was soon coming to the throne. Already as vice-regent under his stepmother, he posed a threat to the life of Moses.

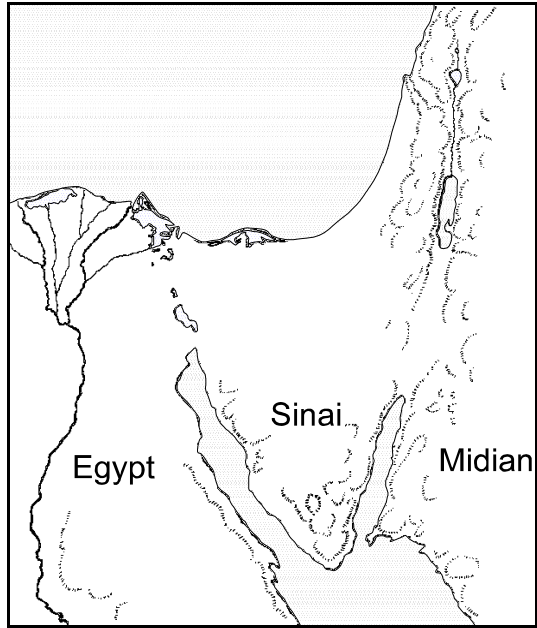
The Biblical account specifically states that *“when Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses”* (Exodus 2:15). Merrill makes this observation

*“That the pharaoh himself took note of what would otherwise have been a relatively minor incident suggests that this particular pharaoh had more than casual interest in ridding himself of Moses” (1987:62).*

Is it possible that Thutmose III saw Moses as a possible rival to the throne and therefore sought to use this opportunity to get rid of him? We must be careful not to jump to conclusions, but we can nevertheless note that it would not be until after the death of Thutmose III that Moses would feel free to return to Egypt (Exodus 2:23).

Moses was forced to flee Egypt. He sought refuge in Midian, the wilderness lands to the east of the Gulf of Aqaba.

The Anastasi Papyri are made up of official reports from the Egyptian border authorities and demonstrate the tight control which the held over the Egyptian border.



- Anastasi III records the daily border crossings of immigrants during the reign of Pharaoh Merneptah.
- Anastasi VI records the passage of an entire tribe from Edom into Egypt during a drought.
- Anastasi V describes the escape of two slaves from the royal palace at Pi-Rameses. The Egyptian commander of the boarder writes the following:

*In life, prosperity, health! In the favor of Amon-Re, King of the gods, and of the ka of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt... I was sent forth... at the time of evening, following after these two slaves... When I reached the fortress, they told me that the scouts had come from the desert, saying that they had passed the walled place north of the Migdol of Seti Merne-Ptah. (BAR Jan/Feb 1999).*

Though these date after the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, they reflect the control over the borders of Egypt in Biblical times.

## THE PLAGUES

If we are correct in our understanding of the Biblical and Egyptian chronologies, then Thutmose III had died by the time that Moses returned to Egypt and his son, Amenhotep II was now the pharaoh of Egypt. He had just returned from a successful military campaign in northern Palestine and he sat now as the king of the mightiest nation on the face of the earth.

When he refused to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt, the Lord sent ten successive plagues against the land.

1. Blood (Exodus 7:14-25).
2. Frogs (Exodus 8:1-15).
3. Lice (Exodus 8:16-19).
4. Insects (Exodus 8:20-32).
5. Cattle (Exodus 9:1-7).
6. Boils (Exodus 9:8-12).
7. Hail (Exodus 9:13-34).
8. Locusts (Exodus 10:1-20).
9. Darkness (Exodus 10:21-29).
10. Death of the firstborn (Exodus 11-12).

Notice that there is an increase in severity throughout the plagues. They begin with discomfort and move on to suffering, followed by destruction and death.

The first nine plagues can be arranged into three groups of three plagues each.

Plagues	Effects	Initiator
1-3	Loathsome	Inflicted by the hand of Aaron using the rod
4-6	Painful	Inflicted by the hand of the Lord
7-9	Destructive beyond anything ever before experienced in Egypt	Inflicted by the hand of Moses

The first three plagues were upon all of the inhabitants of Egypt. By contrast, the last six plagues fall only upon the Egyptians and do not directly affect the Israelites.

## MOSES VERSUS PHARAOH

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. (Exodus 7:1).*

Exodus presents a contest between the God of Israel versus the gods of Egypt and a contest between Moses versus Pharaoh.

Yahweh versus Gods of Egypt
Moses versus Pharaoh

For Moses to meet with Pharaoh, it must follow that Moses is on the same level with Pharaoh. How was Pharaoh viewed in ancient Egypt? He was viewed as a god.

There was a hierarchy of position in the ancient world. The highest position was that of a god. Next was that of a prophet. Then came the priest. Finally came all of the other people.

There is a sense in which both Aaron and Moses are commissioned to act the part of a higher office than is their own.

- Moses the prophet acts the part of God to Aaron and to Pharaoh.
- Aaron the priest acts the part of a prophet.

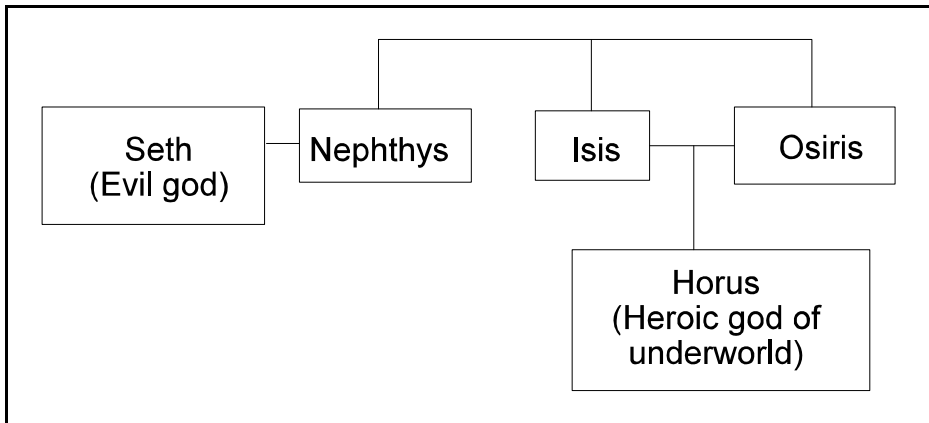
*“Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and it shall come about that he shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be as God to him.” (Exodus 4:16).*

Moses gets a temporary promotion along with Aaron. Moses will act in the place of God to Aaron and Aaron will act in the place of prophet.

Accordingly, it becomes readily apparent that Moses has been prepared in his past and upbringing to act the part of God to pharaoh. This becomes clear as we take note of the Egyptian mythology and beliefs.

The hero of the Egyptian pantheon was the god Horus who had the head of a bird. He was the god of the underworld. In most mythologies, this would have made him a dark, brooding villain, but Egypt's concept of the afterlife made him an admirable hero.





The birth story of Moses is echoed in Egyptian mythology. The exposed infant motif follows a regular story in which the parents are unable to keep the child and he is exposed to the elements. But instead of starving to death, he is found by one who takes care of him (Edipus, Romulus and Remus, Sargon the Great). However, only in the Moses and Horus stories is the placing of the child on the water an attempt to save the child. In Egyptian mythology, Seth attempts to put Horus to death. Isis tries to save him by fleeing to Buto where she keeps Horus hidden in the papyrus marshes.

In the Moses story, the Pharaoh takes the place of Seth, the evil god. Horus is pictured in a stella triumphing over dangerous animals as he holds the tail of a snake in his hand. In another, Horus holds a staff with the head of a snake.

The Hyksos tell a story of a magician who was able to take a wax figure and turn it into a crocodile and then catch it in his hand so that it would again become wax.

God challenges Pharaoh on his own turf. “You think that your gods and magicians can accomplish all of these terrific miracles. I will accomplish them before your eyes and show you that I am God rather than Pharaoh or the false gods of Egypt.”

## **A SUMMARY OF THE EXODUS**

The Exodus is likened in the Scripture as the birth of a child. The prophet Hosea gives this analogy.

*When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt  
I called My son. (Hosea 11:1).*

The birth of the nation of Israel was unlike the birth of any other nation in history. It was a supernatural birth.

1. The Supernatural Growth of the Child in the Womb of Egypt.

Only 70 Israelites went down into Egypt in 1876 B.C. (75 including Joseph and his family). 430 years later, 2 million Israelites come out. There is no other place in the ancient world that this spectacular growth could have taken place because only Egypt had the natural resources to feed such a large group.

2. The Supernatural Preservation of the Child in the Womb of Egypt.

We have already mentioned the political power of the 16<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egypt. The armies of this dynasty had marched through Canaan all the way to the Euphrates River. Egypt was the most powerful country in the world.

Furthermore, Egypt is a very reluctant mother. She does not like this growth which is springing up inside her and she seeks to destroy it.

A decree is issued that all of the male Hebrew children are to be killed. This solution to the “Jewish problem” is unsuccessful and Egypt fails in her attempted abortion.

3. The Supernatural Birth of the Child from the Womb of Egypt.

Now that the fetus is fully formed, it becomes time for the birth of the new nation of Israel. However, Egypt continues to be a reluctant mother. She does not want to give birth to this child which has grown within her.

Therefore the Lord brings upon her the travail of the ten plagues so that she must give birth in spite of herself.

4. The Supernatural Protection of the Child once it has been born.

Once Israel comes out of Egypt, she is utterly defenseless. She has no chariots or military establishment to protect herself from outside attack. Furthermore, Egypt is still trying to destroy her. When Israel

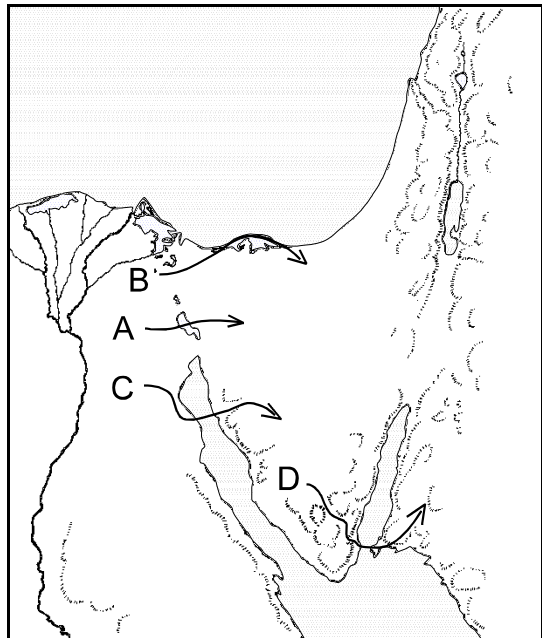
finds herself trapped by Egypt at the Red Sea, she faces the greatest army of the ancient world. Egypt has the biggest chariot corps, the most modern weaponry and the sharpest crack troops of any military establishment in existence. Thus, when Israel comes out victorious through the Red Sea while Egypt is destroyed, only God can receive the glory (Deuteronomy 4:32-34).

## THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

1. The Place of the crossing of the Red Sea has come under increased scrutiny in recent years and a number of theories have arisen in attempting to locate the geography of the movement of the Israelites..

- a. The Lakes East of the Delta.

Much ado has been made about the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures have the Israelites crossing the *Yam Suph* (literally, “Sea of Reeds”). It is argued that this must refer to one of the marshy lakes that lay between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. This view is often made to say that these lakes were very shallow and that the Israelites were able to wade across



while the heavy chariots of the Egyptians became stuck in the soft mud of the marsh. The problem is that the designation *Yam Suph* was well known to the Hebrews as referring, not to a marshy lake, but to the body of water we know as the Red Sea.

b. The Gulf of Elath.

Another view identifies the Yam Suph as the Gulf of Elath, located to the northeast of the Nile Delta. There is a narrow strip of land that curves out into the Mediterranean. The problem with this view is that the Bible expressly says that Israel did not take the route known as “the way of the Philistines” (Exodus 13:17).

c. The Red Sea.

The Bible continues to speak of the *Yam Suph* in a way that is an obvious reference to the Red Sea. In 1 Kings 9:26, Solomon is said to have built a fleet of ships on the shore of the *Yam Suph*. It is unlikely that these ships were located in some desert marshes or any other small body of water.

d. The Gulf of Aqaba.

This view has the Israelites going through the Sinai Desert and then crossing the relatively narrow area on the south end of the Gulf of Aqaba. This portion of the gulf has something of an underwater land bridge and is only about 150 feet deep as opposed to the 1000 foot depth on either side.

One problem with this view is that the Israelites would not have had enough time to leave Migdol at the border of Egypt, avoid the way of the Philistines, and then arrive at the Gulf of Aqaba, cross that portion of the Red Sea, and then spend another three days in the wilderness of Shur, camping at Elam and then leaving there to go to the wilderness of Sin in the allotted time.

Another problem with this view is that we are specifically told that the Israelites had to make a detour around the land of the Edomites in order to go from the Sinai Wilderness to the land of Moab. If they had been wandering in the Arabian Desert, this detour would have been unnecessary at this time, but they would instead have been forced to take this detour to approach the area of Kadesh-Barnea.

Gordon Franz points out why we can know that Mount Sinai was outside the Land of Midian: *In Exodus 18, Moses and the*

*Israelites are camped at "the Mountain of God" (Mt. Sinai) when Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, visits them. Verse 27 says, "Then Moses let his father-in-law depart [from Mt. Sinai], and he went his way to his own land [Midian]." <sup>1</sup>*

2. The Means of Parting the Waters.

When the Bible describes the actual parting of the waters of the Red Sea, there are several interesting factors which are mentioned.

*Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided.*

*And the sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them, on their right hand and on their left. (Exodus 14:21-22).*

Notice that the parting of the water was directly caused by the "strong east wind." The prevailing winds in that area are normally from the west. An east wind comes off the desert and brings very dust. In this case, it must have been a very localized wind to drive back the waters at the precise place that Israel could cross.

Although the waters were parted on the "right hand and on their left," we must not infer that the path through the sea was a narrow hall as has been portrayed in modern movies. The indication is that the entire tribe of Israel numbering many hundreds of thousands passed through in the space of a single night. If this is so, then the parting of the sea might well have been up to a mile wide so that all could make the crossing.

3. The Destruction of Pharaoh's army.

The chariot corps of Egypt took off through the Red Sea in pursuit of Israel. Here, they ran into trouble.

*And He caused their chariot wheels to swerve,*

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented at the ETS / NEAS meeting Thursday, November 15, 2001.

*and He made them drive with difficulty... (Exodus 14:25a).*

A traffic jam took place on the sea bottom. Before they could retreat, the sea returned to its normal state, covering chariot and soldier alike so that all were lost.

## THE MOSAIC COVENANT

With the escape of the Israelites into the Sinai Wilderness, the first step in the formation of the nation was completed. Next, the Lord moves to give the Israelites a constitution which will bind them together and unify them as a nation. Upon arrival at Mount Sinai, the Lord entered into a constitutional covenant with Israel. There were five parts to this covenant.

### 1. The Preamble.

Just as the Constitution of the United States of America has a Preamble which states the purpose of that Constitution, so in Exodus 19:5-6 we have the Preamble to the Israelite Constitution designed by God.

*“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” (Exodus 19:5-6).*

In these verses, we see God’s purpose and plan for the nation of Israel. It was a threefold plan.

#### a. A Possession.

First, Israel is to be a possession belonging to the Lord. She will be valued above the other nations of the earth, even though they all belong to the Lord.

#### b. A Kingdom of Priests.

Secondly, Israel is to be a kingdom of priests. A priest is one

who acts as an intermediary between man and God. The way of access to the Lord will now be through the sons of Israel. There will be no access to God apart from the priesthood of God's special nation.

c. A Holy Nation.

Finally. Israel will be a nation completely set apart from the other nations of the world as a holy nation to the Lord.

It is toward these three goals that all of the commands in the Mosaic Law are directed. These three goals are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in His church. All of these qualities are ascribed both the Jesus and to His body, the united assembly of covenant believers.

2. The Decalogue.

When we speak of the Decalogue, we are referring to the Ten Commandments given in Exodus 20:1-17. They express the eternal, moral and righteous will of God.

(1) No other gods.

Israel was to be set apart from the other nations of the world in that she was to be monotheistic worshipping only the one true God.

(2) No idols.

The language of this passage does not necessarily forbid statues or paintings as long as they are not objects of worship.

(3) God's name.

It is declared sinful to use the name of Yahweh irresponsibly or in profane speech.

(4) The Sabbath.

The keeping of the Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 31:13-17).

The sign of the Noahic Covenant was the rainbow.

The sign of the Abrahamic Covenant was circumcision.  
The signs of the New Covenant are the Lord's Supper and baptism.

By working six days and resting on the seventh, Israel gave outward symbolic indication that she had entered into a covenant relationship with the Creator who had originally worked six days and rested on the seventh.

- (5) Respect for parents.

This command contains with it a promise, a prolonged life as the reward for obedience.

- (6) No murder.

This is in the pi'el stem in the Hebrew, giving what would normally refer to killing. However, the intensive form that is found here signifies murder. This is a command that protects the individual's right to life.

- (7) No adultery: This command protects the individual's marriage and family.

- (8) No stealing: This command protects the individual's personal property.

- (9) No false witness: This command protects the individual's reputation. It is also a call for truth.

- (10) No coveting: All of the previous commands deal with outward actions. This one deals with an inward attitude.

The first four commandments deal with Israel's relationship with Yahweh and give reasons for each command.

These first four commands are completely unique to this constitution. No other society in the ancient world recognized laws similar to these since it was unthinkable to have only one God.

The last six commandments deal with principles of morality in man's relationship to other men. These are laws common to any society which recognizes basic establishment principles. This is why no



explanation of them is necessary.

3. The Judgments.

The Judgments (Mishpatim) were the laws which governed the social laws of Israel (Exodus 21-24). They were case laws which further developed the Decalogue. Each one begins with an “if” clause (“If you do this, then you will do that...”).

4. The Religious Regulations.

The Religious Laws (Exodus 25 - Numbers 12) are designed to enable Yahweh to establish His rule over His people as their King. These laws establish the Theocratic State, with its various outward symbols.

a. The Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant.

The Tabernacle was an elaborate tent which served as a portable temple for the Lord. It had an outer court where sacrifices could be offered, and the tent itself which was further divided into the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. At the center of this innermost sanctum was the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark was a wooden box overlaid with gold and having a solid gold cover known as the Mercy Seat. This Mercy Seat symbolized the throne of the King. The shekinah glory of Yahweh would reside upon the mercy seat. The Ark was kept in the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle. Therefore, the Tabernacle was the capital of the King. It was the center of government as well as the center of religion.

b. The Priests.

They served as the mediators who would offer sacrifices on behalf of the people, taking their prayers before Yahweh.

c. The Sacrifices.

These were designed to keep the people in a state of purity, enabling a holy God to remain in the midst of a contaminated people.

It was always to be through the shedding of the blood of an innocent substitute that the Sinless King was able to reside in the midst of His sinful people.

All of these Religious Laws served an even more fundamental purpose of pointing to the Messiah who was to come. They picture the person of Jesus who became flesh and “tabernacled” among us. They picture our great High Priest who entered heaven itself with His own blood. And they picture the One who is the Sinless Lamb of God who was offered to bear the sins of the world.

## **THE MOSAIC COVENANT & THE SUZERAIN TREATIES**

In recent years, archaeologists have discovered various types of treaties from the ancient world. One form which was often used by the Hittite kings and their vassals is known as the Suzerain Treaty.

The Hittite Suzerain Treaties always followed a prescribed format. Upon closer examination, this format is to be found in striking parallel to the format of the Mosaic Covenant as outlined in the book of Deuteronomy.

### **1. The Preamble.**

The Suzerain (the king). identifies himself as the author of the proposed covenant in such a way as to inspire fear and awe in his vassal.

*The regulations which the great prince of  
Hatti, Hattusiles, the powerful, the son of Mursilis,  
the great prince of Hatti, the powerful, the son of  
Suppiluliumas, the great prince of Hatti, the powerful.*

In the Mosaic Covenant, Yahweh identifies Himself and shows His relationship to Israel’s genealogy, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He also shows His greatness in conquering Israel’s enemies (Exodus 20:1; Deuteronomy 1:1-5).

### **2. The Historical Prologue.**

The Suzerain describes in detail the previous relationship between himself and his vassal. A great emphasis is placed upon the deeds of

kindness of the Suzerain toward his vassal so that the vassal finds himself obligated to be loyal to his Suzerain.

In the Mosaic Covenant, the Lord recalls how He has brought Israel out of Egypt and how, in spite of her constant rebellion, has fought for Israel and protected her, caring for her in the wilderness. He goes on to show how He still intends to give her the land of Canaan for a possession (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 1:6; 3:29).

### 3. The Stipulations.

These are obligations which are imposed upon and accepted. They usually include the following by the vassal demands.

- a. The Suzerain prohibits foreign relationships outside his own empire.
- b. The Suzerain prohibits oppression by one of his vassals over another.
- c. The vassal must aid the Suzerain in any military endeavor in which he partakes.
- d. The vassal is not to take in any refugees from other countries.
- e. The vassal must appear before the Suzerain once a year.
- f. Controversies between vassals must be settled by the Suzerain.

Each of these stipulations finds its counterpart in the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20-31; Deuteronomy 4-26).

### 4. Deposit and Public Reading of the Covenant.

A provision is made for the deposit of a copy of the covenant in the vassal's sanctuary or temple. Since the treaty was so involved with the witness of deities, it was regarded as a religious object and therefore was kept in the temple.

There was also a provision made for the public reading of the covenant terms to the people (Exodus 25:16; 34:1, 26-29; Deuteronomy 10:1-5; 31:9-13).

5. Witnesses.

Just as legal contracts were witnessed by a number of people in the community, so the gods were thought to act as witnesses to the international covenants.

Naturally, the gods of paganism are not found in the Mosaic Covenant, so there are alternate witnesses to take their places.

- a. Memorial stones (Exodus 24:4; Joshua 24:27).
- b. The song of Moses (Deuteronomy 31:16-30; 32:1—47).
- c. The Book of Law (Deuteronomy 31:26).

6. Curses and Blessings.

The treaty was not merely a legal document to be enforced by the Suzerain. It was a religious document. It was the gods who had served as witnesses who were to punish the vassal if he broke the treaty.

Curses were invoked upon the vassal which were to become activated if he broke the treaty. Blessings were invoked upon him if he was faithful to the terms of the covenant.

In the Mosaic Covenant, the order of the curses and blessings are reversed. Blessings are first described and then the cursings (Leviticus 26:3-33; Deuteronomy 28:1-68).

## **FAILURE AT KADESH-BARNEA**

After leaving Mount Sinai, the Israelites traveled to the northeast, moving up toward the land of Canaan. Acting according to God's instructions, Moses sent out twelve spies into the land ahead to spy out the land. When they had all returned, ten of them proclaimed it impossible to take the walled cities of the Canaanites. Only Joshua and Caleb wished to continue into the land. The people of Israel accepted the majority report.

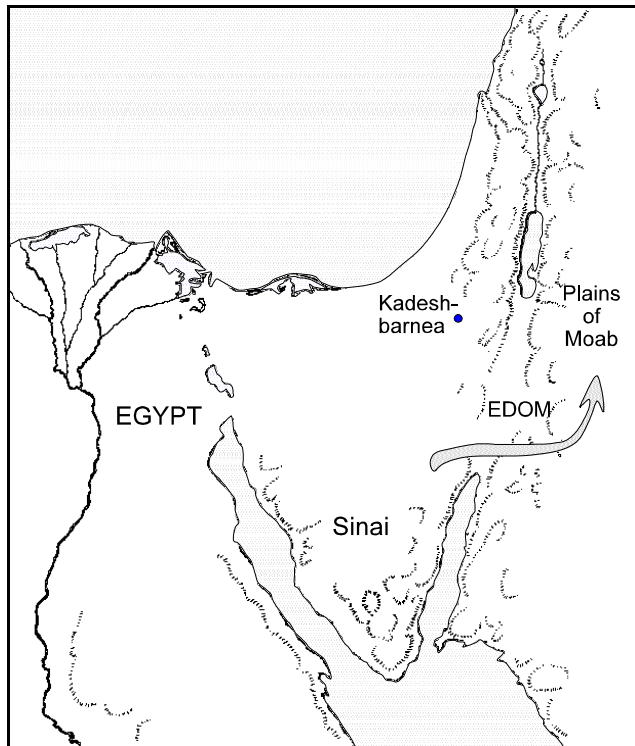
This was a case where the majority was wrong. There is a lesson here. It is that it is possible to be in the minority and to still be right.

Because of the unbelief of the people, the Lord said that they would remain in the Wilderness for forty years. When the Israelites heard this, they decided to go ahead and take on the Canaanites, against the advice of Moses who warned them that they would now be defeated. The following battle turned into a massacre and the Israelites were thoroughly defeated.

## THE WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

Most of the next 38 years were spent by the Israelites near the area of Kadesh-barnea. During this time, the Exodus generation died and a new generation succeeded them.

When the Israelites finally left Kadesh-barnea, they traveled south in a wide circle around the hostile Edomites, finally coming to the plains of Moab on the east bank of the Jordan River. It was here that God completed His covenant with Israel in the form of the book of Deuteronomy, using the same format of the Suzerain Treaties of that day.



With Moses soon to die, a new leader was chosen who would lead the Israelites into Canaan. His name was Joshua.

# ISRAEL'S CONQUEST OF CANAAN

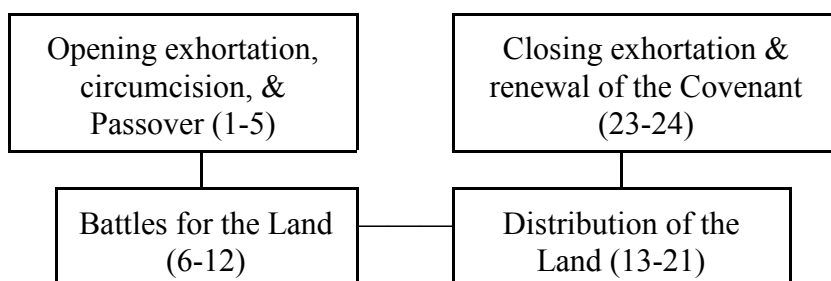
*Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.*

*From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun, will be your territory. (Joshua 1:3-4).*

We stated in the chapter dealing with the birth of Israel that there are three things necessary for any nation.

- There must be a people to be the citizens.
- There must be a constitution to bind them together.
- There must be a land.

The book of Joshua relates the account of the final step of Israel becoming a nation, the taking of the Promised Land. This book is actually arranged in the format of a large chiastic parallel. Thus, it can be seen that this book begins and ends with a focus upon the Covenant of the Lord with His people. In both the beginning and the end of the book, we will hear Joshua's refrain to be strong and courageous in the keeping of the covenant.



This is the message of the book of Joshua. It is that God has been faithful to keep His promises regarding a land and an inheritance for His people. Because God has been faithful in the keeping of His covenant relationship, so also the people of Israel are to be faithful in keeping the terms of the covenant.

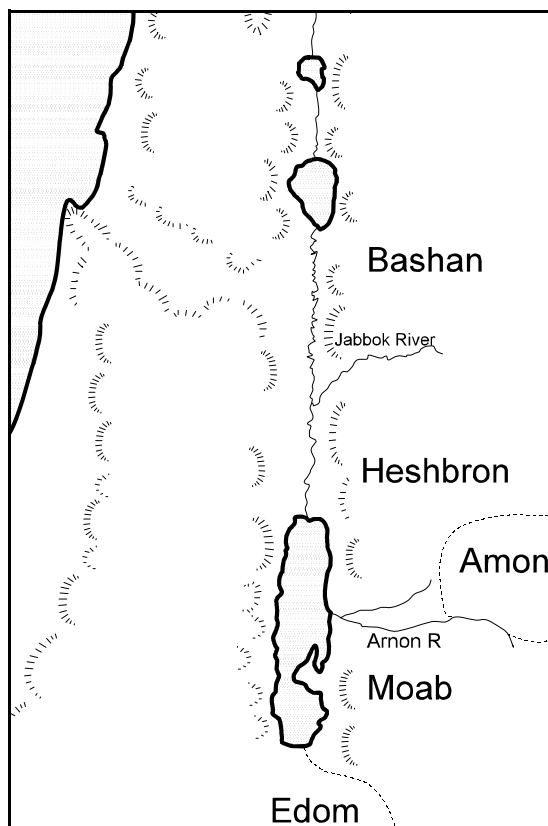
## CONQUEST OF TRANSJORDAN

When we speak of the Transjordan, we are referring to those lands which lay to the east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. The conquest of the Transjordan took place during the closing years of the life of Moses.

### 1. Conquest of Heshbron.

The Amorites had carved out for themselves a kingdom from the lands of their Moabite neighbors that reached from the Jabbok River in the north to the Arnon River in the south. They called their kingdom Heshbron.

The Israelites had carefully avoided a military confrontation with Edom, Moab and Amon, detouring around their territories to camp at Mattanah on the Arnon River.



From here, they requested permission to pass through the territory of Sihon, king of the Amorite kingdom of Heshbron. In response, he sent an army to intercept the Israelites at Jahaz where the Amorites were routed and Sihon was killed.

### 2. Conquest of Bashan.

Moving north, the Israelites crossed attacked the giant King Og, ruler of the Jabbok River and Bashan. Bashan was the country on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was a rich, fertile land and the tribes of Reuben and Gad received permission to settle here, provided that their men assist in the taking of the Promised Land.

At this point, Israel controlled all of the Transjordan from Mount Hermon to the Arnon River.

## THE AMARNA TABLETS

A series of letters were discovered at the ancient Egyptian city of Akhenaton, located on the east bank of the Nile midway between Giza and Thebes. The city has since become known as Tell el-Amarna by the combining of two names:

- a. El-Til is the name of the modern-day village in the area.
- b. El-Amarna is one of the Arab tribes which has settled in the area.

In 1887, a peasant woman found some tablets in the ruins of Tell el-Amarna. She sold them for ten piastres. The tablets were offered to European scholars, but were suspected of being forgeries and were rejected. The tablets were taken to Luxor and sold to tourists. By the time that scholars realized the tablets were genuine, a number of the tablets had been sold.

Excavations began in 1891 and a total of 400 tablets were eventually uncovered. The tablets date to the 18th dynasty of Egypt, specifically during the reign of Akhenaton. These tablets consist correspondence between the Pharaoh of Egypt at the kings of the cities of Jerusalem, Gezer, Lachish, Jarmuth and Eglon. However, they are written in Akkadian, demonstrating that this was the language of international diplomacy.

In several of these letters, there are complaints and requests for protection from invading **Hapiru**, a nomadic people who were overrunning the land. Some of these Hapiru had been joined by the Canaanites and some had offered their services as mercenaries.

The interesting thing about these Amarna Tablets is what they do NOT mention. There are no letters from Jericho, Ai, Bethel, or Gibeon - those cities which were destroyed by Joshua.

## THE TAKING OF JERICHO

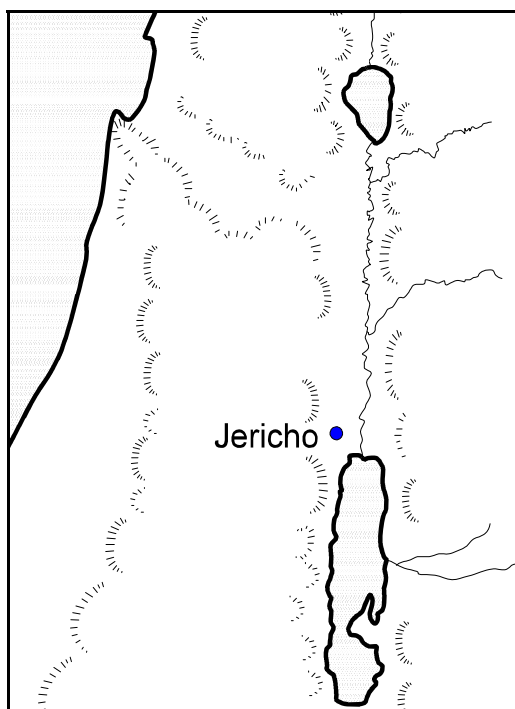
Following the death of Moses, Joshua sent two spies across the Jordan River



to spy out the land, with instructions to pay special attention to the city of Jericho. It has always amused me that Joshua who, 40 years earlier had been one of the 12 spies, now decided to send only 2 spies. Perhaps he disqualified 10 others who might be inclined to bring back a negative report.

1. The City of Jericho.

As the Jordan River nears the Dead Sea, the river valley widens to a width of about 10 miles. On the western edge of this wide valley lies the ancient city of Jericho.



a. Strategic importance.

Jericho is one of the oldest known cities in the world, its earliest ruins dated at 7,000 B.C.

The military importance of this city is seen in that it stood at the crossroads of the Canaanite trade routes and controlled the door into central Palestine.

b. Physical description.

There are two Jerichos - an original site during the Old Testament era and a different site in the New Testament era. The site of the Old Testament city is a mound rising up 50 feet above the surrounding bedrock of the southern Jordan valley (Jericho is 825 feet below sea level). It is located about 10 miles to the NNW of the mouth of the Dead Sea and directly west of fords which make it possible to cross the Jordan except during the rainy season.

There is a natural spring known as Ain es-Sultan which

originally attracted settlers to this site. This oasis gave the city its nickname, “City of Palm Trees.” Even today, the area around Jericho is known for its extensive groves of palm trees.

Jericho was surrounded by a double wall about 30 feet high. The outer wall was 6 feet thick; then came an open space of 15 feet, followed by the inner wall which was 12 feet thick.

The city was fairly small (only 6 acres), but held a strategic position at the hub of four major roads radiating outward to Gerazim, Jerusalem, Hebron, and westward to the fords across the Jordan.

c. Archaeological digs have been conducted by...

(1) Austro-German archaeologists Ernst Sellin and Deutsche Orientgesellschaft from 1907-1909 and again in 1911.

(2) John Garstang from 1930-1936.

He found scarabs of Hatshepsut, Thutmoses 3rd and Amenhotep 3rd in a cemetery at Jericho, indicating that the city was intact in the period from 1450 to 1400 B.C. (a scarab of Hatshepsut would have been especially rare), but none later.

Garstang created quite a stir when he announced that he had discovered the walls of Jericho which had been knocked down by the Israelites.

The following history was outlined by Garstang for the city of Jericho.

Designation	Description
Undesignated	Neolithic occupation (prior to 4500 B.C.). Already at this time the city was defended by a wall 12 feet high and 6 feet wide.

Undesignated	Chalcolithic occupation saw a number of successive cities (4500-3000 B.C.).
City A	Brick wall - Early Bronze Age - 3000 B.C.
City B	Founded around 2500 B.C. City grows to 12 acres. Destroyed in 1700 B.C.
City C	Hyksos period. Larger than its predecessors - 15 acres. High walls and a moat. Destroyed around 1500 B.C., presumably by pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty.
City D	Constructed around 1500 B.C. Scarabs of Amenhotep III (1413-1377 B.C.). Double wall system with a space of 12-15 feet between the walls. Walls were about 30 feet high. City only comprised about 6 acres. Evidence of violent destruction - outer wall has fallen down the slope.
City E	Constructed in 860 B.C. (1 Kings 16:34). The city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.

The city was eventually abandoned and the New Testament city of the same name was built at a nearby location.

- (3) Kathleen Kenyon, director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem from 1952-1958, had originally been a student of Garstang's. She disagreed

with the dates assigned by Garstang (her tendency was to deny any correlation between archaeology and the Bible). She insisted that Garstang's wall had in fact collapsed 1000 years earlier. She concluded that Jericho had been unoccupied in the Late Bronze Age.

Bryant Wood, an archaeologist at the University of Toronto, re-investigated Kenyon's final reports which had been published after her death in 1978. He confirmed her dating of the wall in question but rejected her conclusion for the dates of the final destruction of the city. He concluded that this final destruction had indeed taken place around 1400 B.C.

2. Rahab the Harlot.

*...so they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there. (Judges 2:1b).*

Some commentaries have tried to suggest that Rahab was only an innkeeper. But that isn't true. This woman was a prostitute. She was an *ishih zonah* - a woman of harlotry.

There is a lesson here. It is that the church is not a gathering for good people. The church is a hospital for sinners. We say we believe that, but our actions often show that we don't. We become proud of our own righteousness.

Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute. She was of a cursed profession and of a cursed people. In spite of this, she had heard of the power of Yahweh and she had become a believer.

*Now before they lay down, she came to them on the roof, <sup>9</sup> and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. <sup>10</sup> For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt..." (Judges 2:8-10a).*

She had heard the news of the miraculous deliverance from Egypt and she had placed her faith in the Lord. Her faith motivated her to action

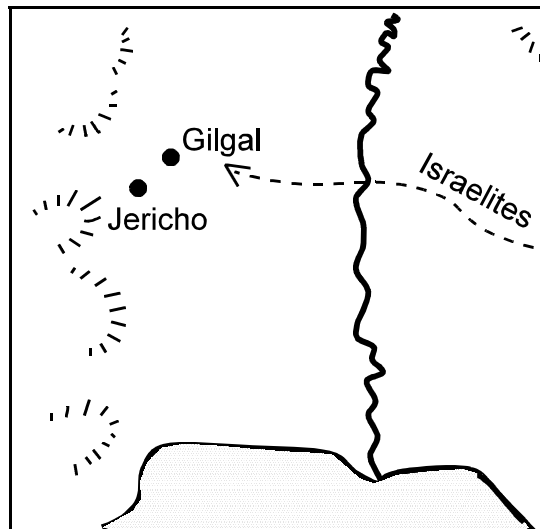
(James 2:25) and manifested itself as she hid the two spies in her own home. As a result, she was promised protection and deliverance from destruction. Indeed, she later married Salmon and became the ancestress of Boaz, David and Jesus.

3. The Report of the Spies.

Escaping from Jericho, the spies hid for several days in the hill country to the west before making their way back across the Jordan River to the camp of Israel.

*And they said to Joshua, "Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands, and all the inhabitants of the land, moreover, have melted away before us." (Joshua 2:24).*

Their report reflects, not only their faith in the Lord, but also the terror of the Canaanites which had been engendered by the stories of the Exodus miracles.



4. Crossing the Jordan.

The Jordan River is usually forded quite easily. Indeed, until Roman times there were no bridges across the river. However, in the springtime, the melting snows of Mount Hermon combine with the latter rains to swell the river and cause it to overrun its banks.

On orders from the Lord, Joshua directed the priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan.

*And when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), 16 that the waters which were flowing down from above*

*stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. (Joshua 3:15-16).*

Notice that the waters were held up far upstream at the city of Adam. This is located 16 miles north of Jericho where the Jabbok flows into the Jordan. Since Jericho is six miles north of the Dead Sea, this would have left over 20 miles of dry riverbed over which the Israelites could cross.

It is interesting that in 1927 a section of the cliff at Adam fell into the Jordan and dammed up the river for 21 hours.

5. Memorial Stones.

*Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day. (Joshua 4:9).*

As the Israelites crossed through the dry riverbed of the Jordan, Joshua had two groups of stones set up. They were a group of memorial stones. They were to be a constant reminder of the power of God which was able to stop the waters of the Jordan so that they could cross over.

Remembering is important. Nostalgia can be good. It is good to remember God and His faithfulness. We need reminders. The Lord's Supper is such a reminder. The real danger in Christianity is that we forget. That is how we fall into sin. Every time a Jew walked past that stack of rocks, he would be reminded of the power and the goodness of God.

A careful reading of the text suggests that there were actually two stacks of rocks. The first group is seen in verse 8. They are twelve stones taken from the riverbed and placed outside the river.

But there is also a second group. This group is seen here in verse 9. This group is also composed of twelve stones. But they are not placed outside the river. They are placed "in the middle of the Jordan."

Seems like a funny place to place memorial stones, doesn't it? After all, who is going to see them at the bottom of the river? Let me suggest that, in the same way that the first group was to remind the Israelites of the faithfulness and the power of God, so also this second group of stones would also be a reminder to the Israelites.

Are you going through any dry seasons in your life? Perhaps your road is a bit rocky. Gather up those rocks into a pile and build a memorial to the Lord. And let them serve as a reminder that He is still faithful. Even in the dry season.

But when would they see this second group? Only in the dry season when the level of the river lowered. During the dry season, when the crops were in danger of dying and the people were praying for the coming rains, these stones in the middle of the river would become visible. They would be a reminder that God is faithful - even in the dry season.

## THE TAKING OF AI

After the fall of Jericho, the next city on the path of conquest was Ai. This was a very small city. Its remains have not even been located with certainty by modern archaeologists.

The city of Ai is always found in the Hebrew with the definite article, "the heap" or "the ruin." Joshua 7:2 indicates that Ai was "east of Bethel."

Most archaeologists identify Ai with the modern site of Et-Tel, about two miles southeast of Bethel. There is a problem with this identification. Et-Tel was uninhabited from 2200 to 1200 B.C. Furthermore, in the early Bronze Age when Et-Tel was inhabited, it was a city covering 27 acres with a stone wall 25 feet wide and 30 feet high. This does not match the description given by the spies that this was a town of only a few men. When the spies had checked it out, they had suggested that Joshua only send in a few troops (Joshua 7:3). I am forced to conclude that the site of Ai is still unknown.

The modern site of Et Tell is generally thought to be the location of the ancient city of Ai (it is within a mile and a half of Bethel). The following digs have been held at the site.

- a. John Garstang (1928).
- b. Judith Marquet-Krause (1933-35).

c. Joseph A. Callaway (1964).

There was a pre-urban occupation of the site as early as 3200-3000 B.C. This was followed by a prosperous city in the Early Bronze Period (3000-2500 B.C.).

6:1	Central Campaign	Jericho	Victory through Faith
7:1		Ai	Defeat through Sin
8:1			Restoration
9:1	Southern Campaign	Gibeon	Deception
10:1		Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon	The Sun & Moon Stand Still
11:1	Northern Campaign	Hazor, Madon, Shimron, Achshaph	Surprise attack by the Waters of Merom
11:16	Summary	<i>"There was not a city that made peace"</i>	<i>"It was of the Lord to harden their hearts"</i>

1. The Sin of Achan.

Jericho had been cursed along with everything in it. God had commanded that nothing be taken from the ruins except for gold, silver and other metals for the Tabernacle treasury.

But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel. (Joshua 7:1).

Achan disobeyed the Lord and stole some goods from the ruins of Jericho. This was to have an adverse effect upon Israel. There is a lesson here. It is that the consequences of sin are never private. The effects of sin always have a way of spilling over and touching the



lives of others.

2. Spies Sent to Ai.

Not one to leave things to chance, Joshua sent spies out to search Ai for weaknesses.

*And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up; only about two or three thousand men need go up to Ai; do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few." (Joshua 7:3).*

Upon their return, the spies related how Ai was not big enough to justify sending the entire Israelite army.

3. Defeat at Ai.

Only 3000 Israelites were sent out to take the city. They were decisively defeated. Achan was found and punished, along with his entire household. Joshua led the entire nation of Israel in a prayer for repentance over this sin.

4. Fall of Ai.

Joshua took 30,000 men and hid them in ambush around Ai with another body of 5000 men hiding to the west of the city.

Attacking Ai with the remainder of his force, he feigned a retreat. The army of Ai began a pursuit and were drawn away from the city as they chased after the fleeing Israelites.

Suddenly, the Israelites wheeled and attacked the forces of Ai. At the same time, the hidden forces descended upon the unprotected city, putting it to the torch.

## **THE DECEPTION OF GIBEON**

The city of Gibeon was one of the larger cities of Canaan (Joshua 10:2). It lay directly in the path of the Israelite invading army.

1. The Plan of the Gibeonites.

When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what had happened to Ai and Jericho, they dressed up their ambassadors in old, worn-out clothes and sent them over the hill to Joshua, telling him that their country was so far away that the ragged clothes they wore had been new when they set out.

2. Treaty with the Gibeonites.

Believing their story that their home was far away, Joshua made a peace treaty with the Gibeonites. The Lord had warned Israel against making treaties with the Canaanites (Exodus 23:32-33; 34:12). Joshua did not consult the Lord or the high priest before making this decision. It was to plague Israel in future generations.

When the deception was discovered, the Gibeonites were allowed to live, but they were made servants to the Israelites.

## THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN

Up to now, Joshua's strategy had been to cut the land of Canaan in half by a thrust across the central region of the land. He was now in a position to turn in either direction.

1. The Amorite League.

Gibeon had belonged to a league of Amorite cities until she deserted and made a treaty with the invading Israelites. The Amorite League saw this as a defection and determined to destroy Gibeon as a lesson to other cities.

The Amorite League was made up of the following cities of southern Palestine.

- a. Jerusalem.
- b. Hebron.
- c. Jarmuth.
- d. Lachish.
- e. Eglon.

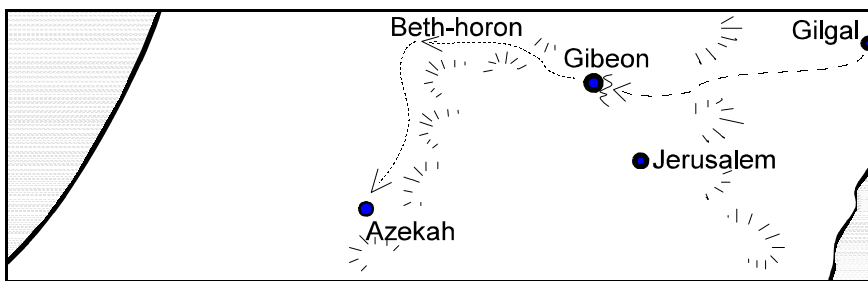
Each of these cities was located in the hill country of southern Palestine.

2. A Request for Aid.

When the armies of the Amorite League attacked Gibeon, a messenger was sent to Joshua, asking for help.

That night, Joshua made a forced march from Gilgal to Gibeon, attacking the Amorites the next morning (Joshua 10:9).

3. When The Sun Stood Still.



It was during this battle that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still so that the enemy could not escape under the cover of darkness.

*And it came about as they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, that the Lord threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword.*

*Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "O sun, stand still at Gibeon, and O moon in the valley of Aijalon."*

*So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. (Joshua 10:11-13).*

There have been several different interpretations offered for this passage.

- a. Poetical Interpretation: Both the command and its fulfillment are seen as poetical language consisting in an appeal for renewed strength and vigor for the warriors of Israel.

- (1) The command to "stand still" is *dos*, the Hebrew Qal Imperative of *damas*. It can mean both "be still" or "be silent."
- (2) The fact that the moon is also called to stand still is seen as an indication of the poetical nature of the passage. The moon would have been no help in providing light if the sun remained in the sky.

On the other hand, if the sun literally set leaving only the light of the moon, then the call for the moon's light to assist them would make sense.

- (3) An alternate poetic interpretation is that Joshua was calling for the sun to be still in shining so brightly. This interpretation says that the last thing Joshua wanted was more sunlight - rather, he was seeking relief from the heat of the day.

Some have suggested that this is descriptive of a solar eclipse, but we are able to plot which solar eclipses were visible in Palestine and none of them fit the date of Joshua.

The solar eclipses in Palestine between the years 1500 to 100 B.C. were as follows:

August 19, 1157 B.C.  
September 30, 1131 B.C.  
November 23, 1041

Joshua's prayer was answered by an icy hailstorm which both cooled the attackers and destroyed many of the enemy.

An obvious problem with this interpretation is that the moon is also said to have stayed. There would be no reason for this since the moon gives off no heat.

- b. Literal Interpretation: The passage explains the words of Joshua by saying that "*the sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.*"

The phrase “the sun stopped” is *יעמר השמש* (*waYa'mor HaShemesh* - “the sun stood”). The verb can carry the idea of standing still. Furthermore, the passage says that the sun “*did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.*”

If we adopt the literal interpretation, then we are still left with another question: Is this a localized phenomenon, or was it caused by a stopping of the rotation of the entire planet?

- (1) A localized phenomenon could have been caused by refraction of the light of the sun and the moon (a mirage) in which they appeared to be out of their regular phases.
- (2) The other way for this miracle to have taken place would have been for the earth to stop its movement. Considering that the earth rotates at a speed of about 1000 miles per hour at the equator, this would have caused massive earthquakes and seismic disturbances of epic proportions. Such a phenomenon would have resulted in a long afternoon, a long evening, a long night, depending upon what part of the world the observer stood.

Irrnmanuel Velikovsky's book “Worlds In Collision” (1950) attempts to document instances of writings from various cultures around the world which described a long night, a long evening, a long morning, etc.

The Biblical account states that “hailstones” from the sky were instrumental in destroying the Amorite army.

The earth rotates at a speed of 1000 miles per hour at the equator. The changing of this rate of rotation would have uprooted entire mountains and cast them across the sky in an unparalleled cosmic catastrophe. It may have been from this source that the Lord used the stones which destroyed the fleeing Amorites.

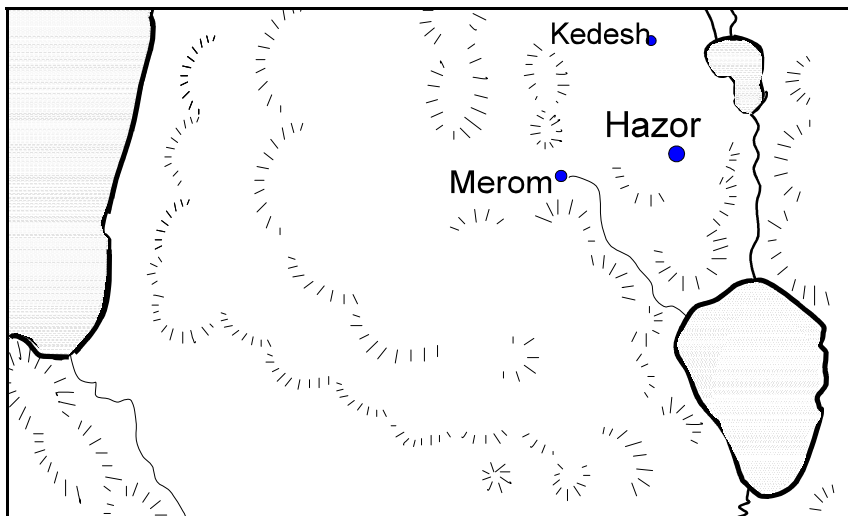
No matter which interpretation we choose, it should be recognized that this was seen as an unprecedented miracle.

*And there was no day like that before it or after it, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel. (Joshua 10:14).*

You cannot believe the Bible without also believing in miracles. Many people want to take the miracles out of the Bible. Whether one believes in miracles or does not believe in miracles has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not miracles are true. Philosophers have said that the supernatural cannot take place. And so, they have tried to define miracles out of existence. But that doesn't make miracles go away. Reality has nothing to do with public opinion.

## THE NORTHERN CAMPAIGN

When the king of Hazor heard of the defeat of the Amorite League, he called together all of the kings of Northern Canaan in order to map out a unified strategy against the Israelites.



1. The Northern Alliance was made up of the following cities.
  - a. Hazor.

The name Hazor means “enclosure” or “settlement.” It was already an ancient city in Joshua’s day. Hazor was the largest city in all of Canaan with a population as high as 40,000. Hammurabi had kept two ambassadors stationed at this city.

Fortified with a double system of massive walls and a deep moat all the way around her, she seemed virtually impregnable.

Hazor is comprised of two distinct sections: The upper city (the acropolis) and the lower city (the fortified enclosure) lying close to the north. Hazor was the largest site of the Biblical period of Israel. It was approximately 10 times the size of Jerusalem in the days of David and Solomon.

The palace was destroyed with the rest of Hazor, apparently in a conflagration that fired the bricks into very hard material. The remains of the Hazor palace were covered with ash and debris which contained fragments of Egyptian sculptures, ivory artifacts, jewelry, bronze figurines and statues and more.

Occupants	Dates	Description
Canaanite Occupation	2000-1700 B.C.	Confined to the upper city
	1700-1400 B.C.	Lower city only, the upper city was not initially rebuilt
	1400 B.C.	Massive burning on the plateau.
	1250 B.C.	Destruction in post Amarna Era (possibly from the days of Deborah)
Israelite Occupation	1200-1000 B.C.	Small settlement
	930-850 B.C.	City gradually expanded
	850-732 B.C.	Major construction turned Hazor into a royal city under Ahab.
	800-732 B.C.	City declined in importance. Destroyed by Tiglath-pileser.

Excavations begun on this site in 1955 under Yigael Yadin and resumed in 1968. Further excavations continue through the present.

A very large Canaanite temple was uncovered in the northern part of the city. It appears that four consecutive temples were built one on top of the other, between the 17th and 13th centuries BC. The first of these was modest, the last attained its greatest size in the 14th century BC. It consists of three large rooms built in a row, from south to north. The entrance hall in the south leads to a central hall, behind which was the holy of holies, the northernmost and the largest room of the temple.

- b. Madon & Shimron: Royal cities located in Galilee.
- c. Cities of the Arabah: Lay within the Upper Jordan River Valley.
- d. Dor.

The Akkadian “duru” means “fortress.” The city of Dor was located on the coast of the Mediterranean to the south of Mount Carmel. It was a Phoenician port city.

- e. Various Canaanite tribes.

Other tribes mentioned in this alliance included the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Hivites.

## 2 Mobilization at Waters of Merom.

This Northern Confederacy mobilized by the waters of Merom in the hill country to the northwest of the Sea of Galilee.

Israel was encamped at Gilgal near the ruins of Jericho (Joshua 10:43). The distance between these two armies was about 70 miles.

## 3. Surprise Attack.

Joshua faced a force that was both numerically and technologically superior to his own. It would be the first time that Israel faced an enemy chariot corps.



Utilizing the element of surprise and mobility, Joshua led his army in a forced march, falling upon the bivouacked Confederacy in a surprise attack and completely routing them. Another contingent of his army moved to Hazor and set fire to that city.

## **JOSHUA'S POLITICAL MISTAKES**

1. He made a Treaty with Gibeon.

Gibeon remained as a spiritual cancer within the nation of Israel. This was to have an adverse affect upon Israel, causing many to worship the false gods of the Canaanites.

2. He failed to take Jerusalem.

*Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah could not drive them out... (Joshua 15:63a).*

Jerusalem was later captured by the sons of Judah after the death of Joshua and the city was burned to the ground (Judges 1:8). However, the Jebusites proved to be a determined people and they rebuilt the city, holding it until the days of King David.

3. He failed to permanently drive out the Canaanites.

Many of the Canaanite forts which were initially overthrown were later permitted to be rebuilt, especially those in the lowlands and in the plains of Jezreel.

The most dangerous thing about the Canaanites was their religious contamination. The basis of the Canaanite religion was the fertility cult. This involved sacred prostitution, child sacrifice, bestiality, homosexuality and snake worship.

The Lord had told Abraham 600 years earlier that the iniquity of the Amorites was not full in that day (Genesis 15:16). He gave the Canaanites a 600 year opportunity to repent.

Now, in Joshua's day, the time of judgment upon the Canaanites was at hand. Joshua's war against them was the Lord's judgment for their

sinfulness.

The Canaanite contamination is seen in the fact that it eventually led to the downfall of all of Israel. The world's thinking today will accomplish the exact same thing if you let it go unchallenged. Just as Joshua fought against the Canaanites, so you are involved in a spiritual war. As Joshua had the power to drive the Canaanites from the land, so God has given you power to win your spiritual battles. But the danger is that you fall short. The danger is that some root of sin be ignored and allowed to remain.

# THE JUDGES

*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25).*

The period of the Judges in Israel provides the transition between Joshua and the conquest of Canaan and the advent of Saul, the first king of Israel.

## THE WORLD IN THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES

Joshua's entrance into the land of Canaan can be dated around 1400 B.C. Assuming the early dating of Egyptian chronology, Amenhotep III was on the throne of Egypt at this time and he had permitted his military to lapse into decline so that he was not able to come to the aid of the Canaanite cities which Joshua attacked.

After the death of Joshua, Israel was governed by a series of judges for the next three hundred years. This period saw the Battle of Kadesh and the following decline of both the Hittites and the Egyptians. During this time, the Indo-European tribes began to move down from the north, overthrowing the Mycenaean and Hittite Civilizations.

It was still during the period of the Judges that Rameses III defeated the invading Sea Peoples, finally allowing them to settle in southern Palestine where they joined the Philistines. After this time Egypt dwindled into comparative insignificance.

This was a time of unrest all over the world, and in Israel it was no different. Joshua's campaigns had subdued much of the land, but opposition still remained.

The Israelites did not enjoy the technological advances of their enemies. The Philistines had a chariot corp which gave them a highly mobile force. This gave them a great advantage as long as the terrain was reasonably level. For this reason, the Philistines remained in control of the low-lands of Palestine.

## THE ISRAELITE GOVERNMENT

The government of Israel was strikingly different from that of her neighbors. Moab, Ammon, Edom and the Philistines each were ruled by a king whose authority extended to all of the people within their lands.

Israel, on the other hand, was only a loose federation of tribes, held together by a common covenant with Yahweh. There were three visible symbols of this common bond.

### 1. Circumcision.

The rite of circumcision had been ordained for the Israelites in the days of Abraham. The cutting of the male foreskin represented the mark of the seed. It was a sign indicating that a person was a covenant citizen.

### 2. The Tabernacle.

The center of worship for the Israelite was the Tabernacle. This was a portable meeting place in the form of a tent with a surrounding cloth wall. It was here that the daily sacrifices were to be made. During the time of the Judges, the Tabernacle was kept at Shiloh, a city within the territory of Ephraim.

### 3. The Ark of the Covenant.

At the center of the Tabernacle, located in the innermost part was the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was a wooden chest overlaid with gold. It contained the broken pieces of the tablets of the law, an ancient put of manna and Aaron's rod.

The top of the Ark was made of solid gold. It was known as the Mercy Seat. It was considered to be the very throne of God.

In theory, the government of Israel was a Theocracy, with Yahweh ruling over His people from Shiloh. In reality, there was usually anarchy with each man doing "what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25).

The elders of each tribe dispensed judgment within each tribe, exercising no authority over any other tribe but their own.

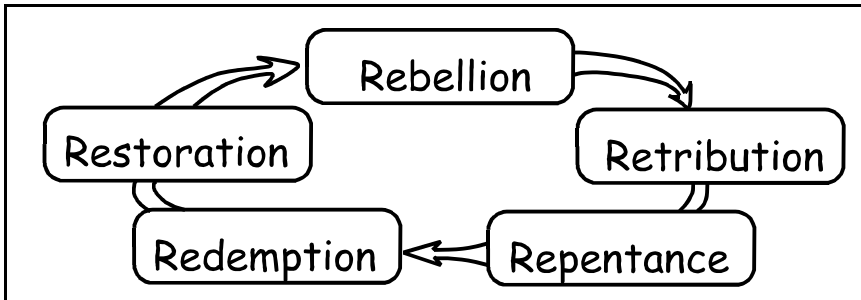
Throughout this period, God raised up various leaders who were called “judges” to act as Commander-in-Chief in time of war. The judge acted as the spokesman of the Lord in time of peace.

This system of government had one fatal weakness. It did not provide the basis for a strong centralized leadership. The only time that the nation was unified was in time of war, and even then, such was not always the case.

The only thing that made Israel a unity and therefore a power to be reckoned with was their relationship with Yahweh. As that relationship prospered, so Israel prospered as a nation and as a people. But all too often that relationship was ignored.

## ISRAEL’S FIVE CYCLES

As we overview the period of the Judges, it seems as though the Israelites went through a series of cycles. Each of these cycles had the same five aspects.



### 1. Rebellion.

*Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals, <sup>12</sup> and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger.*

*So they forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. (Judges 2:11-13).*

The religion of the Canaanites had a sensual appeal to the Israelites. As the people of the land had an agricultural economy, so their

worship revolved around a fertility cult. The Israelites found themselves turning from Yahweh to go after other gods and worship them.

In many cases, this relapse was brought about because of mixed marriages with the Canaanites.

2. Retribution.

*And the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.*

*Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had spoken and as the Lord had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed. (Judges 2:14-15).*

As a result of their relapse, the Lord sent their enemies in to raid their camps and villages. They soon found that they were no longer a match for their enemies in battle.

3. Repentance.

Realizing that the Lord had forsaken them, the people now cried out to Yahweh for help against their enemies, repenting of the sin that had brought punishment against them.

4. Redemption.

*And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them. (Judges 2:18).*

The Lord would raise up a single man, a Judge to right the wrong and to defeat the enemy of Israel. Thus the title of judge signified both the leadership he would exercise as well as the fact that his service often took place during a time of tension and turmoil.

5. Restoration.

Now the people would enjoy a period of rest and prosperity under the leadership of the judge as they worshiped Yahweh. But all too soon, the judge would die and the people would return to worshipping the false gods of the Canaanites. The cycle continues throughout the book with a number of different oppressors:

The following list of judges conforms to the order in which they are found within the book of Judges:

OPPRESSOR	JUDGE	TRIBE	SCRIPTURE
Mesopotamia	Othniel	Judah	Judges 3:8
Moabites	Ehud	Benjamin	Judges 3:9-30
Philistines	Shamgar	-	Judges 3:31
Canaanites	Deborah	Ephraim	Judges 4-5
Midianites	Gideon	Manasseh	Judges 6-8
Abimelech	-	Manasseh	Judges 9
	Tola	Ephraim	Judges 10:1-2
	Jair	Gilead	Judges 10:3-6
Ammonites	Jephthah	Gilead	Judges 10:10-12:7
	Ibzan	Judah	Judges 12:8-10
	Elon	Zebulun	Judges 12:11-12
	Abdon	Ephraim	Judges 12:13-15
Philistines	Samson	Dan	Judges 13-16

It should not be assumed that this is necessarily a chronologically progressive account. There seem to be places where the ministry of the judges had a certain amount of overlap.

## OTHNIEL

*Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia, and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. (Judges 3:8).*

The word translated "Mesopotamia" is the Hebrew *Aram Naharim* - "Aram between the rivers." Indeed, our word "Mesopotamia" is derived from the Greek term meaning "between two rivers." The rivers in view here were the Tigris and the Euphrates. During this period, northern Mesopotamia was ruled by the Kingdom of Mitanni.

There is now archaeological evidence that at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egypt, Mitanni forces were strong enough not only to enter Canaan, but to go all the way to Egypt. For eight years, the Israelites found themselves under the shadow of these oppressors from the north.

*And when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. (Judge 3:9).*

The Hebrew word translated "deliverer" and "deliver" come from the root word *yasha*, "to save." It is from this root that we obtain the name *Yashua*, "Yahweh saves," its English form being "Jesus."

*And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went to war, the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.*

*Then the land had rest fort years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died. (Judges 3:10-11).*

This is the first of seven times where we read in the book of Judges that the Spirit of the Lord comes upon someone. It will happen on a number of other occasions.

- Othniel (3:10).
- Gideon (6:34).
- Jephthah (11:29).
- Samson (13:25; 14:6; 14:19; 15:14).



The Lord gave His Spirit in these instances to enable His people to accomplish special tasks. He does the same thing today.

## **EHUD**

### 1. The Oppression of Moab.

*Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.*

*And he gathered to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel, and they possessed the city of the palm trees.*

*And the sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. (Judges 3:12-14).*

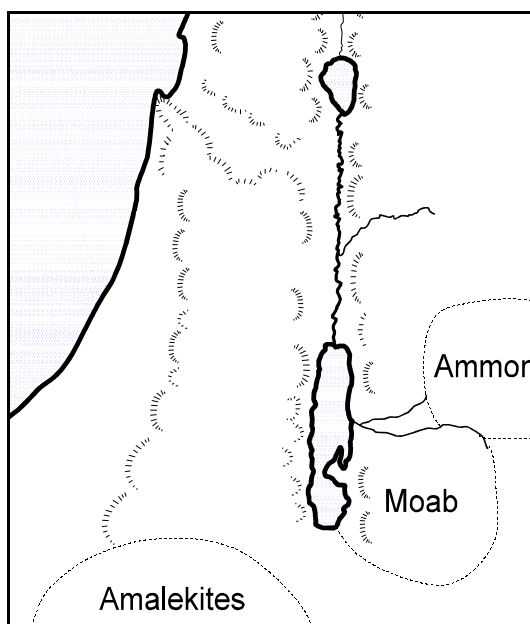
The Moabites and the Ammonites were descendants of Lot. The Israelites had in the past deliberately avoided military conflict with Moab and Ammon for this reason. But this did not stop these two kingdoms from invading Israel. Eglon, the king of Moab, formed an alliance in order to invade Israel. It involved three kingdoms:

#### a. Moab.

The kingdom of Moab was located on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea between the Zered and the Arnon Rivers.

#### b. Ammon.

The Ammonites lived to the north east of Moab. In past years, they had



been pushed eastward off their homeland along the eastern bank of the Jordan by the Amorites. Their new home was located to the east of the Amorites on the border of the desert and east of the headwaters of the Jabbok River.

Their capital city, Rabbath-ammon, still stands today as the capital city of Jordan. It is known simply as Ammon.

c. Amalekites.

The Amalekites lived in the Negev to the south of Canaan. They were descendants of Esau and were initially one of the desert tribes of Edom.

The “city of the palm trees” is a designation for Jericho (Deuteronomy 34:3). Though the city had been destroyed by Joshua and remained uninhabited, the site remained an important one due to its control of the important trade route through the center of Canaan.

The site of the Old Testament city is a mound rising up 50 feet above the surrounding bedrock of the southern Jordan valley (Jericho is 825 feet below sea level). It is located about 10 miles to the NNW of the mouth of the Dead Sea and directly west of fords which make it possible to cross the Jordan except during the rainy season.

There is a natural spring known as Ain es-Sultan which originally attracted settlers to this site. This oasis gave the city its nickname, “City of Palm Trees.”

The site held a strategic position at the hub of four major roads radiating outward to Gerazim, Jerusalem, Hebron, and westward to the fords across the Jordan.

2. Ehud the Man.

Judges 3:15-26 tells the story of Ehud and his premeditated murder of Eglon, king of Moab (perhaps "assassination" is a better word).

Ehud is the hero of the story. It was the Lord who raised him up to be a deliverer for the Israelites (3:15). This act would serve as an impetus for an uprising against Moab.

*But when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord,*

*the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. And the sons of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab. (Judges 3:15).*

Ehud was a “left-handed man,” literally, “a man bound in his right hand.” There is a play on words here. He was a “left handed man” but he was also a Benjamite, meaning a “son of the right hand.” The fact that Ehud was left-handed was significant.

In that culture, a left-handed man was considered something of a social misfit. The right hand was normally the social hand (we still speak of extending the “right hand of fellowship”). The left hand was used solely for matters of personal hygiene. It was considered the unclean hand. That is why in matters of judgment, the condemned would be placed at the left hand of the king (remember this the next time you look at the judgment of the sheep and the goats and see what happens to those whom Christ places at His left hand).

It was this social misfit that God chose to deliver the Israelites from their oppressors. There is a lesson here. It is that God uses the unusable. Even Jesus was described as “the stone that the builders rejected.”

### 3. The Assassination of Eglon.

*And Ehud made himself a sword which had two edges, a cubit in length; and he bound it on his right thigh under his cloak.*

*And he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.*

*And it came about when he had finished presenting the tribute, that he sent away the people who had carried the tribute.*

*But he himself turned back from the idols which were at Gilead, and said, “I have a secret message for you, O king.” And he said, “Keep silence.” And all who attended him left him.*

*And Ehud came to him while he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber, And Ehud said, “I have a message from God for you.” And he arose from his seat.*

*And Ehud stretched out his left hand, took the*

*sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly.*

*The handle also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the sword out of his belly; and the refuse came out.*

*Then Ehud went out into the vestibule and shut the doors of the roof chamber behind him, and locked them. (Judges 3:16-23).*

The very thing that made him a social outcast was utilized by Ehud in carrying out his execution of the king.

It is not only mentioned that Eglon was fat (3:17), but we are given graphic details of his fat closing in over the haft of the assassin's blade (3:22). Furthermore, we are given a glimpse of the embarrassment of the servants as we view their thoughts of their master (3:24-25).

Ehud makes his escape while the servants wait outside the king's room, thinking that he is merely taking his time in matters of personal hygiene ("he is only relieving himself in the cool room" - 3:24).

#### 4. Military Deliverance.

*Now Ehud escaped while they were delaying, and he passed by the idols and escaped to Seirah.*

*And it came about when he had arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was in front of them.*

*And he said to them, "Pursue them, for the Lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your hands," So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan opposite Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross.*

*And they struck down at that time about ten thousand Moabites, all robust and valiant men; and no one escaped.*

*So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was undisturbed for eighty years. (Judges 3:26-30).*

Ehud did not stop with the assassination of the Moabite king. In this, he was not like the Israelites who had taken the land but who had

failed to take the opportunity to completely drive out the Canaanites.

He escaped only to rally the Israelites. While he had previously gone against the enemy alone, now he walked at their head. The period of peace that ensued was 80 years, the longest of any period during the days of the judges. Moab and Israel were to continue as perpetual enemies for most of their history.

## DEBORAH

### 1. The Oppression of Hazor.

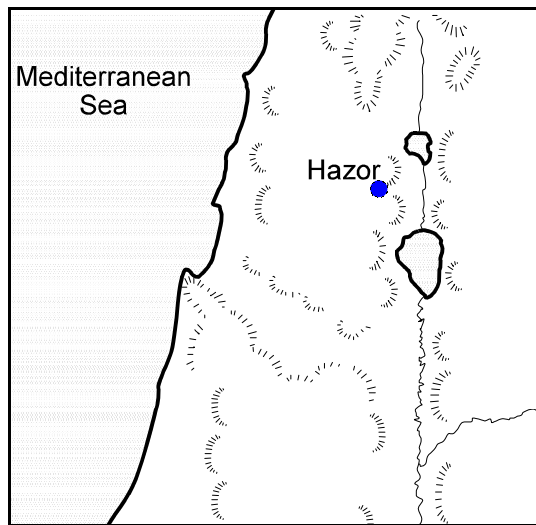
*Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died.*

*And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim.*

*And the sons of Israel cried to the Lord; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years. (Judges 4:1-3).*

Ancient Hazor has been identified with Tell el-Qeday. It is located nine miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

The site is made up of an oval-shaped tell of about 25 acres and a much larger plateau covering an area of 175 acres. This made Hazor one of the largest cities in Canaan.



Excavations begun on this site in 1955 under Yigael Yadin.

Stratum	Date	Description
1		Destruction by Deborah
2		City was not as strong as Stratum 3 - the plateau was not rebuilt.
3	1400	Destruction by Joshua. Archaeology shows massive burning on the plateau.

What made Hazor so formidable was the fact that it boasted a chariot corps numbering 900 chariots. It must be remembered that chariots were to the ancient world what the armored tank has been to the modern world.

2. The Ministry of Deborah.

*Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.*

*And she used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. (Judges 4:4-5).*

Throughout most of antiquity, women had a fairly low standing in society. And yet, this woman was known as a prophetess and a judge. She was a housewife and a mother (Judges 5:7 mentions that she was a mother in Israel). But that did not stop the Lord from speaking through her.

3. Deborah and Barak.

*Now she sent and summoned Barak, the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, "Behold, the Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded, 'Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun, 7 and I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon; and I will give him into your hand.'"*

*Then Barak said to her, "If you will go with*

*me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.” (Judges 4:6-8).*

Barak said that he would go, but only on one condition. He would only go if Deborah would come along. Barak believed that the Lord was with Deborah. He wasn't so certain that the Lord was with him. And so, he wanted to bring someone along who would guarantee the presence of the Lord. By insisting that Deborah come, Barak was showing true faith. But he was also showing weak faith.

*And she said, “I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.” Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. (Judges 4:9).*

If I gave a quiz in the average Sunday school class, quite a few would recognize the name of Deborah. But not that many would remember the name of Barak.

#### 4. The Battle.

As the battle commenced, the forces of Sisera consisted of a large chariot corps mobilized “from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon” (Judges 4:13). We know the location of the river Kishon - it runs in a northwesterly direction along the southern part of the Valley of Jezreel, emptying out into the Mediterranean just north of Mount Carmel.

What is interesting is the other place-name mentioned. It is Harosheth-hagoyim. It seems to mean “the cutting of the nations.” The key city of this valley, although not mentioned in this text, is the ancient walled city of Megiddo. It is from this that we get the Hebrew “Armageddon” (*Har-Megiddo* - “Mount of Megiddo” - the problem being is that Megiddo is not on a mountain, it is in the middle of the valley).

In the historical account of the passage, we read that “the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army” (4:15). The passage makes it quite clear that the instrument which the Lord used to accomplish this was Barak and the Israelites.

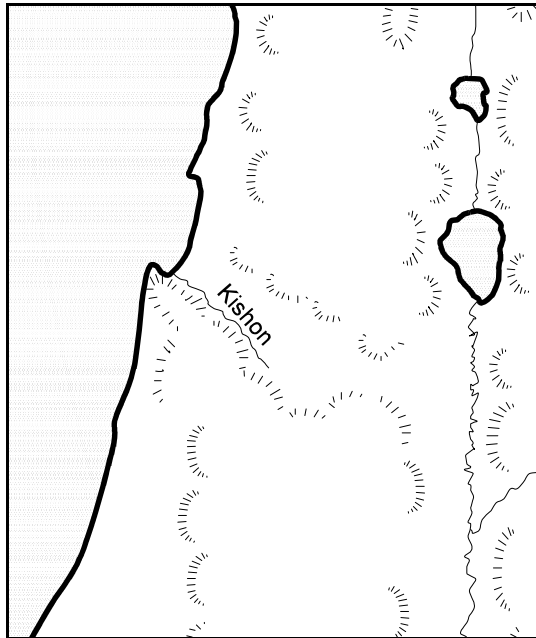
Judges 5 follows up the battle with a song of victory. In this song, Deborah says that “*the torrent of Kishon swept them away*”(5:21) - seemingly a reference to the Kishon River overflowing its banks, although whether this is simply poetic imagery or whether it actually happened in the course of the battle is difficult to tell.

As I read this account, I am struck by the “coincidence” of its echoing repetition in the book of Revelation.

- a. The kings of the nations (*Ha-Goyim*) are described as being gathered together to the place known as Har-Megiddo (Armageddon).

- b. It is the Lord who goes and fights for His people.

- c. There is a “torrent” in Judges while Revelation describes blood “to the horse’s bridle.” It seems as though the imagery for the spiritual battle of Armageddon is drawn from this historical battle.



5. Sisera’s Defeat.

*And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army, with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. (Judges 4:15).*

How did Barak and his 10,000 under-equipped foot soldiers manage to defeat a chariot corps of 900 war chariots? This was like having a bunch of Indians defeat a modern mechanized armor division. And



what is more, they did it in open terrain. They were on the valley of Megiddo. This was perfect territory for chariot warfare. The Israelites had no right to win.

But God was bigger than Sisera's chariot corps. In her song of victory, Deborah says that "the earth quaked, the heavens also dripped, even the clouds dripped water" (Judges 5:4). Furthermore, she says that "the torrent of Kishon swept them away, the ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon" (Judges 5:21). We can further note that this torrent of Kishon is also mentioned in Psalm 83:9.

If this is not merely figurative language, then it is possible that the Lord brought about a rainstorm and a flooding of the Kishon River to turn the valley floor into mud, thereby immobilizing Sisera's chariot force. The Israelites were unaffected by this adverse weather and attacked their enemies, routing them.

6. Jael - a Faithful Wife with a Faithless Husband.

As Sisera flees on foot, he will come into contact with another woman who will be used of the Lord. It is noteworthy that this woman was married to a man who had rejected the Lord.

*Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaanannim, which is near Kedesh. (Judges 4:11).*

Heber had come from a distinguished family. He was a descendant of the father-in-law of Moses. But he had long since disassociated himself from his fellow Israelites. Instead of living with them, he had parted from their company and had pitched his tent in the area of Kedesh Naphtali on the southwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

He had also made an alliance with the Canaanite city of Hazor and the enemies of the people of God.

*Now Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. (Judges 4:17).*

This man had made peace at a time where there ought to have been no peace. But his wife remained faithful to the Lord. When Sisera sought refuge within her tent, she at first acquiesced, feeding him and hiding him under a rug within her tent.

*But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died. (Judges 4:21).*

In such a way, the prophecy was fulfilled. It was by the hand of a woman that Sisera met his end. This was the original battle of Armageddon.

*The kings came and fought;  
Then fought the kings of Canaan  
At Taanach near the waters of Megiddo;  
They took no plunder in silver. (Judges 5:19).*

This battle was to become the pattern for the victory of the Lord against the powers of darkness. As Deborah describes the slaying of Sisera (5:23-27), there is a picture of the spiritual war that was introduced in Genesis 3:15.

<b>Genesis 3:15</b>	<b>Deborah's Song</b>
The woman.	"Most blessed of women is Jael"
The wife of Adam who had fallen into sin.	"The wife of Heber the Kenite"
He shall bruise you on the head.	"She struck Sisera, she smashed his head; and she shattered and pierced his temple"

As a result of this victory, there are 40 years of peace in the land (Judges 5:31).

## **GIDEON**

Gideon is the lesson of what God can do with a man who will simply say, "Yes" to God. The interesting thing about him is he initially seems to have

been inclined to say, “No.”

1. Oppression at the hands of Midian.

*Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian seven years. (Judges 6:1).*

The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:1-4). They settled in the lands of Arabia to the east of the Gulf of Aqaba where they adopted a nomadic lifestyle. But now they invaded the land of Canaan.

This period lasted for seven years. For seven years, the Midianites made successive raids into Canaan. They always came at the time of the harvest. They would wait until the Israelites had done all the work of planting and cultivating, and then they would swarm over the land, taking the crops at will.

2. Gideon’s Call.

*Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. (Judges 6:11).*

In verses 11 and 12 He is called the “angel of the Lord.” When we come to verse 14 He is simply called “the Lord.” This should not confuse us. The angel of the Lord always represents the very presence and message of God.

Gideon wasn’t expecting such an angelic visitor. He was expecting Midianites. That is why he was beating wheat in a place where you didn’t normally beat wheat. He was in hiding.

*And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.” (Judges 6:12).*

Gideon didn’t look much like a valiant warrior. He looked more like the “before” picture on a “before & after” poster. He was here in hiding doing “woman’s work” (the grinding of grain was considered

to be the work of women - Exodus 11:5). But God declared him to be a “valiant warrior.”

That is what God does with us, too. He justifies us. He declares us to be righteous, not because we are righteous, but because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ which has been reckoned to us. He says, “I have declared you to be righteous, now be righteous.”

3. Gideon’s Requests for a Sign.

Gideon didn’t make only one request for a sign. He made three such requests (though he acted in faith and obedience prior to making the last two requests).

Request #1	“Show me a sign” (Fire springs from the rock and consumes the offering).	Judges 6:17-22
Request #2	Let dew be on the fleece while the ground remains dry.	Judges 6:36-38
Request #3	Let the fleece be dry while dew is on the ground.	Judges 6:39-40

The first sign involved Gideon preparing an offering of meat and bread and broth and bringing it to the angel of the Lord. These were placed on a rock.

*Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread, and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. (Judges 6:21).*

I can’t help but wonder if the charred surface of that rock was to serve as a constant reminder that the Lord had been there. Indeed, Gideon chose to immortalize that place by building an altar there.

*Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. (Judges 6:24).*

If I had been there, I might have named it “the place of the burning

rock.” But I wasn’t. And perhaps Gideon realized something that is all too easily missed. He named it, “The Lord is Peace.” He understood that the fact that a sacrifice had been accepted by God was a sign of peace between God and men.

4. Gideon Destroys the Altar of Baal.

*Now the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it; 26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down." (Judges 6:25-26).*

Baal was the storm god of the Canaanites. The word “Baal” means “lord” or “master.” It is used in modern Hebrew to describe a “husband.” Baal was the god who was said to produce rain which was so necessary to the raising of crops and cattle. He was also the god of reproduction and produce.

The Israelites had begun to worship this false god. As a sign of their worship, they had built an altar to Baal.

*Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him; and it came about, because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, that he did it by night. (Judges 6:27).*

The tearing down of this altar was no simple affair. A Baal altar found at Megiddo measured 26 feet across and 4 feet high. It was made of stones cemented together with dried mud. Next to it would be an “Asherah,” a fertility symbol.

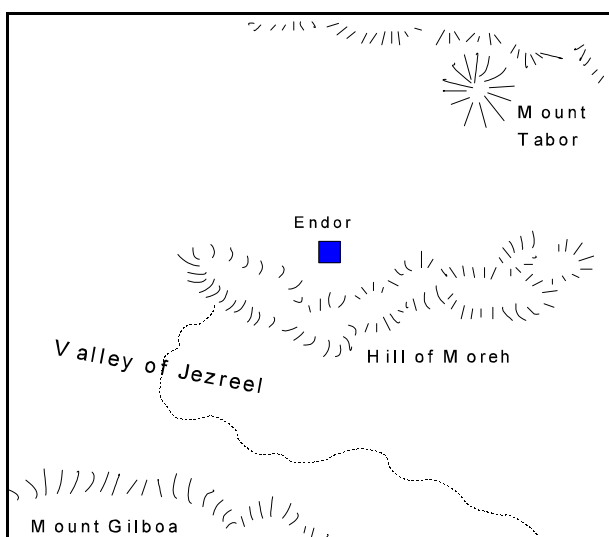
So loyal were the Israelites to the worship of Baal that Gideon feared to destroy the altar by day. The account goes on to show that his fear was not misplaced, for the Israelites respond by demanding his death and it is only when his father intercedes for him that he is allowed to live.

*Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it.”*

*But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar.”*

*Therefore on that day he named him Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal contend against him,” because he had torn down his altar. (Judges 6:30-32).*

There is a play on words here. Gideon is given the nickname “Jerubbaal” because it was suggested by his father that they should “let Baal contend (yrb) against him.” We could translate the name as “Baal-fighter.”



5. The Reduction of Gideon's Forces.

*Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley (Judges 7:1).*

The Midianites had a camel corps. These would have been the desert version of cavalry and, as such, would be more suited to warfare on the open plains as opposed to mountain terrain. With this in mind, they had moved their forces into the Valley of Jezreel and had encamped near the village of Endor on the north side of the Hill of

Moreh.

Gideon and his forces encamped to the south of the Midianites with only the ridge of Moreh separating the two forces. It was a time of tension with battle in the air. And it was now that the Lord instructed Gideon to whittle down his forces.

When we get to Judges 8:10, we shall see that the entire force of the Midianites numbered 135,000 men. The Israelites at the outset were outnumbered nearly four to one.

32,000 men	<i>“Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him depart”</i>	22,000 leave
10,000 men	<i>“Separate everyone who laps like a dog”</i>	9,700 sent home
300 men	<i>“I will deliver you with the 300 men.”</i>	

6. The Battle.

*And he divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.*

*And he said to them, “Look at me, and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. 18 When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp, and say, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon.’” (Judges 7:16-18).*

This isn’t much of a battle strategy. In one hand they would hold a trumpet. In the other hand they would hold a pitcher and a torch. What is wrong with this picture? They had no weapons. The Lord would be their sword.

*And when they blew 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against the other even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-melolah, by Tabbath. (Judges 7:22).*

The attack was set for the “middle watch.” This was in the dead of night when the camp would be filled with slumber. Suddenly there was a clattering of shattered pottery and 300 swirling lights around the camp.

The battle quickly turned into a rout. The army of the Midianites fled back the way they had come. As they retreated, the other tribes of Israel were called to join in.

*Then Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to the Jordan and crossed over, weary yet pursuing. (Judges 8:4).*

Gideon knew that victory would not be complete without destroying the military might of the Midianites. With this in mind, he began a chase of the Midianites that was to take him 150 miles.

*And he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”*

*The leaders of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army.?”*

*And Gideon said, “All right, when the Lord has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hands, then I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars.” (Judges 8:5-7).*

As we read a bit further, we find that Gideon received this same repulse from the town of Penuel. These were Israelite towns. They were inhabited by those two and a half tribes which had elected to remain on the east bank of the Jordan River.

Succoth	Declined to assist Gideon through the sharing of provisions.	<i>“I will thrash your bodies with thorns &amp; briars”</i>
Penuel		<i>“I will tear down this tower”</i>

Do you see what has happened? They are no longer identifying themselves with the covenant people of God. They want to “play it safe.” They have not yet chosen sides in the conflict.



7. Offer of Kingship.

*Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian."*

*But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you." (Judges 8:22-23).*

Gideon did not let his victory go to his head. In this he is to be commended. He gave the glory and the credit of his victory to the Lord.

8. The Ephod at Ophrah.

*Yet Gideon said to them, "I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil." For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites. (Judges 8:24).*

The people agree to this request and a total of 1700 shekels (about 42 pounds) of gold along with other ornaments are gathered and given to Gideon.

*And Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household. (Judges 8:27).*

An *ephod* was an apron-looking garment. It was worn by the high priest. It was the badge of priesthood (Judges 17:5). It was held in place by a waistband and associated with the urim and thummim which were kept within a breastplate.

What caused Gideon to do such a thing? Was it pride? Or the sudden wealth that was awarded him? He had faced the hoards of Midian and won. He faced the temptation of sudden wealth and lost.

## **ABIMELECH**

Gideon's closing years were a time of great prosperity. A part of this

prosperity was in the fact that he had no less than 70 sons. One of these sons was by a concubine from Shechem. His name was Abimelech, meaning “my father the king.”

Often when a ruler dies, his son succeeds him. But what happens when that ruler has 70 sons? The answer is trouble.

1. King at Shechem.

Following the death of his father, Abimelech goes to Shechem and raises support to build for himself a throne and to establish himself as king.

They supply him with funds by which he hires a band of “worthless and reckless fellows.” Seventy pieces of silver are used to hire these men who help to murder seventy brothers.

*Then he went to his father’s house at Ophrah, and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he hid himself.*

*And all the men of Shechem and all Beth-millo assembled together, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar which was at Shechem. (Judges 9:5-6).*

There is an interesting play on words as the men of Shechem “made king Abimelech as king.” They bring him to the point of making his position to match his name.

Shechem was a Canaanite city. It had been there in the days of Jacob (see Genesis 34 for the story of Dinah and the people of Shechem). They were used to the idea of a king and were especially prone to accept a man whose mother came from their city. Thus, the advent of Abimelech was as an anti-Israelite king.

2. Curse of Jotham.

Jotham, the youngest and only surviving son of Gideon, goes to Mount Gerazim and pronounces a curse upon the city of Shechem.

It begins with a parable in which the trees embark upon a quest for a king. Nobler trees refuse such a position. But the bramble bush

agrees.

*“And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in truth you are anointing me as king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, may fire come out from the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon.’”*  
(Judges 9:15).

The picture is obvious. The bramble bush has no shade by which it is able to shade the mighty cedars.

There is a motif established here of a false anointed one.

Shechem lies on the saddle ridge between the twin peaks of Gerizim and Ebal. This is significant as these were the two mountains upon which Joshua had all of the Israelites stand and recite the blessings and the cursings of the law.

*“...let fire come out from Abimelech and consume the men of Shechem and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and Beth-millo, and consume Abimelech.”* (Judges 9:20).

The rest of this chapter deals with the fulfillment of this curse. Following a three year reign, *“God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem”* (Judges 9:23).

Abimelech captures a rebellious Shechem and burns its tower fortress to the ground, sowing the city with salt. This is possibly related to the concept of a “covenant of salt.” The idea was that salt would preclude anything from growing in that location in the future.

Abimelech then goes on to attack Thebez. This is another city within the realm of Manasseh and located some six miles to the northeast of Shechem. It is here that Abimelech is killed.

*So Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it, and approached the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire.*

*But a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech’s head, crushing his skull.*

*Then he called quickly to the young man, his armor bearer, and said to him, “Draw your sword*

*and kill me, lest it be said of me, 'A woman slew him.' So the young man pierced him through, and he died. (Judges 9:52-54).*

Abimelech's death is an ignoble one - he is killed by a lowly weapon (the millstone) and at the hands of a woman. This is reminiscent of the death of Sisera.

Sisera	Killed by a woman	Tent peg through the Head
Abimelech		A Millstone crushed his Head

This motif of the crushed head of the enemy of God harkens back to the prophecy of the seed of the serpent from Genesis 3:15.

## **JEPHTHAH**

### **1. The Judgment of God.**

*Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him.*

*And the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the sons of Ammon. (Judges 10:6-7).*

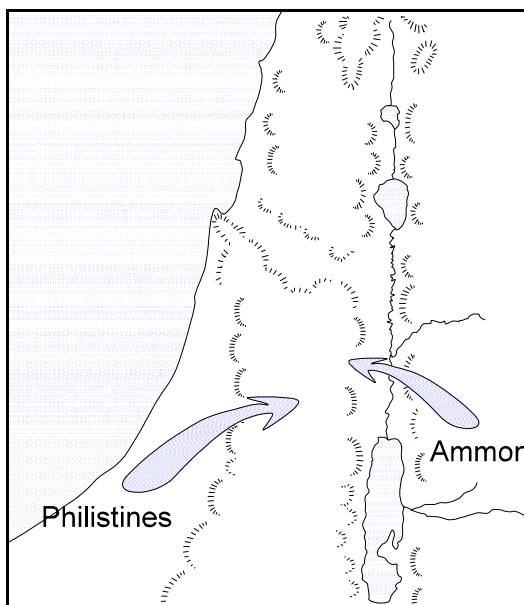
Once again the Israelites turned away from the Lord and indulged in the pagan practices of the nations around them. This time, judgment came from two separate directions.

#### **a. The Philistines.**

These were a group of warriors known as the "Sea Peoples." They had attempted an invasion of Egypt and had only barely been repulsed in the days of Rameses III. They had subsequently founded five cities on the seacoast area of southwestern Canaan.

b. The Ammonites.

These were the descendants of Lot through his incestuous relationship with his daughter. They were located to the southeast of Gilead.



It is the second of these two groups that is of foremost interest in this passage. The Philistines become a major concern as we examine Samson. Thus, Jephthah will be to the eastern tribes what Samson will be to the tribes of the west.

2. Jephthah - A Man Rejected.

*Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior, but he was the son of a harlot. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah.*

*And Gilead's wife bore him sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, "You shall not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman."*

*So Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob; and worthless fellows gathered themselves about Jephthah, and they went out with him. (Judges 11:1-3).*

Jephthah was illegitimate. As such, he was a social outcast and was stripped of any rights to inheritance. This was no fault of his own. He was being persecuted for the sins of his parents.

Those who speak of sexual sins as merely "a matter between consenting adults" normally forget the repercussions that such activities have upon the children.

Jephthah was forced to live in exile in “the land of Tob.” This was the area to the southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Here he became the leader of a group who are described as “worthless fellows,” literally “empty men”). The same term was used of the men who followed Abimelech (Judges 9:4).

3. An Invitation to Leadership.

*And it happened when the sons of Ammon fought against Israel that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob; 6 and they said to Jephthah, “Come and be our chief that we may fight against the sons of Ammon.” (Judges 11:5-6).*

It must have taken a great deal for the elders of Gilead to swallow their pride and come to Jephthah. They ask that he come and be their “chief.” In verse 11 they make him “head and chief” over them.

4. Initial Negotiations.

Before seeking a military resolve, Jephthah sends messengers to the king of the Ammonites in an attempt to negotiate a peaceful resolve. Several arguments are given.

- a. Israel took only the land of the Amorites and then only after being attacked when they sought safe passage through that land (Judges 11:15-22).
- b. It was the Lord who drove out the Amorites, something that Chemosh, the god of the Ammonites had failed to do (Judges 11:23-24).
- c. This land had now been the uncontested property of the Israelites for the past 300 years (Judges 11:26).

5. Victory of Jephthah.

*Now the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, so that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh; then he passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he went on to the sons of Ammon. (Judges 11:29).*

This is only the second time up to this point that it had been said of one of the judges that “*the Spirit of the Lord came upon*” him. It is an indication that Jephthah was trusting in the Lord for this victory. Indeed, Hebrews 11:32 lists Jephthah as one of those who “*by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight*” (Hebrews 11:33-34).

*So Jephthah crossed over to the sons of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord gave them into his hand.*

*And he struck them with a very great slaughter from Aroer to the entrance of Minnith, twenty cities, and as far as Abel-keramim. So the sons of Ammon were subdued before the sons of Israel. (Judges 11:12-13).*

We are not told the specific strategy used - only that it was the Lord who gave the victory. The result was not only that the Ammonites were pushed back into their own land, but that the entire line of fortresses which divided the lands of Israel from those of Ammon now fell to the Israelites.

6. Jephthah's Vow (Judges 11:30-31; 11:34-40).

Prior to the battle, Jephthah made a vow to the Lord that if he was victorious then upon his return “*whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering*” (Judges 11:31). Upon his victorious return, the first one to come out of the door of his house was his daughter. He responds in sorrow.

*And it came about when he saw her, that he tore his clothes and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you are among those who trouble me; for I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot take it back.” (Judges 11:35).*

She asks for a two month respite to mourn “because of my virginity” (Judges 11:37).

*And it came about at the end of two months that she returned to her father, who did to her according to the vow which he had made; and she had no relations with a man. Thus it became a custom in Israel, <sup>40</sup> that the daughters of Israel went yearly to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year. (Judges 11:39-40).*

This passage has led to some difficult questions since the natural reading seems to indicate that Jephthah engaged in human sacrifice, putting his own daughter to death in order to fulfill his foolish vow.

There are two possibilities:

- a. Jephthah did not actually have her put to death, but only sacrificed her in the sense of wholly dedicating her to the service of the Lord.
- b. Jephthah actually performed a human sacrifice, putting his daughter to death as a sacrifice to God.

Evidences have been offered for both of these interpretations.

<b>Dedicated to God</b>	<b>Human Sacrifice</b>
Being a Judge, Jephthah must have been Good-fearing and so would not have violated the Law	The promise of a simple animal sacrifice would hardly be a convincing vow in this situation
The Spirit of the Lord comes on Jephthah and he is mentioned in Hebrews 11 as being one of faith	This does not take place while the Spirit of the Lord is on him and he is not commended for this action
Daughter bewails her virginity and Judges 11:29 makes comment that “she knew not a man”	The burnt offering involves death in all 286 Old Testament occurrences



Exodus 38:8 and 1 Samuel 2:22 speak of women in service of the Tabernacle	If it was a frequent practice for women to serve in the Tabernacle, then why would this be a case for mourning?
Human sacrifice would have been clearly understood as a violation of God's Law; public opinion would have disallowed it	Human sacrifice was viewed as a last ditch effort in battle (2 Kings 3:27).
Leviticus 27:1-8 allows for redemption of humans vowed for sacrifice	There is little evidence of Jephthah's knowledge of the Law

Deuteronomy 12:31 warns that the Israelites were not to engage in the pagan practices of the Canaanites, *"for every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods."*

## THE PHILISTINES

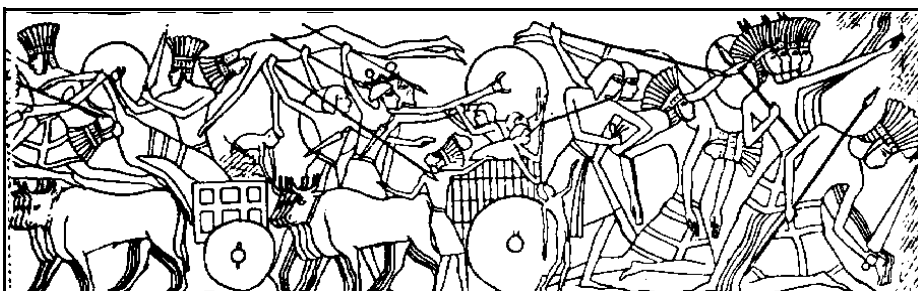
The story of Samson opens with a new antagonist for Israel. They are called the Philistines.

*Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, so that the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. (Judges 13:1).*

We have already made mention of the advent of the five cities of the Philistines upon the shores of southwest Canaan.

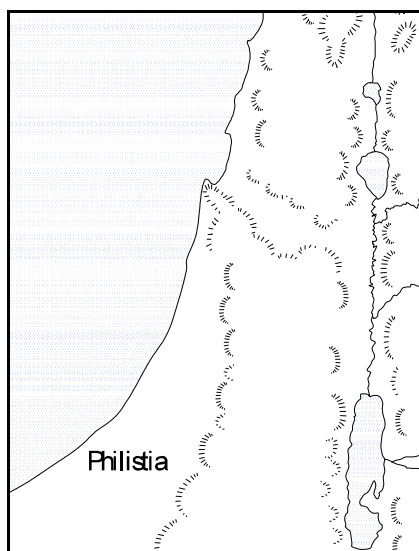
The word "Philistine" is a transliteration and is not a Hebrew or even a Semitic word. It seems to be Indo-European in origin. It is from this name that we derive the term "Palestine."

Genesis 10:14 identifies the tribal origins of the Philistines as a Hamitic people coming from the Casluhim (See also Jeremiah 47:4; Amos 9:7; Deuteronomy 2:23 and 1 Chronicles 1:12). The most plausible theory is that these were related either to the Minoans of Crete or to the Mycenaeans of early Greece.



Egyptian records speak of an invading group of “Sea Peoples” who were barely repulsed by Rameses III in 1188 B.C. It is probable that the Philistines were among these Sea Peoples.

With the exception of Ekron, the five major cities of the Philistines were all originally Canaanite cities which were taken over by the Philistines. From their position on the coast, they controlled the major trade route into Egypt.



- (1) Ashkelon was the only city to have its own harbor and so it was the major seaport for the Philistines. Letters from Ashkelon appear among the Amarna Tablets in Egypt.
- (2) Gaza was located 3 miles inland from the coast of the Mediterranean. The city was situated on a high hill a hundred feet over the surrounding plain. It boasted fifteen fresh water wells.
- (3) Ashdod was originally inhabited by the Anakim. The city boasted a temple to their god Dagon. It would be here that the Philistines would bring the captured Ark in the days of Samuel.
- (4) Ekron is the only city to have been built by the Philistines and not merely taken over.
- (5) Gath (“Winepress”) was the home of the Anakim, a race of giants, one of whom was Goliath. As there were several towns by the name of Gath, the exact location of this city has not yet been determined.

## **SAMSON**

### **1. Birth and Early Life.**

*“For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:5).*

The requirements of the Nazarite Vow had been set forth in Numbers 6:2-5. It was a “vow of dedication.” Indeed, the word “Nazarite” comes from the Hebrew word *nezer*, “to separate.”

Samson was to be separated unto God from the womb. While those who partook of the Nazarite Vow generally only did so for a limited time, Samson was to be a permanent Nazarite.

*Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the Lord blessed him.*

*And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahanch-Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. (Judges 13:24-25).*

The name “Samson” seems to be taken from the Hebrew word *shemesh*, meaning “sun.” Perhaps this was because he was born only a few miles away from Beth-Shemesh (“House of the Sun”). As such, it was a Canaanite name, for they worshipped the sun.

At some point in his life, the Spirit of God “began to stir” within Samson. Perhaps this stirring was with reference to his great strength.

We should not think of Samson as a great muscle-man. Rather, he seems to have been an ordinary man gifted with extraordinary strength.

### **3. His Desire for a Philistine Woman.**

*Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the*

*Philistines. (Judges 14:1).*

Samson lived in a cross-cultural community. The Sorek Valley hosted both Israelite, Canaanite and Philistine towns. And as Samson came of marital age, his eye fell upon a Philistine woman.

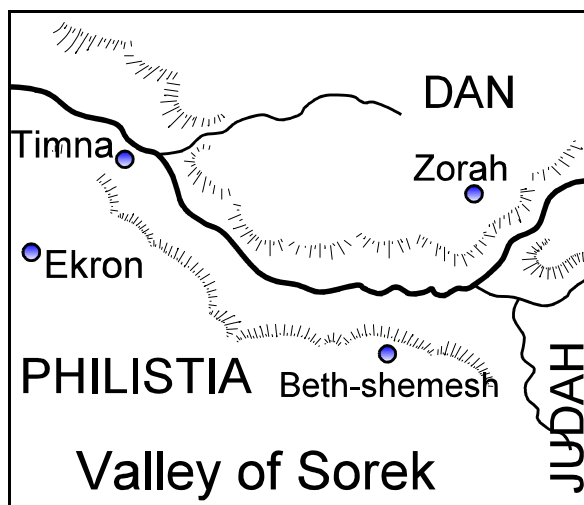
In verse 3 he says to his father, “Get her for me, for she **looks good to me.**” Again in verse 7 we read that “**she looked good to Samson.**” In both these cases, the Hebrew says literally, “She is right in my eyes.” This is a refrain which we will see throughout the closing chapters of the book of Judges when “*every man did what was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

Samson was a He-Man with a "she-weakness." He had a tendency toward lust that was to conquer him. But the real point of this story is how God used Samson in spite of his failures. It is a story of the sovereignty of God.

Judges 14:4 says that all of his troubled relationships were “*of the Lord, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines.*”

4. The Wedding Incident.

Wedding feasts were no short affair. They customarily lasted as long as a week (14:17). The groom would throw a great party to which he would invite all of his friends. Since the wedding was taking place in a Philistine town, it was a group of Philistines who came to attend the feast.



Normally, custom mandated that the wedding feast be at the house of the groom. But this was not the case here. Instead of this Philistine girl associating herself with the people of God, Samson was associating himself with the Philistines. In the midst of the feast,

Samson proposes a riddle and a very expensive wager.

*So he said to them, "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." (Judges 14:14).*

After three days, the Philistine guests have not discovered the answer, so they threaten his bride with death and with the destruction of her father's home. She, in turn, solicits the answer from Samson and betrays him.

*Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil, and gave the changes of clothes to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house. (Judges 14:19).*

Samson's attack on the Philistines was motivated, not from spiritual reasons, but merely of revenge. Remember that the Lord was using his strength in spite of his impure motivations.

This is the first of several escalating conflicts with the Philistines.

Verse	Incident	Number Killed
14:19	Samson kills men of Ashkelon to take their clothes in payment	30 men
15:5	Samson burns farmlands of Philistines	Unknown
15:8	Samson strikes with a great slaughter	Unknown
15:15	Samson breaks ropes that bind him and fights with the jawbone of an ass	1000 men
16:30	Samson pushes down the house of Dagon, killing all within	More than he had killed in his life

5. In the Time of Wheat Harvest - An Escalating Vengeance.

The anger of his vengeance temporarily cooled, Samson returns to take his wife, only to find that she has been given to another man. Samson takes this as a further insult and takes up a career as an arsonist, burning up a great number of the fields of the Philistines. The Philistines respond by burning the home of his would-be bride and her father. They die in the flames, she suffering the very death she had sought to avoid in initially betraying Samson.

The escalation continues as Samson “*struck them ruthlessly with a great slaughter*” (Judges 15:8). Following this, Samson escapes to a refuge in a cave near the town of Etam (a mere 2 miles from Bethlehem) in the territory of Judah.

6. The Lehi Incident - the Jawbone of an Ass.

Samson’s actions had already brought retribution upon his bride and father-in-law. Now the Philistines invade the territory of Judah, putting pressure upon the Israelites to turn Samson over to them. They agree and Samson is bound and made a captive of the Philistines.

*When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands.*

*And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out and took it and killed a thousand men with it. (Judges 15:14-15).*

The name “Lehi” means “jawbone.” It seems likely that it was given this designation following this event.

7. The Gates of Gaza.

*Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.*

*When it was told to the Gazites, saying, “Samson has come here,” they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. And they kept silent all night, saying, “Let us wait until the morning light, then we will kill him.”*

*Now Samson lay until midnight, and at*

*midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts and pulled them up along with the bars; then he put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron. (Judges 16:1-3).*

This is the second time a woman became the source of trouble for Samson. Perhaps as many as 20 years had passed since his last encounter with the Philistines (Judges 15:20).

While they lie in wait for him, he literally breaks out of the city, carrying the city gates with him. This had a special significance in the ancient world. A city was considered to be no stronger than its gates. To have the gates carried off was the height of humiliation for this city.

Hebron is located nearly 40 miles to the east of Gaza. Furthermore, it is uphill all the way, rising to a height of 3000 feet above sea level. Apparently, Samson took these gates there as a trophy of the strength of the God of Israel.

8. Samson and Delilah.

*After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. (Judges 16:4).*

Though Delilah is not described as a Philistine, her name does not seem to be Semitic in origin and so it is likely that she was a Philistine. The lords of the Philistines offer her a large bribe if she will discover the secret of Samson's great strength. Samson is at first evasive, telling her lie after lie. But ultimately he relents.

*And it came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death.*

*So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, "A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazarite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I shall become weak and be like any other man." (Judges 16:16-17).*

Delilah is quick to make use of this information and, while he is sleeping, she has his head shaved.

*And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.*

*Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison*

*However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off. (Judges 16:20-22).*

The gouging of the eyes of a hated prisoner was common in the ancient world. It assured him a fate of servitude. He is brought to Gaza, the city which he had humiliated by carrying away the gates.

Thrown into prison, he is assigned the duty of grinding mill by hand (the large animal-powered mills were not yet in use).

9. Samson's Death.

*Now the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice, for they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands." (Judges 16:23).*

"Dagon" was the god of the Philistines. Though the name is similar to *dag*, the Hebrew word for "fish," more recent archaeological studies have identified Dagon as a Canaanite deity which had been borrowed by the Philistines. In Ugaritic literature he is the father of Baal. Dagon was the god of grain (*dgn*). Perhaps this was why Samson had been given the task of grinding grain in the prison. They attributed this victory, not to Samson's disobedience, but to the power of their own god.

In the midst of their celebration, they have Samson brought out for their amusement. In the midst of this entertainment, Samson prays one last time to the Lord.

*Then Samson called to the Lord and said, "O*



*Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."*

*And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left.*

*And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life. (Judges 16:28-30).*

Two Philistine temples have been uncovered by archaeologists. One at Tel Qasile, in northern Tel Aviv, and one in Tel Mique, ancient Ekron, 21 miles south of Tel Aviv. Both temples share a unique design; the roof was supported by two central pillars. The pillars were made of wood and rested on stone support bases six feet apart from one another.

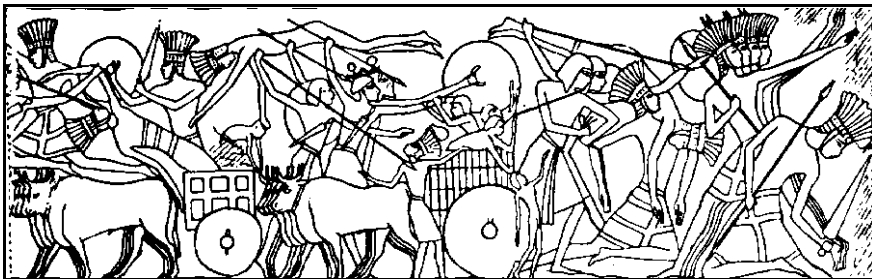
# ISRAEL IN THE DAYS OF THE MONARCHY

*Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek.*

*And the Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield. (1 Samuel 4:1-2).*

The Philistines had become the dominate force along the Mediterranean coastline in the latter days of the Judges. It is from this group that we derive the name “Palestine.”

During the reign of Rameses 3rd of Egypt, this area had experienced a massive wave of migrations. The Sea Peoples had swept down the coast toward Egypt and were only turned away after a terrible battle on the Nile River. One tribe of these Sea Peoples were the Peleset - the Philistines. They had settled on the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean, establishing themselves in five cities on the coastal plain. For years there had been discord between the Philistines in the lowlands and the Israelites who lived in the hills.



Indeed, the reason that the Israelites lived in the hills is because the Philistines had iron chariots and this gave them greater mobility in the lowlands and made them masters of the coastal areas (Judges 1:19). But now, for the first time, the Israelites fight a pitched battle against the Philistines. The result is disastrous.

The place of this battle was known as Ebenezer. The name “Ebenezer” is a compound made up of the joining of two words.

- a. *Eben* is the word for “stone.”
- b. *Ezar* is the verb, “to help.”

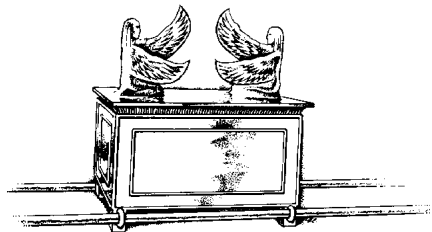
It therefore means “the stone of help.” Unfortunately, there was no help for the people of Israel on that day.

## ISRAEL AND THE ARK

*When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.”*

*So the people sent to Shiloh and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts who sits above the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. (1 Samuel 4:3-4).*

In light of their defeat, the Israelites determine to bring the ark of the covenant with them into their next battle against the Philistines. They are thinking of it as a good like charm. The second battle is another defeat for Israel.



First Battle of Ebenezer	4,000 Israelites killed
Second Battle of Ebenezer	30,000 Israelites killed The ark is taken Hophni & Phinehas are killed

When Eli the judge of Israel hears the news that the ark has been taken, he falls backward off his seat, breaks his neck and dies “for he was old and heavy” (Judges 4:18). Eli illustrates the tragedy of a lack of church discipline. He allowed his sons to remain in the priesthood and did not seek to have them removed, in spite of the fact of their continuing sin.

The wife of Phinehas hears the news. She is pregnant and the shock of this tragedy brings on the labor pains. As she dies in childbirth, the women try to console her, telling her that she has given birth to a son. But with her dying breath, she names the child “Ichabod.”

*And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel,” because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband.*

*And she said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken.” (1 Samuel 4:21-22).*

It has been noted that אִי־כָבוֹד (“Ichabod”) uses a very rare form of the negative particle (אֵין) found normally only in Ugaritic and Phoenician.

## THE ARK IN THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES

1 Samuel 5 records the travels of the ark of the covenant after it had fallen into the hands of the Philistines.

Verse	City	Occurrences
5:1	Ashdod	Idol of Dagon first found on its face. It is again on its face, this time with head and hands removed. People broke out with tumors.
5:8	Gath	A very great confusion. The men of the city smitten with tumors.
5:10	Ekron	A very great confusion. The men who did not die were smitten with tumors.

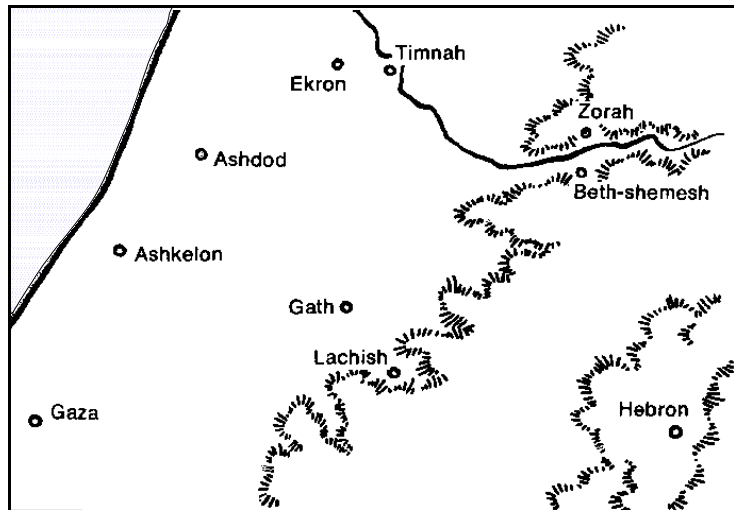
The ark was considered to be the throne of God. God was described as “*the Lord of hosts who sits above the cherubim*” (4:4). Since the God of Israel was invisible, His presence could only be determined by the place where He would sit.

Dagon was the god of the Philistines. Though the name is similar to *dag*, the Hebrew word for “fish,” more recent archaeological studies have identified Dagon as a Canaanite deity which had been borrowed by the Philistines. In

Ugaritic literature he is the father of Baal. Dagon was the god of grain.

The significance of the idol being found face down before the ark of the Lord is obvious. And when, the following day, the people found the idol again face down and this time with its head and hands removed, it is an obvious indication that Yahweh had defeated Dagon in battle and had removed these battle trophies, much the same way that David would later remove the head of Goliath.

After seven months of passing the ark from city to city, the Philistines determine to send it back home to the land of the Israelites. They do so, sending it back with an offering of five golden tumors and five golden mice



(hoping that this would take away the plagues of tumors). They place these along with the ark onto an ark pulled by two cows.

1. Beth-shemesh.

*And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh; and they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh.*

*Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see it.*

*And the cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite and stood there where there was a large stone; and they split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. (1 Samuel 6:12-14).*

Beth-shemesh is located on the east end of the Sorek Valley, near to where Samson had lived. Its name means “house of the sun.” It had been allotted in the days of Joshua to the priests (Joshua 21:16).

Archaeological excavations at Beth-Shemesh and have revealed a massive fortification system and a huge underground reservoir cut out of the rock. Artifacts show a blend of Canaanite, Israelite and Philistine culture.

These people working out in their fields look up to see a strange procession. A pair of oxen pulling a cart on which rests the throne of God. And behind them come five kings and all of their retainers. It was as though the Lord were leading all of the enemies of Israel in a triumphant parade.

The people of Beth-shemesh respond in worship, taking apart the cart on which the ark was transported and using both the wood and the oxen as a sacrifice to the Lord.

*And He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. He struck down all the people, 50,070 men, and the people mourned because the Lord had struck down the people with a great slaughter. (1 Samuel 6:19).*

The Philistines had suffered because of the presence of the ark in their cities, but the Israelites were no less immune to the results of a careless treatment of the ark. It is not as though they were ignorant of the importance of the ark. These were Levites. They would have been familiar with the requirements of the Law. They would have known that, in the days in the Wilderness, only the sons of Aaron had been permitted to handle the ark - that even they did not presume to look within the ark, but reverently covered it with a veil each time they were required to move it (Numbers 4:5-20).

The number translated as 50,070 men reads differently in the Hebrew text: 70 men, 50,000 men.

Aside from the fact that there were not this many men in the town of Beth-shemesh, the construction of the Hebrew suggests that this reading might be the result of a textual error, even though this is not apparent from either the Massoretic text or from the Septuagint.

2. Kiriath-jearim.

*And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took the ark of the Lord and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord.*

*And it came about from the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim that the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. (1 Samuel 7:1-2).*

Demoralized by the death of their men, the people of Beth-shemesh sent the ark 10 miles up the road to the town of Kiriath-jearim (only 8 miles from Jerusalem). It is placed into the keeping of Abinadab and his son Eleazar. The ark will remain there until being brought to Jerusalem in the days of David.

## THE JUDGESHIP OF SAMUEL

Samuel was to be the last judge of Israel. His ministry is one which connects the period of the judges with that of the kings.

1. Call to Repentance.

The capture of the ark had been due to the unfaithfulness of Israel. The spiritual leaders of the nation had turned their hearts away from the Lord and He, in turn, had brought judgment upon the nation.

*Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "if you return to the Lord with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."*

*So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the Lord alone. (1 Samuel 7:3-4).*

It was not only the priests and spiritual leaders of the nation who had been in sin. The Israelites had begun to engage in idol-worship. Samuel calls for repentance. This repentance is threefold:

- a. Remove the foreign gods. It began with a turning away from the sin in which they had been involved.
- b. Direct your hearts to the Lord. False worship was to be replaced with true worship - a worship of commitment to the Lord.
- c. Serve Him alone. True repentance always involves a resulting obedience. It is not merely a change of mind. There is also a resulting change of action. Notice that they were not merely called to serve the Lord. They were called to serve God alone. They are to serve Him and are to serve no other.

Jesus pointed out this principle when He said that “*no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other*” (Matthew 6:24).

## 2. Victory Over the Philistines.

*Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.*

*Then the sons of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” (1 Samuel 7:7-8).*

What was it that caused the Philistines to attack Israel at this particular time? It was because they heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah. Perhaps they viewed this gathering as a military threat.

Satan always attacks when he sees God’s people repenting of their sins. He views this, not as a military threat, but as a spiritual threat.

Samuel also views this as a spiritual battle. And so, he does not prepare the men for battle. He doesn’t beat any plowshares into swords. He doesn’t suggest an armament plan or devise a strategy. Instead, he performs an act of worship.

*Now Samuel was offering up the burnt*



*offering, and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel.*

*And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as below Beth-car. (1 Samuel 7:10-11).*

The Lord wins the battle. And He does so in a way that is reminiscent of the days of Joshua. You remember the story. Joshua was fighting an alliance of five kings and he called upon the sun and the moon to stand still and they obeyed him. The Lord sent great hailstones against the enemies of Israel when killed more than were killed in the fighting. And the Israelites pursued their enemies down the descent of Beth-horon.

Now it happens again. There is an alliance of five kings, a prayer to the Lord, an answer from the skies, and a victory in which the Israelites pursue their enemies down the valley (This is the same valley in which lies Beth-car).

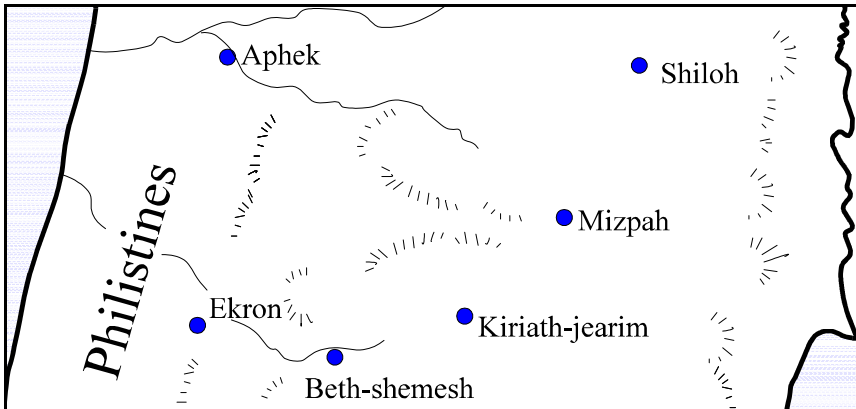
If I had been there prior to the battle, I might have been tempted to say, “Hey guys, I know that God used to do this sort of thing, but times have changed. That was a long time ago in another age and God doesn’t do that sort of thing anymore.” There is a lesson here. It is that we dare not underestimate the power of God.

### 3. The Memorial at Ebenezer.

*Then Samuel took a stone and set it as far as below Beth-car and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” (1 Samuel 7:12).*

The word Ebenezer is actually two words in the Hebrew. *Eben* is the word for “stone.” *Ezer* is the verb, “to help.” It is called this because this was the place where the Lord “helped us.”

This does not seem to be the same Ebenezer as the one mentioned in chapter 4:1 and 5:1. That first Ebenezer was located near Aphek (4:1). This Ebenezer is between Mizpah and Shen. That first Ebenezer was a place of defeat. This second Ebenezer is a stone of victory. And so, Samuel establishes it as a memorial.



Memorials are important. They are important because we need to be reminded of those times when the Lord has helped us. We need to be reminded because, when times get tough, we forget.

Do you have any memorials of the faithfulness of God in your life? You ask the Lord to remind you of those times. And then you build a memorial there so that you will never forget.

## SAUL

### 1. Call for a King.

From the days in the wilderness, God had told the Israelites that one day they would have a king (Deuteronomy 17:14-17). And yet, it had been understood up to this point that GOD was their king. When the Israelites had offered the kingship to Gideon, he had refused, insisting that “*the Lord shall rule over you*” (Judges 8:23). That all changes when the people of Israel ask Samuel for a king.

*And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel.*

*Now the name of his first-born was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba.*

*His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice. (1 Samuel 8:1-3).*

Samuel was the judge of Israel. As Samuel grew older, he was succeeded by his two sons. Their judging was characterized by dishonesty and corruption. They followed after a perversion of justice.

There is a parallel here between Samuel and Eli. They both judged Israel. They both had two sons. Their sons acted wickedly and were rejected.

Perhaps Samuel had learned his parenting skills from Eli. The good news is that he does not seem to have been partaking in their sinful behavior the way in which Eli did. Because his sons were not fit to succeed him, the Israelites perceived a need for a king.

*Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; 5 and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." (1 Samuel 8:4-5).*

In verse 1, Samuel had appointed his sons to be judges over Israel. Now the elders ask Samuel to appoint a king to judge them. There are several things which ought to be mentioned in defense of Israel's request for a king:

- a. The request was initiated because of the ungodly successors to Samuel. In verse 20 they shall add that they are seeking one who would fight their battles.
- b. Instead of seeking a king on their own, they sought the right man from the spokesman of the Lord.
- c. God had told the Israelites that one day they would have a king (Deuteronomy 17:14-17). Nevertheless, their request was perceived as a rejection, not only of Samuel and his sons, but even of the Lord who tells Samuel that "*they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them*" (8:7). One of the problems with a king was that many of the surrounding nations considered their kings to be gods.

The Lord issues a warning of what it will mean for the Israelites to have a king to reign over them.

- He will draft your sons into his military (8:11).
- He will conscript people to do his plowing and harvesting and to manufacture his weapons of war (8:12).
- He will take your daughters for household duties (8:13).
- He will take your lands and vineyards and groves and give them to his retainers (8:14).
- He will tax the produce of your land (8:15).
- He will take your servants and animals (8:16).
- He will take YOU (8:17).

They have come and asked the Lord for a king. Before it is all over, they will come and ask God to take their king back (8:18). The career of Saul is set forth in three acts, each of which consists of several parallel scenes.

	<b>Act 1</b>	<b>Act 2</b>	<b>Act 3</b>
Scene 1	Saul meets Samuel and is anointed by him (9-10)	Saul meets Samuel and is condemned by him (15).	Saul meets Samuel and his death is foretold (28).
Scene 2	Success in battle with the help of God (11).	Success in battle with the help of David (17-18).	Failure in battle and suicide (31).
Scene 3	Saul's failure before Samuel and Jonathan (13-14).	Saul's failure before David (19-26).	

## 2. The Anointing of Saul.

Saul comes on the scene, not seeking a kingdom or a throne, but looking for some lost donkeys. As they are about to give up on their quest, Saul's servant suggests that they go and inquire from the local Seer about the missing donkeys.

They discuss this plan. Saul is reluctant because they have no gift to give to the Seer. But the servant has a quarter of a shekel of silver. This was not a coin, for coinage would not be invented until the 7th century B.C. This was a weight.

Meanwhile, the Lord had revealed to Samuel that a man was coming from the tribe of Benjamin who would be anointed as the deliverer of the Israelites. Thus, when Saul arrives at the gate of the city, he is met by Samuel who informs him that the donkeys have been found and then proceeds to invite him as the guest of honor to a special dinner.

*Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, "Has not the Lord anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?" (1 Samuel 10:1).*

Notice the use of the definite article in describing the flask of oil (the Hebrew **הַשֵּׁמֶן** has the sign of the direct object). This was not merely any old flask. It was the flask. I think it is possible that this was the flask that contained holy anointing oil of a special recipe which had been used to anoint the tabernacle and the holy things (Exodus 30:22-32).

*Thereafter Samuel called the people together to the Lord as Mizpah (1 Samuel 10:17).*

Mizpah was the place where the Lord had last delivered the Israelites from the attack of the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:5-11). It had since become one of the regular points along Samuel's traveling circuit (1 Samuel 7:16).

*Thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot.*

*Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they looked for him, he could not be found.*

*Therefore he inquired further of the Lord, "Has the man come here yet?" So the Lord said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage."*

*So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.*

*And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people." So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!" (1*

*Samuel 10:20-24).*

There is a touch of irony here. When we first saw Saul, he was being sent to look for missing donkeys. Now it is Saul who is missing and the people go looking for him. They find him hiding by the baggage.

Remember, being a king was not something for which Saul had been seeking. He had come on the scene seeking nothing but a pair of lost donkeys. And now that he is chosen, he is still reluctant to take of the mantle of kingship.

3. The Nature of Saul's Kingship.

*And Saul also went to his house at Gibeah;  
and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched  
went with him.*

*But certain worthless men said, "How can this  
one deliver us?" And they despised him and did not  
bring him any present. But he kept silent. (1 Samuel  
10:26-27).*

What happened after Saul had been proclaimed the first king of Israel? Did he move into the royal palace? He did not. There was no royal palace into which he could move. And so, when the celebration was over, there was nothing else for him to do but to return home. When next we see him, he will be at the south end of a northbound team of oxen.

You see, Israel at this time was nothing more than a scattered and disunited collection of tribes. This was not a unified nation. You couldn't even get them to agree on what to eat for lunch. And they also did not agree that Saul should be their new king, no matter what Samuel had told them. But this changed dramatically when Saul led the Israelites to victory in battle.

4. Saul and the Ammonites.

*Now Nahash the Ammonite came up and  
besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh  
said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us and we  
will serve you."*

*But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "I will  
make it with you on this condition, that I will gouge*

*out the right eye of every one of you, thus I will make it a reproach on all Israel.”*

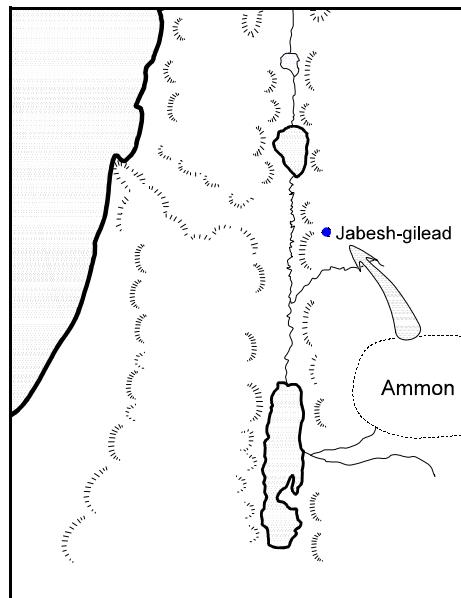
*And the elders of Jabesh said to him, “Let us alone for seven days, that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to deliver us, we will come out to you.” (1 Samuel 11:1-3).*

There was bad blood between the Ammonites and the Israelites. The Ammonites were descendants of Lot through his incestuous relationship with one of his daughters (the name Ammon - *עַמּוֹנִי* - means “my father”). They occupied the territory north of the Arnon River and east of the Dead Sea.

- They had joined Moab in invading Israel and taking Jericho in the days of Ehud (Judges 3:12-13).
- They had also warred with Israel in the days of Jephthah and had been defeated by him, losing a number of their border cities to him (Judges 10-11).

Now they were back. The city which they were now attacking was Jabesh-gilead. By strange coincidence, this is the same city which had been destroyed by the Israelites for not joining in the punitive attack against the tribe of Benjamin following the incident at Gibeah in which a Levite’s concubine was raped and then dismembered (Judges 19-21).

The city had since been rebuilt and re-inhabited. It is now being attacked, not by Israel, but by Ammon. And because of her past history, it seems doubtful that anyone will come to her aid. Except for a man from the tribe of Benjamin - Saul’s tribe. And specifically, a man of Gibeah - Saul’s city.



<b>Judges 19-21</b>	<b>1 Samuel 11</b>
Takes place when Israel had no king.	Becomes the confirming event of Saul's kingship.
Gibeah becomes a city destined to be destroyed for her sins.	Gibeah becomes the city from which salvation goes forth.
Jabesh-gilead refuses to join in Israel's call for punishment against wicked Gibeah.	Jabesh-gilead is besieged and asks for help from Israel.
Benjamin becomes the object of attack.	Benjamin becomes the leader in this holy war.

*Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry.*

*And he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." Then the dread of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out as one man.*

*And he numbered them in Bezek; and the sons of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000. (1 Samuel 11:6-8).*

It is possible that the term *aleph* ("thousand") is to be understood in a more general sense as a military unity.

Just as the Israelites had been called to arms against Gibeah by the cutting up of the body of the murdered concubine, so this time two oxen are cut up and their pieces sent throughout the land as a call to arms.

Gibeah which was formerly in need of the heavy hand of punishment has now become the rallying point of salvation for God's people.

Saul moves north to Bezek where he musters his forces in preparation for an attack across the Jordan.

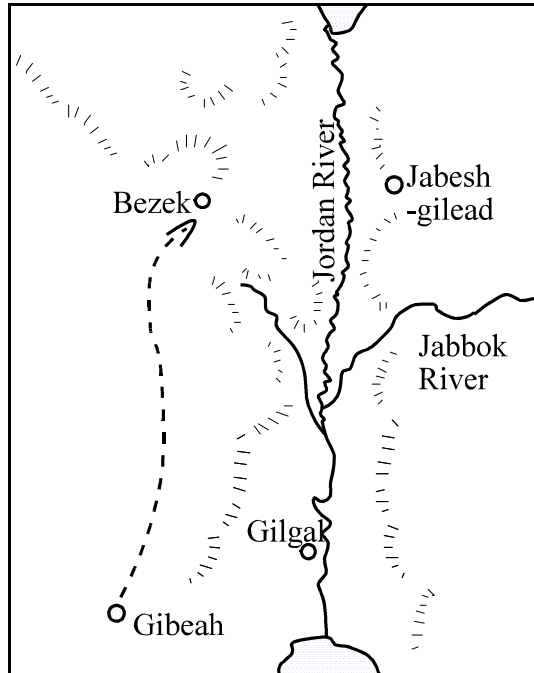
*And it happened the next morning that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into*



*the midst of the camp at the morning watch, and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. And it came about that those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together. (1 Samuel 11:11).*

Having assembled at Bezek on the mountains of Gilboa, Saul and his force cross the Jordan River and attack the Ammonites just before sunrise. The result is an overwhelming victory.

It is noteworthy that it would be at this same locale on the mountains of Gilboa that Saul would eventually fight his last battle. And when his body is mutilated and hung up on the wall of the city of Beth-shan, it will be men of Jabesh-gilead who will rescue the body and give it a proper burial.



Flushed with their victory, the people call for the death of those who had originally refused to follow Saul as king. Saul refuses, requiring leniency, pointing out that it is the Lord who has accomplished deliverance.

5. Coronation at Gilgal.

*Then Samuel said to the people, "Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there."*

*So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they also offered sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly. (1 Samuel 11:14-15).*

Gilgal was located on the western bank of the Jordan River. It was here that Joshua and the Israelites first camped after crossing the Jordan River. They had built a monument here of 12 memorial stones. And it was here that the Israelites had renewed the covenant, circumcising all of the men in the camp.

This was a place of...

- Victory
- Celebration
- Memorial
- Rededication

Gilgal will be the scene both of Saul's coronation, his rebuke and his ultimate rejection as king.

Saul is the story of a great beginning. But the spiritual life is not limited to beginnings. It is not a sprint. It is, instead, a marathon. Saul had made an excellent beginning. This young man who had come on the scene looking for lost donkeys had instead found himself as the redeemer of Israel and her first king. The tragedy of his story is told in chapters 13-15.

Chapter 13	Chapter 14	Chapter 15
Jonathan's victory over the Philistines at Geba	Jonathan's victory over the Philistine garrison at Michmash	Saul's victory over the Amalekites
Saul disobeys the law by offering sacrifices	Saul makes an oath of hunger which Jonathan inadvertently disobeys	Saul disobeys God by sparing the life of Agag, king of the Amalekites.

The section comes to a climax when Samuel refuses the company of Saul. When Saul reaches out to detain the prophet, he inadvertently tears his cloak. Samuel retorts, "*The Lord has torn the kingdom from you today, and has given it to your neighbor*" (1 Samuel 15:28).

## DAVID

The name "David" is unusual within the world of the Bible. It means

“beloved” and, for all his faults, this is a man who loved the Lord and who was beloved by God.

1. The Goliath Incident.

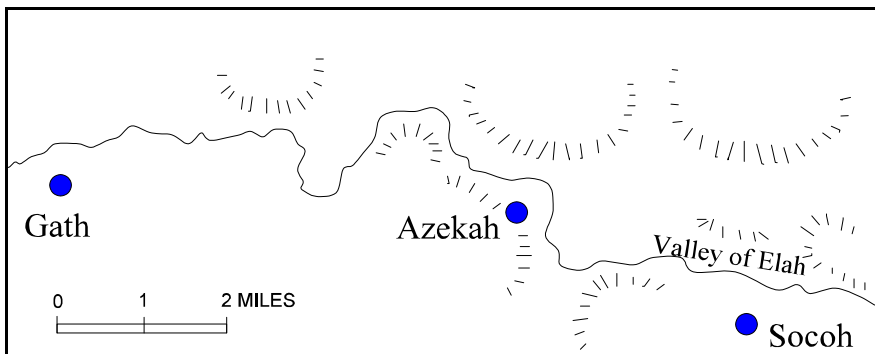
The Story of David & Goliath is probably one of the best known Bible stories, and has been told in Sunday Schools for generations. As such it has perhaps become too familiar, and perhaps as we read it over, we tend to read it through the eyes of a child.

*Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered at Socoh which belongs to Judah, and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim.*

*And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and camped in the valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array to encounter the Philistines.*

*And the Philistines stood on the mountain on one side while Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them. (1 Samuel 17:1-3).*

As you leave the coast land area of Palestine along the Mediterranean and move eastward, the first geographical feature you encounter is a range of low foothills known as the Shephelah. Over the years the streams flowing down from these hills have cut deep gorges known as Wadis. The Valley of Elah is one such Wadi. Located about 15 miles west of Bethlehem, this Wadi served as a pass from east to west (the stream disappears entirely in the dry season leaving a riverbed of small round stones).



The Philistines held the seacoast plains of Canaan. The Israelites held the mountains. The Shephelah was the contested area between.

*Then a champion came out from the armies of the Philistines named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.*

*And he had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was clothed in scale-armor which weighed five thousand shekels of bronze.*

*He also had bronze greaves on his legs and a bronze javelin slung between his shoulders.*

*And the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the head of his spear weighed six hundred shekels of iron; his shield-carrier also walked before him. (1 Samuel 17:4-7).*

The name "Goliath" seems to be Indo-European in origin. He is described as having the latest armaments in modern warfare.

This paragraph leaves us with a number of weights and measures.

Weight/Measure	Meaning	Equivalent
Cubit	Distance from the tip of the fingers to the elbow	18 inches
Span	From the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger when the hand is extended	8 inches
Shekel, from a word meaning "to weigh"	There is considerable fluctuation as to what constituted a shekel.	4/10's to 3/10's of an ounce

When we put these together, we are presented with the following description:

Item	Description	Equivalent
Height	<i>six cubits and a span</i>	9 feet, 8 inches
Armor	<i>5000 shekels of bronze</i>	125 pounds
Head of his Spear	<i>600 shekels of iron</i>	15 pounds

The tallest man in recent recorded history was Robert Wadlow who was 8 feet, 11 inches at the time of his death on July 15, 1940 (he was

only 22 years old). In his case, being overly tall did not lead to good health, but quite the opposite. On the other hand, it should be noted that when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, one of the scrolls included the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel and there is a textual variant that describes Goliath as four cubits and a span. This would make him around 6 feet, 8 inches tall. In a world where the average height was around five and a half feet, he still would have been a veritable giant.

No matter which reading we adopt, Goliath was the equivalent of a human tank. He looked indestructible. To even get to him, one would have to get past the large figure-eight shield which was held by his armor bearer.

*And he stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, and said to them, "Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me.*

*"If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us." (1 Samuel 17:8-9).*

Warfare in the ancient world was a violent and bloody affair (this is true for war in any age). It was not uncommon for 20 or 30 thousand men to fall in a single battle. Goliath was a part of a highly cultured race. He offers a relatively peaceful alternative. A representative from each of the two warring nations will fight and decide the issue. Instead of thousands falling in battle, only one man shall die. A young shepherd named David takes up the challenge.

*And he took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:40).*

A sling consisted of two long cords tied to a pocket at the center. The slinger would place a stone in the pocket, whirl to ends of the cord and then release one of them, letting the stone fly at its target. I've used a sling before. And I admit that it takes a lot of practice.

The sling was one of the accepted weapons of the Israelites. It was

not dependent upon the ironworks of the Philistines. There had been an entire brigade of 700 slingers from the tribe of Benjamin who could “*sling a stone at a hair and not miss*” (*Judges 20:16*).

*And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground. (1 Samuel 17:49).*

The later Greek helmets had a protective prong down the center of the face to stop such assaults. But the Philistine helmets left the face exposed. Do you remember the incident of the Ark within the Temple of Dagon? There is an interesting similarity with the fall of Dagon and the fall of Goliath.

<b>Ark Versus Dagon</b>	<b>David Versus Goliath</b>
The Ark had been captured by the Philistines and placed in the Temple of Dagon.	Goliath saw in David an easy victory.
Dagon was found face down before the Ark.	Goliath fell on his face.
Dagon was found with his head removed which led to an enduring practice.	David cut off Goliath’s head and kept it as a trophy.
Dagon was seen by all to be a dead idol of stone.	The Lord is seen to be the living God (17:26).

2. David the Fugitive.

David’s rise to popularity was meteoric in its suddenness. One day he is a simple shepherd and the next he is the hero of Israel who overshadows even the lofty king Saul. It is not long before Saul becomes jealous and David has to flee for his life.

Throughout this period, we continue to see Saul fall short at every turn while David continues to succeed.

19:1	20:1	21:10	22:6	24:1	26:1
David flees from the presence of Saul	David & Jonathan makes a covenant	David flees to Gath	Saul Pursues David		
			1st Pursuit	2nd Pursuit	3rd Pursuit
David assisted by Michal	David assisted by Ahimelech	David assisted by king of Moab	David encouraged by Jonathan	David cuts Saul's robe	David takes Saul's spear & jug
David assisted by the Lord			David assisted by his Circumstances	David assisted by Abigail	David flees to Gath

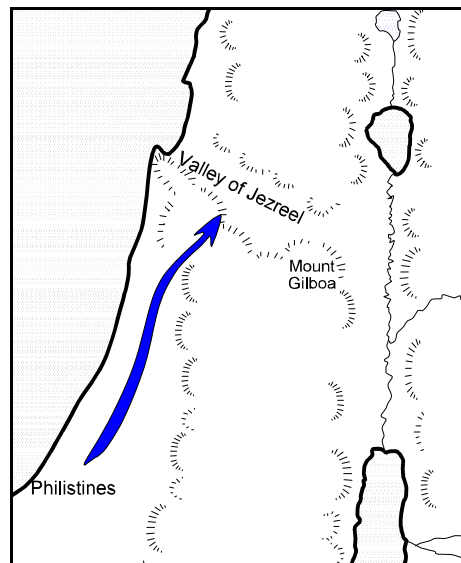
Saul's court was in Gibeah, a city in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin, about 10-15 miles north of Jerusalem. David flees, first to Nob where he finds refuge at the tabernacle, then later to the cities of the Philistines.

### 3. The Death of Saul.

*So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in Gilboa. (1 Samuel 28:5).*

Shunem is located in the Valley of Jezreel at the southern foot of Mount Moreh, nine miles east-northeast of Megiddo. Mount Gilboa is 10 miles to the south on the southeastern edge of the Valley of Jezreel.

Instead of coming up the narrow mountain passes as they had in the past, the Philistines now moved across the wide open plains of Jezreel. Here they could maneuver their chariot corps to full effect. If this military operation was successful, it would result in splitting the land in two.



*When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly.*

*When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets. (1 Samuel 28:6-7).*

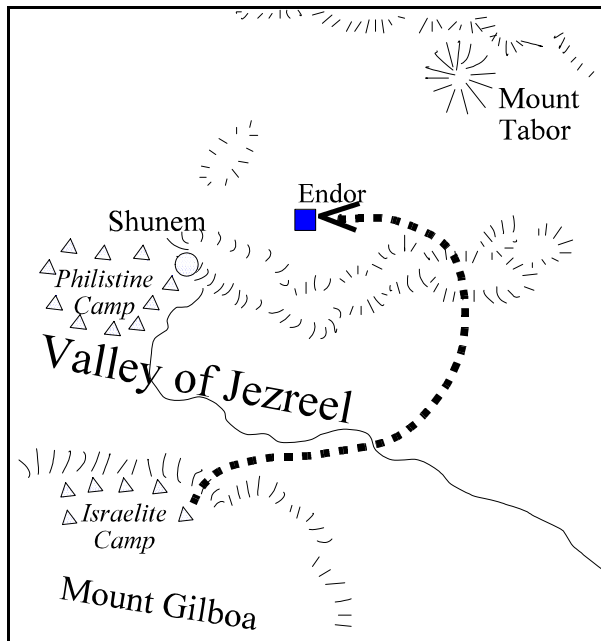
Saul had every reason to fear. The Philistines were big and they had the best in military weaponry and there were a lot of them.

*Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor." (1 Samuel 28:7).*

The Hebrew word for Medium is 'Ob. This is a Hittite loan-word. It originally was used to describe a pit and spoke of the place of departed spirits. It came to be used both of the spirits of the dead as well as of those who were supposedly able to contact those spirits.

The Mosaic Law strictly forbade God's people from consulting mediums.

The penalty for such actions was death.



*"Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their blood guiltiness is upon them." (Leviticus 20:27).*

In accordance with God's law, Saul had ordered that mediums and spiritists be driven from the land. And yet, he now seeks to consult with



one. He is directed by his servants to the town of En-dor, located on the northern slope of Little Hermon.

To arrive at Endor from Mount Gilboa would have involved a long 8-mile detour around the Philistine forces. Saul took this route under the cover of night, perhaps for several reasons.

- To escape detection by the Philistines.
- It was traditionally believed that such a seance would only work at night.

The woman of Endor at first refuses to participate. It is not until Saul takes a solemn oath invoking the name of the Lord that she agrees to participate.

*Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me."*

*When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul."*

*And the king said to her, "Do not be afraid; but what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being [Elohim] coming up out of the earth."*

*And he said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage. (1 Samuel 28:11-14).*

This passage has troubled theologians for hundreds of years. There have been three alternate interpretations offered for this passage.

- a. This was truly Samuel speaking from the grave. This interpretation takes the passage naturally when it says that *"the woman saw Samuel"* (28:12).
- b. This was a demonic manifestation pretending to be Samuel. This view was held by Augustine.
- c. This was a trick of the woman. This interpretation is perhaps supported by the Septuagint which uses a term in this passage which is also used of ventriloquists.

The reason for the varied interpretation is because people do not care for the implications of what happened; that a seance was actually able to bring back Samuel from the dead. However, this need not be considered as normative. Just because Samuel actually appeared to the medium in this instance does not give credibility to all such mediums.

Indeed, if there is a lesson here, it is that God's people ought to trust in the Lord rather than in other types of spiritual phenomenon. We ought not to delve into horoscopes or fortune telling or Ouija boards, for such activity is following in the footsteps of Saul.

Evidently, only the woman saw the form of Samuel, for Saul asked in verse 14, "*What is his form?*" and did not realize that it was Samuel until she had given a description of the prophet.

Notice what it was about the description which identified the visionary arrival as Samuel. It was the fact that he was an old man who was "*wrapped with a robe*" (28:14).

Saul remembered that robe. He could not help but remember how Samuel had predicted the loss of the kingdom and had turned to go and how he, Saul, had grabbed the robe of Samuel and had torn it. He had been told that in just such a manner the kingdom would be torn from his grasp.

*And Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has departed from you and has become your adversary?"*

*"And the Lord has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the Lord has **torn** the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David.*

*"As you did not obey the Lord and did not execute His fierce wrath of Amalek, so the Lord has done this thing to you this day.*

*Moreover the Lord will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the Lord will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!" (1 Samuel 28:16-19).*

While in the past the Lord had delivered Israel from the Philistine threat on more than one occasion, now Israel would be delivered by God into the hands of the Philistines (verse 19). The words of the prophecy are

fulfilled in the battle of the following day.

*Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.*

*And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua the sons of Saul.*

*And the battle went heavily against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was badly wounded by the archers.*

*Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and pierce me through and make sport of me." But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it.*

*And when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him.*

*Thus Saul died with his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men on that day together. (1 Samuel 31:2-6).*

The archers served as the field artillery of the ancient world. They could be a deadly arm of the military. When Xenophon was going out to fight the Persians, he was told by one of his scouts, "There are so many archers that when they fire their arrows, they blot out the sun." To which he quipped, "Good! We shall be able to fight in the shade."

As volley after volley of Philistine arrows fell upon the hapless Israelite army, Saul was seriously wounded. The nature of the wound would prevent his escape and the Philistines were closing in.

Saul knew of the reputation of the Philistines. They had captured Samson and had gouged out his eyes and had made a public spectacle of him. Saul fears the worst. He fears that he will be both tortured and humiliated. And so, he takes his own life.

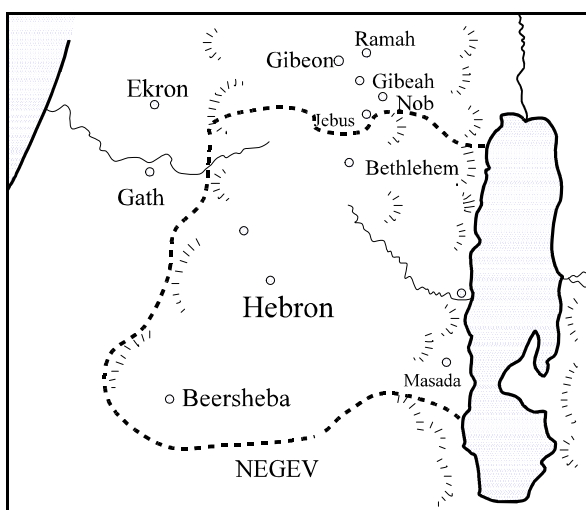
#### 4. David as King.

*And David brought up his men who were with him, each with his household; and they lived in the cities of Hebron.*

*Then the men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah" (2 Samuel 2:3-4a).*

David's kingship is not immediately recognized by all Israel. For the first seven years of his reign, his authority is known only over the tribe of Judah as he uses Hebron as his base of operations.

This was the burial place of the patriarchs.



- Abraham and Sarah.
- Isaac and Rebecca.
- Jacob and Leah.

As such, this was the most prestigious city in all of the land of Judah. David had already been anointed by Samuel. Now he is anointed by the men of Judah.

David's First Anointing	David's Second Anointing
Anointed by Samuel.	Anointed by the men of Judah.
Private anointing.	Public anointing.
Signified a promise of future kingship.	Signified a present recognition of kingship.

*David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.*

*At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah. (2 Samuel 5:4-5).*

It has been theorized by modern scholars that the 40 year reigns ascribed to Moses, to Eli, to David and to Solomon are merely to be understood as a long, undetermined number of years. But this passage gives a breakdown of what comprised those forty years.

5. Jerusalem becomes David's Capital.

Up to this time, David had been reigning in Hebron. Hebron was centrally located in Judah and would always be associated with that tribe. If the other tribes were to accept the concept of a unified nation, it would be necessary to have a capital city which had no former associations. Jerusalem was such a city.

Jerusalem was a city of the Jebusites. They had been living here city before the days of Abraham. One of their kings had been Melchizedek, a priest of God. But now it was merely a Canaanite city. The Israelites under Joshua had been unable to drive out the Jebusites (Joshua 15:63). And even though the Israelites had captured and burned Jerusalem early in the days of the Judges (Judges 1:8), the Jebusites had returned to rebuild and refortify their city.

*Now the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, and they said to David, "You shall not come in here, but the blind and lame shall turn you away"; thinking, "David cannot enter here." (2 Samuel 5:6).*

The old city of Jerusalem was built upon a high ridge and was surrounded on three sides by steep ravines. The old name for the hill was *Ophel* - literally, "the hump." An approaching enemy would have to climb to the top of the ridge and then would find himself facing high fortifications with no room to maneuver.

Furthermore, Jerusalem had its own internal water supply. A tunnel had been carved into the mountain leading down to a pool which was in turn fed by a natural spring.

The boast of the city was that, even if these fortification were manned by blind and lame, they would be enough to keep out any enemy.

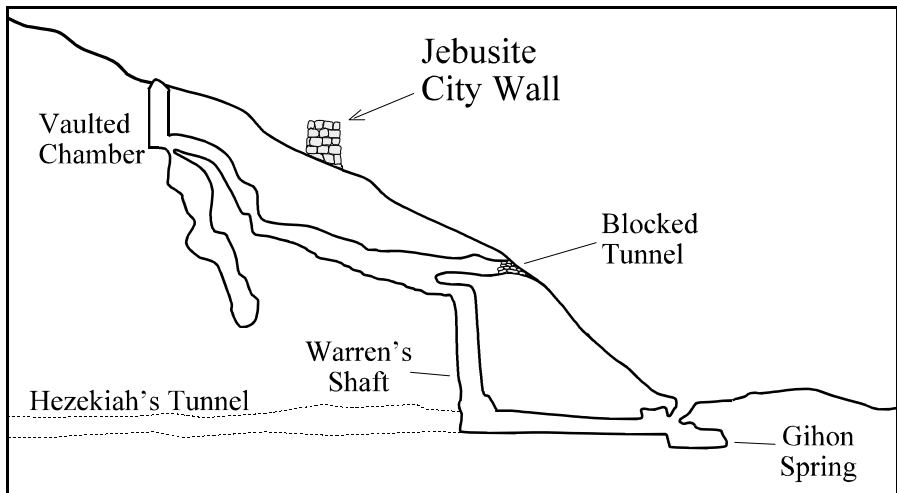
*Nevertheless, David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David. (2 Samuel 5:7).*

The word "Zion" seems to refer to a "high place" or a "place of protection." The term is rare in the historical books.

*And David said on that day, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him reach the lame and the blind,*

*who are hated by David's soul, through the water tunnel." (2 Samuel 5:8a).*

Located on the east side of the city is the Gihon Spring. It is the city's only local source of fresh water. Unfortunately, the spring is located at the bottom of the ridge upon which the city was built. The Jebusites resolved this problem by excavating a tunnel through the bedrock which went beneath the city walls and then down a vertical shaft to the spring.



The shaft was discovered by Captain Charles Warren of the British Engineers in 1867. He and his sergeant entered the Gihon Spring, followed the narrow tunnel into the mountainside, and came upon a vertical shaft rising nearly 40 feet straight up. It was possible for the inhabitants of Jerusalem to stand at the top of the shaft and drop a bucket with a line attached and draw up water.

*Now David had said, "Whoever strikes down a Jebusite first shall be chief and commander." And Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, so he became chief. (1 Chronicles 11:6).*

It is thought that this may have been the route used to capture the city of Jerusalem. David's forces could have crept in through this route to come up inside the city gates.

*So David lived in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward. (2 Samuel 5:9).*

The “Millo” was the original fortification around which the city was built (the word *mala* means “to fill”). Its exact location remains uncertain.

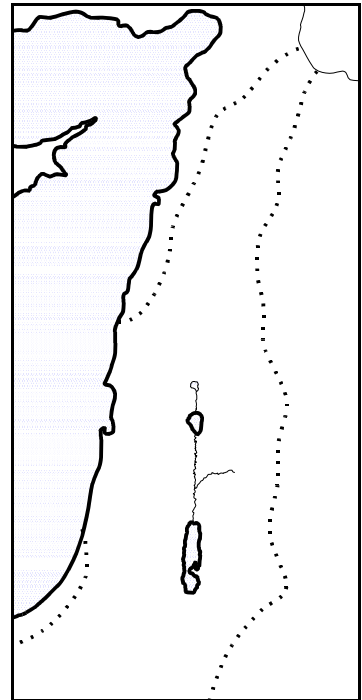
## SOLOMON

The name “Solomon” is taken from the Hebrew word *shalom*, meaning “peace.” What David had won through warfare, Solomon attempted to hold together through peace. His reign is described in the Bible as being a time of peace and prosperity for Israel.

### 1. A Time of Peace.

The reign of Solomon saw a remarkable period of peace in that portion of the ancient world.

- a. Assyria was in a state of decline as it wrestled with internal strife and was further weakened with battles against Aram.
- b. Egypt also suffered the effects of a general decline, never again reaching her former dominance as a world power.
- c. Solomon entered into a prosperous alliance with King Hiram of Tyre. The Phoenicians were the masters of the Mediterranean Sea.



Extent of Solomon's Rule

### 2. The Extent of Solomon's Rule.

*Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life. (1 Kings 4:21).*

“The River” is used only of large rivers as opposed to the term for smaller streams or wadis. In this case, it refers to the Euphrates.

It was commonplace among ancient empires that when the old king died, the subject nations would withhold tribute and challenge the new king in rebellion. This necessitated repeated punitive expeditions to reinforce the former king's terms and to prove the ability of the new king to enforce his will. Solomon did not have to do this. Instead, God gave to him a peaceful reign.

3. The Prosperity of Solomon's Reign.

*So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. (1 Kings 4:25).*

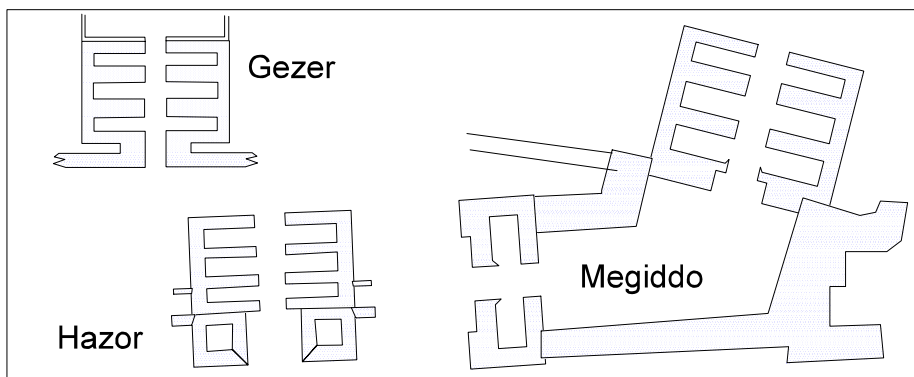
It was not only Solomon who amassed riches. The people of Israel in his day also enjoyed a great amount of prosperity. The statement that "every man under his vine and his fig tree" became a favorite catch phrase used by the prophets to indicate the ideal conditions prevailing in Messiah's kingdom (Micah 4:4; Zechariah 3:10). The fact that a man could enjoy the fruit of the vine and the fig tree meant that there was a complete absence of warfare and it ensuing economic disruption.

4. Construction Projects.

Archaeologists have uncovered some of the fortifications of this period. They included a system of double walls entered by a series of double gates overseen by twin towers.

The casements of these gates are inset into the city to allow an invader to be virtually surrounded.

Archaeological surveys in the 1970's uncovered more than 40 iron age fortresses in the Negev to the south of Israel. They range in size from 70 to 215 feet in diameter.





Solomon entered into a number of major construction projects, building up the fortifications in Jerusalem as well as at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer (1 Kings 9:15).

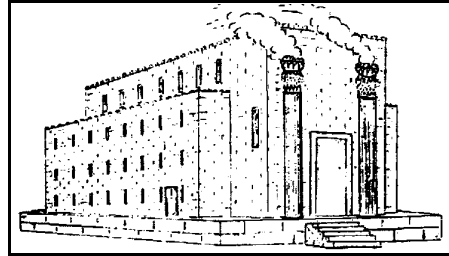


Ruins of casement fortification at Dan

Gezer	It lay on the road which connected the cities of Beth Horon to the coast. As such, it had served as a border city between Israel and the Philistines. It had first been conquered by Pharaoh Thutmose III and more recently had been burned by a later Pharaoh.
Hazor	The major city in the north. It had originally been destroyed by Joshua and later rebuilt.
Megiddo	This ancient city guarded the main road from the Plain of Sharon on the coast to the Valley of Jezreel which intersected the Carmel Range.
Beth Horon	These were two cities which controlled the access to the highlands of Judea from the coastal plain through the Valley of Aijalon

5. Solomon's Temple.

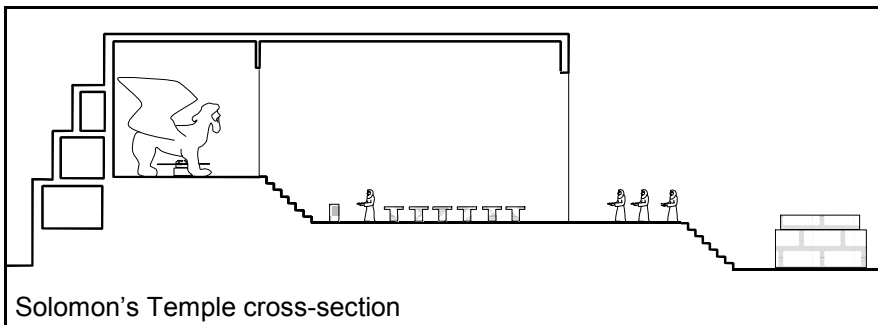
Construction of the Temple began on the fourth year of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 6:1). The building project took seven years and was climaxed with the dedication of the Temple.



*Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the Temple.*

*And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. (2 Chronicles 7:1-2).*

In the same way that the Lord had moved into the Tabernacle in the days of Moses, so now His presence was manifested in the Temple.



There are no remains of Solomon's Temple. It was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. A second temple was rebuilt on this same spot, but that was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. Today there stands on that same site the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim shrine. Indeed, the destruction of these two temples was so complete that modern archaeologists have argued as to its exact location. The traditional view is that it was located at the very top of the temple mount, the spot on which the Dome of the Rock now stands.

The completion of the Temple was to mark a high point in the career of Solomon. The later years of his reign were to see a turning away from the Lord.

<b>Contrasting Elements in Solomon's Career</b>		
	<b>His Early Years</b>	<b>His Later Years</b>
Political Realm	Nation unified and Solomon exalted on the international scene	Tribes rebellious and loss of influence in Egypt, Edom and Syria.
Economic Realm	People willing to donate time and money. Silver "as common as stones."	Heavy taxes and forced labor becomes burdensome.
Social Realm	Focus on building the Temple.	Focus upon other building projects of Solomon.
Spiritual Realm	Dedication to the Lord.	Other gods are worshiped.
Military Realm	Israelite military is exclusively infantry (cavalry not permitted under Mosaic Law).	Large chariot corps developed.

# THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

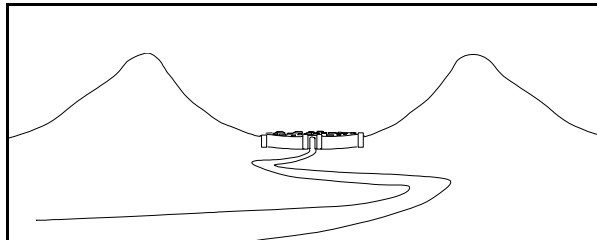
Israel was a family. The tribes of Israel were made up of the descendants of 12 brothers. They all enjoyed the same ancestry and the same heritage. There was among them a bond of blood as well as a bond of faith. But these bonds were broken soon after the death of Solomon.

*Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. (1 Kings 12:1).*

Rehoboam was the son of Solomon and heir to the throne of Israel. The fact that the planned coronation of the king was to take place at Shechem is significant. Jerusalem was the capital city of Israel. It was here that Solomon had been anointed and installed as king of Israel (1 Kings 1:38-39). And yet, Rehoboam found it necessary to travel to Shechem for the inaugural ceremony.

The name “Shechem” describes “the space between the shoulder blades.” The town lay exactly between the two mountains of Gerazim and Ebal. It was here that Israel had come in the days of Joshua where half of the people stood on Mount Gerazim and half of the people stood on Mount Ebal to read the Law of the Covenant. Half of the people had read the blessings of the covenant and half of the people had read the cursings of the covenant and the people had pledged themselves to follow the Lord.

Shechem lay in the geographical center of the land of Israel. It was specifically within the territory of the tribe of Ephraim - one of the largest and most influential tribes of Israel.



The fact that Shechem was to be the site of the inaugural ceremonies was evidence that there was already a schism of spirit between Judah and the other tribes.

When Rehoboam comes to be crowned king, he is faced by a group of tribal elders who have come to him with a petition to lower their taxes. Instead of relenting, Rehoboam threatens to raise the taxes even higher.

*When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!” So Israel departed to their tents.*

*But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. (1 Kings 12:16-17).*

The response of Israel was one of rebellion and a desire for independence. Since the king had refused to look out for their interests, they would now look out for their own interests. Accordingly, they chose for themselves Jeroboam to be their king. Only the tribe of Judah would remain under the rulership of the house of David.

The story of the Divided Kingdom is one of wars, political intrigue, and rebellion against God. Both kingdoms saw periods of rebellion, but in the Northern Kingdom it was a case of rebellion without reprieve.

<b>SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH</b>	<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL</b>
19 Kings, 1 Queen	Kings	19 Kings
Jerusalem	Capital	Samaria
1 Dynasty	Dynasties	5 Dynasties and several independent kings.
Judah & Benjamin	Tribes	10 Northern Tribes.
Most were unstable; some were good & some were bad.	Character of the Kings	All were bad, but only Ahab and Ahaziah were Baal worshipers.
By Babylon in 586 B.C.	Conquered	By Assyria in 721 B.C.
Returned to the land.	Afterward	No return.

## THE FIRST DYNASTY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

### 1. Jeroboam's Early Career.

Jeroboam was from the tribe of Benjamin. In the days of Solomon he had been placed in charge of one of the forced labor crews working in Jerusalem.

One day the prophet Ahijah came to him and foretold that ten of the twelve tribes would be taken from the descendants of Solomon and given to Jeroboam.

*Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces.*

*And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes.'" (1 Kings 11:30-31).*

This action was reminiscent of the time that Saul had pleaded with Samuel and inadvertently ripped his cloak. Samuel had told him that in a similar way the kingdom would be ripped from his grasp and given to David.

Solomon responded to this prophecy by calling for Jeroboam's death. He was forced to flee to Egypt until the death of Solomon.

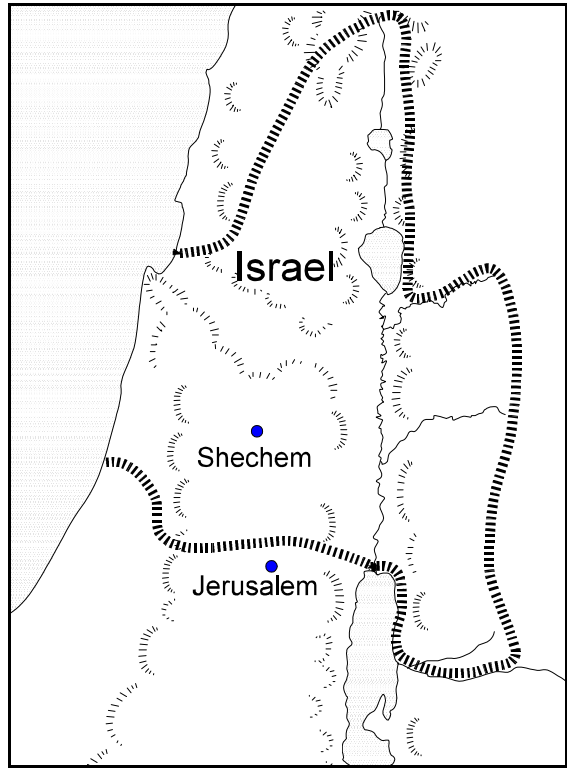
The 21st Dynasty of Egypt had been friendly to Israel to the point of Pharaoh's daughter being wedded to King Solomon. But now there came a Libyan to the throne who founded a new ruling family - the 22nd Dynasty. He is known in historical records as Sheshonq (the Biblical Shishak). He was able to reunify the country which had been previously divided and brought a certain amount of stability to the crown. He would ultimately become an enemy of Israel.

### 2. The Division at Shechem.

The act of succession of the ten northern tribes threatened to bring about a civil war. It was only through the intervention of the prophet Shemaiah that this was averted.

From this time onward, Israel was to remain a divided kingdom. To the south was the tribe of Judah with the small tribe of Benjamin. To the north and to the east were the other ten tribes which now became a separate independent nation. These ten northern tribes are known collectively as:

- Israel (as opposed to Judah in the south).
- Ephraim (after the largest and most influential of the tribes).



### 3. Jeroboam as King over Israel.

*Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel. (1 Kings 12:25).*

Shechem was already an ancient city, nearly a thousand years old dating back before the days of Jacob. Jeroboam built up this city and made it his initial capital. Later he built a secondary palace at Penuel, the place where Jacob had wrestled with the angel on the Jabbok River.

These two sites were located amidst the center of the Northern Kingdom and were designed to unify the people under his rule. To further cement this unity, Jeroboam determined to change the manner of worship in Israel.

<sup>26</sup> *Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will return to the house of David.*

<sup>27</sup> *“If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the*

*house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.”*

28           *So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.”*

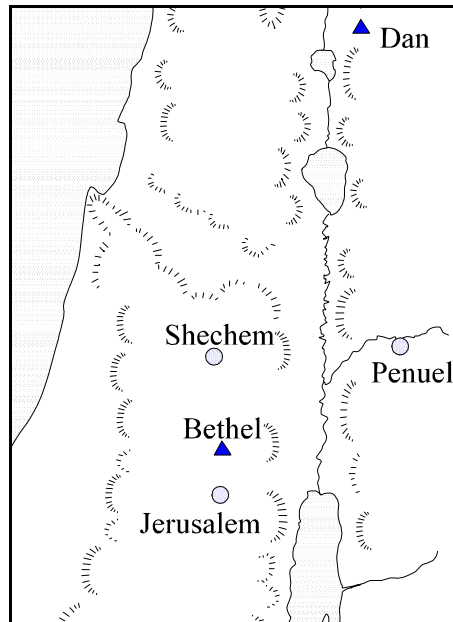
29           *He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. (1 Kings 12:26-29).*

Jeroboam was now the king of the Northern Kingdom. But he was a king with a problem.

The law of the Lord mandated that all Israelites make a pilgrimage three times a year to worship the Lord in His Temple. And here lay the problem. The Temple was in Jerusalem. And Jerusalem was in Judah.

And this land was under the domain of Rehoboam. This state of affairs would give Rehoboam ample opportunity to wage a propaganda campaign which could

ultimately result in Jeroboam being removed and the Kingdom being reunited.



Jeroboam came up with an alternative plan of worship. It was a plan which appealed to convenience. The plan was for two centers of worship to be set up within the Northern Kingdom. They would be located at the extreme northern and southern borders of the kingdom.

a.       Bethel (“House of God”).

This was the place where Jacob had his vision of a ladder reaching to heaven (Genesis 28:11-19). It was located a mere 12 miles north of Jerusalem and sat atop a bare mountaintop.



b. Dan.

The tribe of Dan had originally been given an allotment of land between Judah, Ephraim, and Benjamin. This had proven to be uncomfortably close to the Philistines and in the days of the judges they migrated northward to the area north of the Sea of Galilee on the slopes of Mount Hermon (Judges 18). Capturing the Canaanite city of Laish, they renamed it Dan and made it their religious center with their own Levitical priesthood descended from Moses (Judges 18:30).

At each of these two locations there was erected a golden calf. Perhaps it was reasoned that such a means of worship had been instituted by Aaron at Mount Sinai. In actuality, both Aaron and Jeroboam had borrowed this calf worship from Egypt where the sacred cow was the symbol of the goddess Hathor.



High place at Dan. The metal frame shows where archaeologists believe the altar would have stood before the steps of the temple.

Many of the Hebrews who remained faithful to the teachings of the Law fled to the south to where they could worship in peace. Included in this exodus were many of the Levites. As this strong core of faithful moved out, the Northern Kingdom would find itself subject to apostasy and eventual ruin.

4. Nadab (910-909 B.C.).

The reign of Nadab was short. He continued his father's policy of leading the people in idolatry. It was not long before he fell to the hand of an assassin. The assassin's name was Baasha and he did not stop until the entire house of Jeroboam had been murdered.

## THE SECOND DYNASTY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

This second dynasty was destined to be short-live. It would last only 24 years. The kings of this dynasty went from bad to worse.

1. Baasha (909-886 B.C.).

Israel and Judah had been constantly at war since the days of Jeroboam. Throughout most of this period it was Judah who had the upper hand. There were two reasons for this:

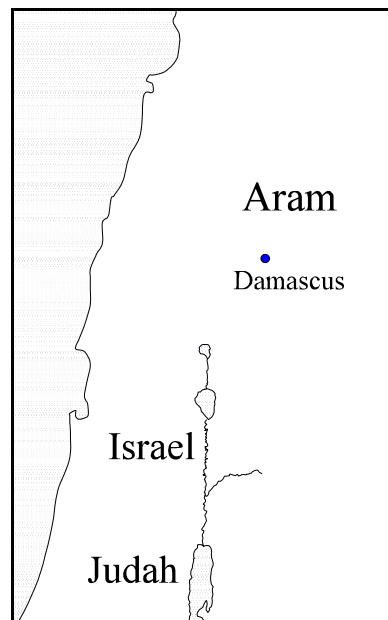
a. The wealth of Judah.

From a strictly economic viewpoint, Judah was wealthier than Israel and could afford a better equipped army.

b. Spiritual source.

The people of Judah enjoyed a continuing success as they continued to worship the Lord.

As the war progressed, Judah formed an alliance with Ben-hadad of Damascus. Baasha found himself surrounded by enemies both to the north and to the south. Because of this, Israel



The stele of Ben-hadad was discovered in northern Syria in 1940. He is called "Bir-hadad," the Aramaic equivalent of Ben-hadad. *Ben* is the Hebrew word for "son." Hadad was one of the deities of the Aramaeans.

was forced to give up large amounts of territory.

2. Elah (886-885 B.C.).

Baasha's son was a drunk and Israel floundered without a leader. Elah was quickly assassinated by one of his captains who took the throne in his place.

3. Zimri (885 B.C.).

Zimri was the captain who murdered his drunken king. He made a grab for the throne and managed to hold on to it for seven days. In those seven days, he murdered everyone from the house of Baasha.

When news of Elah's death reached the Israelite army that was involved in a campaign with the Philistines, the army declared that their commanding general, Omri, should be their new king. Zimri heard of this and committed suicide.

## **THE THIRD DYNASTY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM**

The story of the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel is one of dynasty after dynasty being assassinated for the throne. Jeroboam's family was murdered by Bashan. His succeeding family left a power vacuum. Zimri may have thought to become king himself, but he was unable to gain a following and his reign lasted only a week. Following his untimely death, there arose two contenders for the throne of Israel.

- Tibni, the son of Ginath.
- Omri, commander of the army.

1. Omri (885-874 B.C.).

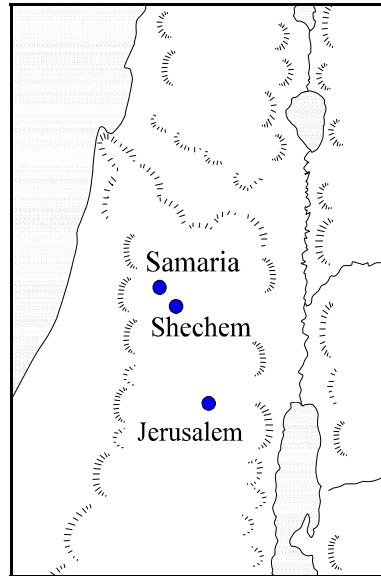
After a civil war which lasted 6 years, it was Omri who came out as the winner in the conflict - he seems to have had both the military expertise as well as the support of the army in taking the throne.

*He bought the hill Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and named the city which he built Samaria, after the name*

*of Shemer, the owner of the hill. (1 Kings 16:24).*

Samaria was to become the new capital city of Israel. It was located on a large oval hilltop, 300 feet above the surrounding plain. From the top of the hill the Mediterranean Sea is visible to the west. It lay 6½ miles northwest of Shechem and along the major north-south highway.

The summit of the hill was leveled and enclosed with a double wall with towers and bastions. In later years, the city would spread downward from the summit.



The main gate faced east where a low ridge joins the hill of Samaria to the major north-south mountain range. The city held large cisterns of water since there was no natural spring of water on the site.

The site was originally excavated in 1908-10 by Harvard University under Reisner, Fisher and Lyon. The following levels were uncovered.

Levels 1-2	Omri-Ahab dynasty
Level 3	Jehu
Levels 4-6	The 8th century, highest level of prosperity

In ensuing excavations, more than 500 fragments of Ivory have been discovered on the site. Amos 6:4 and 3:15 speak of “houses of ivory” and “beds of ivory.” 1 Kings 22 reports that King Ahab created a house of Ivory. Numerous pieces of ivory have been located in the excavations of Samaria in the form of small plaques and panels which were originally set into furniture.

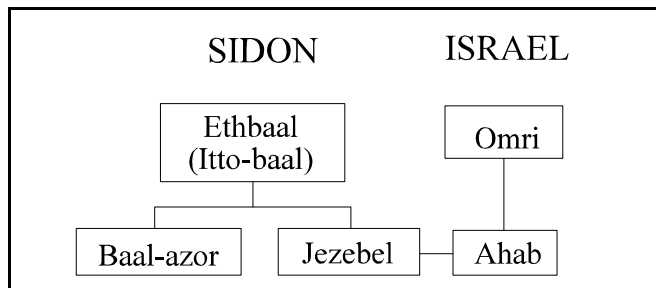
2. Ahab (874-853 B.C.).

*before him.*

31 *It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him.*

32 *So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. (1 Kings 16:30-32).*

Ahab, the son of Omri and successor to his throne, entered into an alliance with the Phoenicians, sealing it by taking a Phoenician princess to be his wife. This alliance would have long-lasting repercussions in Israel.



a. Baal Worship.

It is because of this Phoenician influence that Ahab soon finds himself engaged, not only in idolatry, but in the worshiping of Baal, the god of the Phoenicians. He is confronted by Elijah, but he does not repent before the Lord.

Up to this time, the Israelites had been guilty of attempting to worship Yahweh in an improper manner - through the use of idols which had been established at Bethel and at Dan. But now they turn away completely from any attempt to worship the Lord and turned instead to a false god.

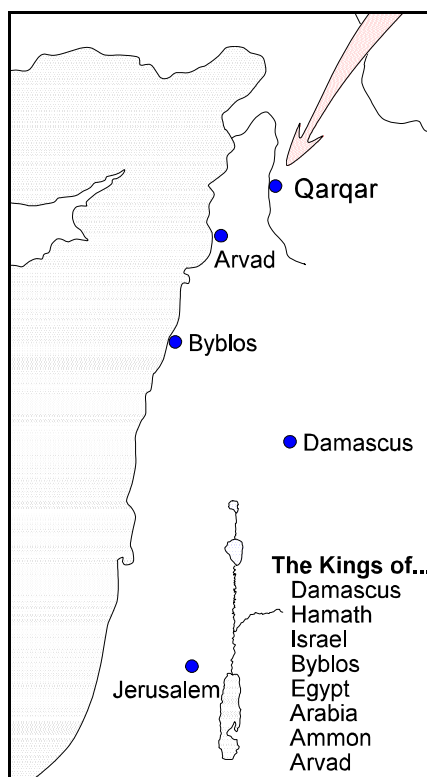
b. The Battle of Qarqar.

Archaeological records from Assyria relate to us how the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III invaded the Levant. From those records, we learn that it was Ahab who rallied all of the

small kingdoms on the Mediterranean Coast to meet this threat. Gathering an alliance of 12 kings, he met the Assyrians at Qarqar in 853 B.C.

In the annals of Shalmaneser III, the Assyrians claim to have won a victory. However it is notable that he made no further southward advances at this time.

- c. The rebuilding of Jericho.



*In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun. (1 Kings 16:34).*

Jericho had been destroyed in the days of Joshua. It had been the first city of Canaan to fall to the Israelites when they entered into the land. As such, it had been accursed - all its inhabitants and even the plunder of the city given over to be burned. Achan's sin had been that of attempting to take some of that plunder for himself and he had paid with his life.

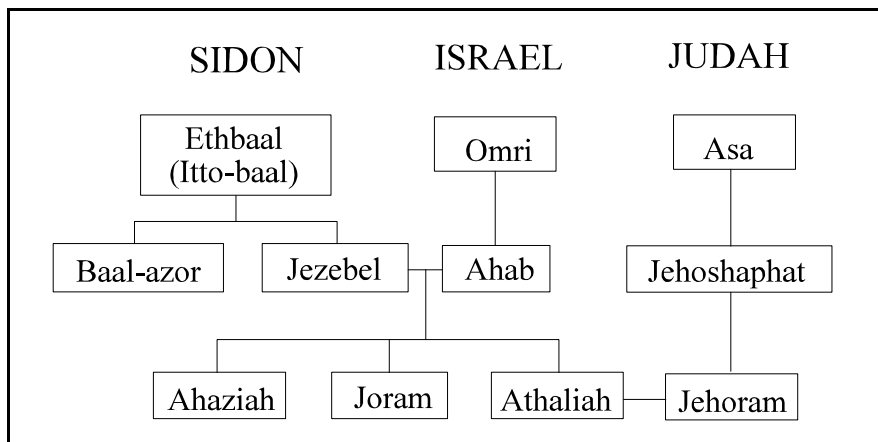
Joshua had issued a decree that Jericho was not to be rebuilt. With his decree came a curse - that the man who would attempt to rebuild Jericho would suffer the loss of both his first-born son and his youngest son (Joshua 6:26).

Apparently with the full blessing of Ahab, Hiel set out to rebuild Jericho. In keeping with the ancient curse, he seems to have deliberately sacrificed both his oldest and his

youngest sons. This was the sort of activity which was commonplace among Baal worshipers.

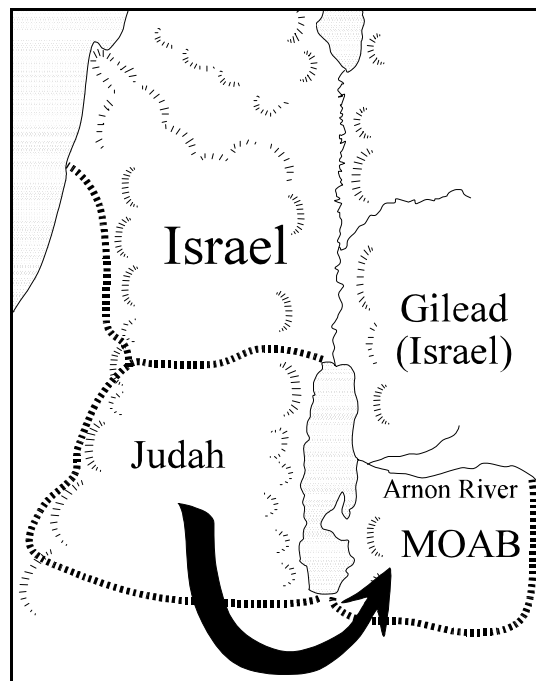
d. Alliance with Judah.

Ahab entered into an alliance with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, sealing it with the marriage of their children. In this way, Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel came to be the queen of Judah.



3. Ahaziah (853-852 B.C.).

Ahaziah came to the throne, but his mother, Jezebel, remained a major influence in the policies of the nation so that Israel continued to turn further and further from the Lord. He died from injuries sustained in a fall when a portion of the lattice within his palace gave way beneath him. He had left no children to succeed him to the throne, so his younger brother Joram became king.



Invasion of Moab

4. Joram (852-841 B.C.).

Joram seems to have been a vacillating character. He often listened to the advice of the prophet Elisha and obeyed the will of the Lord. On the other hand, he seems to have been reluctant to go against his mother in doing away with Baal worship. He would eventually turn against Elisha and seek to kill him.

a. The Moab Campaign.

Early in his reign, Joram allied himself with Judah and Edom and joined those kings in an invasion of Moab, traveling around the southern end of the Dead Sea to come at Moab from the south. 2 Kings 3 gives the Biblical record of the campaign.

In 1868 a French Anglican medical missionary by the name of F.A. Klein discovered a stela in Dhiban, Jordan which has come to be known as the Mesha or Moabite Stone. This stela gives an account of the same battle from the Moabite point of view.

Language	Moabite (very similar to Hebrew)
Description	Basalt stone stele Height: 1.15 meters Width: 60-68 centimeters 35 lines of writing
Author	Mesha, king of Moab
Discovery	1868 in Dhiban [in modern Jordan]
Current Location	Paris, France

A complete transcript of the entire stele can be found in the Appendix. It has become a source of a heated controversy between scholars as it is now believed by some to contain a reference to the “House of David.”

b. The Syrian Invasion.

For a while there was an uneasy peace with Syria, but then



Benihadad once again decided to try to conquer Israel. This time, he led his armies to Samaria where he laid siege to the city.

When the Israelites were ready to give up hope, God intervened, making the Syrians hear the noise of two great chariot corps approaching. The Syrians reasoned that Joram had hired the Egyptians and the Hittites to attack them. They withdrew in disarray, not even bothering to pack their camp.

c. Campaign at Ramoth-gilead.

The Syrians returned in 841 B.C. to attack the eastern city of Ramoth-gilead. The battle went well for the Israelites since Judah had come to assist them. However, Joram was wounded in the battle and was forced to leave the battlefield, leaving his army under the command of Jehu as he withdrew to Jezreel.

Soon after this, Elisha commanded that a prophet go to Ramoth-gilead and anoint Jehu as the new king of Israel. Jehu quickly proceeded to Jezreel where he murdered Joram, Jezebel and Ahaziah, the king of Judah.

## **THE FOURTH DYNASTY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM**

The dynasty begun by Jehu was to be the longest-lasting that the Northern Kingdom would ever see.

1. Jehu (841-814 B.C.).

Jehu began his reign with a vast bloodbath. He demanded that all of the descendants of Ahab and his dynasty be killed and their heads brought to him in a basket. The nobles of Israel were quick to comply. Adopting a chapter from Assyrian terror-tactics, he had the heads placed in heaps at the city gates so that people would be afraid to revolt.

*So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his*

*acquaintances and his priests, until he left him without a survivor. (2 Kings 10:11).*

Jehu wiped out the priests of Baal, setting up in their place the old calf-cult of Jeroboam.

a. The situation in Judah.

While Jehu was killing all of the relatives of Ahab, a similar massacre was taking place in Judah. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, seized power after her son was killed by Jehu. To secure her position of power, she had all of the royal relatives killed. Only her grandson, Joash, escaped.

b. Tribute to Assyria.

As Assyria began to loom once again on the horizon, Jehu found himself paying an annual tribute.



Detail from the Black Obelisk shows Jehu bowing before Shalmaneser III

In 1846, Austen Henry Layard discovered a 6½ foot tall stone stele at the palace of Shalmaneser at Nimrud on the Tigris Rivier. Made of black alebaster, it consisted of a tall, four-sided pillar. It came to be known as the Black Obelisk. There are in all twenty small sculptured pictures on the stela, forming five series, each series having four related pictures.

Each one commemorates a victory and the various kings coming to the Assyrian monarch Shalmaneser III to pay him tribute. One of the reliefs depicts Jehu kneeling with his face to the ground before the Assyrian king (See appendix for the

full text of the inscription).

The cuneiform caption above the relief reads: *“Tribute of Iaua [Jehu], son of Omri. Silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden beaker, golden goblets, pitchers of gold, tin, staves for the hand of the king, javilins, I [Shalmaneser] received from him.”*

The obelisk was nearly lost at sea when the sailing ship on which it was being transported to England came close to sinking during a terrible storm in the Indian Ocean.

c. Attacks from Damascus.

Hazael, king of Damascus had tried to get Jehu to join him in a mutual defense league against Assyria. When Jehu refused, Hazael attacked Israel, taking much territory on the eastern bank of the Jordan.

2. Jehoahaz (814-798 B.C.).

Jehoahaz found himself a vassal to Damascus and was bound by a disarmament treaty in which he was only allowed to maintain 10 chariots, 50 cavalry and 10,000 infantrymen.

The future of Israel at this point looked bleak. Damascus seemed to be toying with Israel the way a cat toys with a captured mouse.

In 804 B.C. Adad-Nirari III of Assyria marched south and besieged Damascus. Although he failed to take the city, the action was sufficient to force Aram to release her hold on Israel. The Northern Kingdom had been saved for a time.

It was around this time that Jonah was sent to prophesy to the city of Nineveh with the result that the city saw a great revival as people turned in faith to Yahweh.

3. Jehoash (798-782 B.C.).

When Jehoash came to the throne of Israel, he faced a Syria that was much weaker than the one to which his father had submitted. He attacked Syria successfully and pushed her national boundaries far to the north.

Next, Jehoash turned to the south and attacked Judah where he again was successful. He even reached Jerusalem, breaking down a portion of the northern wall. After taking hostages, he returned to Samaria.

4. Jeroboam II (782-753 B.C.).

When Jeroboam came to the throne following the death of his father, Israel was the strongest nation in that part of the ancient world.

The jasper seal of "Shema, servant of Jeroboam", discovered by Schumacher at Megiddo, is to be identified with Jeroboam II, as is now epigraphically certain. The lifelike and magnificently executed lion, which appears on it, furnishes evidence of the state of art during this era.

a. Expansion of the Northern Kingdom.

The rest of the ancient world was suffering from the upheavals of more migrations. In the midst of this power vacuum, Jeroboam managed to extend his kingdom northward to the borders of Hamath, making Israel almost as big as she had been in the days of Solomon (2 Kings 14:25). With this vast military victory came a period of great economic prosperity.

b. Ministries of Hosea and Amos.

Hosea and Amos both prophesied during this period. Their writings reflect the moral and religious decay of the Israelites during this time.

- Hosea was called upon to act out the relationship between Yahweh and the nation by marrying an unfaithful prostitute.
- Amos, a shepherd from the eastern regions of Israel, spoke out against the social injustices of the day. He warned that the prosperity of the nation was fleeting. Within 30 years of the death of Jeroboam, the Northern Kingdom would cease to exist.

5. Zechariah (753-752 B.C.).

Zechariah succeeded his father to the throne and reigned for only six

months before being assassinated by Shallum.

Shallum tried to place himself on the throne, but was only able to hold it for a month before he was also assassinated.

## **THE FIFTH DYNASTY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM**

### **1. Menahem (752-742 B.C.).**

Although the details are unknown, Menahem murdered Shallum and took the throne of Israel for himself.

Just three years earlier, Tiglath-Pileser III had come to the throne of Assyria, marking a new period of Assyrian strength. When he marched into Israel, Menahem swore allegiance to him and paid an enormous tribute for the privilege of being allowed to remain intact.

### **2. Pekahiah (742-740 B.C.).**

Pekahiah continued his father's submission to Assyria. However, there was a strong anti-Assyrian faction growing in Israel which thought that they should fight rather than pay the tribute. This resentment grew so high that one of Pekahiah's own generals led a conspiracy, assassinated him, and took the throne for himself.

## **THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM**

The remainder of Israel's history saw two more rulers upon the throne, each one taking it by means of assassination.

### **1. Pekah (740-732 B.C.).**

Realizing that Assyria would soon return to put an end to Israel's anti-Assyrian government, Pekah allied himself with Damascus against Assyria.

This Israelite/Syrian Confederation approached Ahaz, king of Judah

and urged him to join their alliance. When he refused, they attacked and besieged Jerusalem.

Instead of trusting the Lord, Ahaz sent a message to Tiglath-Pileser III, asking him to come down and deliver Judah.

Tiglath-Pileser III swept down from the north, sacked the city of Damascus, and took many of the cities of Israel including Ijon, Abel-beth-maacha, Janoah, Kadesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee — all the land of Naphtali (2 Kings 15:29). The inhabitants of these cities were deported to Assyria. The annals of Tiglath-Pileser give this record:

*...the wide land of Naphtali, in its entirety, I brought within the border of Assyria. My official I set over them as governor.*

Again, he says:

*The land of Bit-Humria (House of Omri)...all of its people, together with their goods, I carried off to Assyria.*

*Bit-Humria* or “House of Omri” had been the common Assyrian name for the country of Israel ever since the days of King Omri.

In an effort to pacify Assyria, the inhabitants of Samaria murdered Pekah and placed Hoshea, a pro-Assyrian leader, upon the throne.

2. Hoshea (732-724 B.C.).

When Hoshea became king, it was a greatly reduced Israel which he ruled.

Tiglath-Pileser had taken all

of the Israelite holdings in Trans-Jordan, in Megiddo, in Galilee, and the lands along the Mediterranean, annexing them to Assyria. Israel retained only Samaria and the surrounding hill country.

Archaeologists have found a small seal which reads, “Belonging to Abdi Servant of Hoshea.”
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Tiglath-Pileser III died in 727 B.C. and Hoshea took this opportunity to revolt. He sent messengers to Egypt to form an alliance against Assyria. At the same time, he stopped payment of the annual tribute.

In 724 B.C. Shalmanesser V, the new king of Assyria, marched south into Israel. Hoshea surrendered himself and offered to pay the tribute, but this time he had gone too far and was thrown into chains. He was taken to Assyria where he died in captivity.

Excavations at Samaria have confirmed the splendor of the Israelite capital in the eighth century BC. Jeroboam II fortified the city with a double wall, reaching to as much as thirty-three feet in width in exposed sections, comprising fortifications so substantial that the Assyrian army took three years to capture the city (2 Kings 17:5).

### 3. The Fall of Samaria.

The Assyrians now laid siege to the capital city of Samaria. Although the city was without a ruling king, Samaria held out under the siege for three years.

Shalmanesser eventually became sick and was forced to return to Nineveh, leaving his younger brother, Sargon II, in command of the armies. When Shalmanesser died in 722 B.C. Sargon declared himself king.

In 1843, the French consular agent at Mosul, Paul Emile Botta, began to dig at Khorsabad and discovered the palace of Sargon II. On the walls of the palace were inscriptions listing Sargon's accomplishments. One of them is the taking of Samaria. He claims to have carried away 27,290 of the Israelites into captivity. He rebuilt the city and settled it with other conquered peoples.

The following year, Samaria was taken. The city was burned to the ground and the surviving population was deported.

*In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria. and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozarx and in the cities of the Medes. (2 Kings 17:6).*

The area that had once been the Northern Kingdom of Israel was eventually resettled with refugees from other Assyrian conquests. These refugees intermarried with the few remaining Hebrew survivors. The resulting half-breeds became known as Samaritans.

The author of the book of Kings summarizes the reason for the fall of

the Northern Kingdom.

*Now this came about, because the sons of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and their had feared other gods <sup>s</sup> and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. (2 Kings 17:7-8).*

Israel had turned away from God. This seems surprising when we consider that she had seen great miracles. Time and time again, the Lord had miraculously intervened in history to save His people from destruction. If any nation on earth could testify to the power of God, it was Israel.

Nor was she without warnings. Prophets continually warned of the coming judgment if Israel did not turn from her evil ways, but all to no avail. The people of Israel had hardened their hearts to the teachings of God and paid the cost for such rebellion.

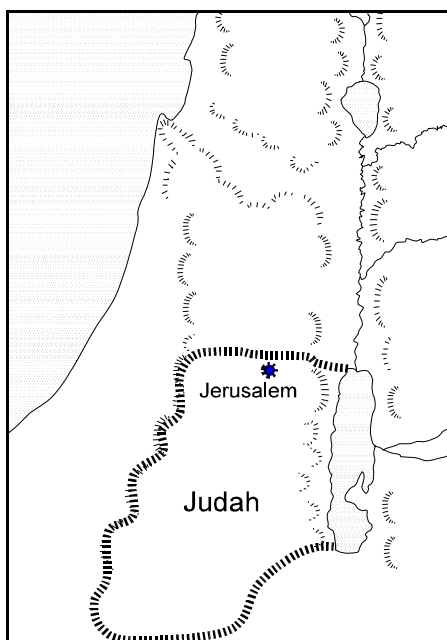


# THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH

*The scepter shall not depart from Judah  
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh comes,  
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Genesis 49:10.*

The promise of kingship from the line of Judah had a long tradition, going back all the way to the prophecy of Jacob. Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob, had sinned against his father and lost the birthright. Simeon and Levi had also disqualified themselves from leadership. This promise of leadership had come to Judah.

Judah was the tribe from which David had come. Because of this, when the other tribes split off and went their own way, Judah remained faithful to the lineage of David. Even though Jerusalem was thought of as a neutral city, it still lay within the boundaries of the lands of Judah. Furthermore, Judah had been exempted from the forced labor which Solomon demanded of the rest of Israel.



The land of Judah was geographically divided from the rest of Israel by the deep valley of Sorek. It was bordered in the east by the Dead Sea, on the west by the lands of the Philistines and in the south by Edom and the Sinai Desert.

The history of the northern and southern kingdoms would run in parallel courses. Though both of these kingdoms would see periods of rebellion against the Lord, Judah's history would be marked by occasional periods of repentance and return.

<b>SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH</b>	<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL</b>
19 Kings, 1 Queen	Kings	19 Kings
Jerusalem	Capital	Samaria
1 Dynasty - the line of David	Dynasties	5 Dynasties and several independent kings.
Judah & Benjamin	Tribes	10 Northern Tribes.
Most were unstable; some were good & some were bad.	Character of the Kings	All were bad, but only Ahab and Ahaziah were Baal worshipers.
By Babylon in 586 B.C.	Conquered	By Assyria in 721 B.C.
Returned to the land.	Afterward	No return.

## REHOBAM OF JUDAH

Rehoboam was the son of Solomon who found himself ruling, not over Israel, but only over the southern kingdom of Judah.

### 1. Rehoboam.

*Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there. And his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. (1 Kings 14:21).*

Rehoboam was the son of Solomon. His mother was of the country of Ammon - presumably one of the 700 foreign wives which Solomon had married. Theirs had been a political marriage and it had produced this young man.

The parallel account in 2 Chronicles 11:17 tells us that the people of Judah served the Lord for three years. It was only after Rehoboam

felt himself secure and established as king of Judah that he led the nation in forsaking the way of the Lord (2 Chronicles 12:1).

Rehoboam's story is one of good beginnings but poor endings. It is a pattern which we shall see repeated in a number of the kings of Judah. It began with Solomon and now it is seen in his son.

Some scholars have wrestled with the idea that Rehoboam was 41 at the beginning of his reign since we read of "*the young men who grew up with him*" in 1 Kings 12:10. Furthermore, 2 Chronicles 13:7 speaks of the splitting of the kingdom having taken place at a time when Rehoboam "*was young and timid and could not hold his own against them.*"

a. The Sins of Judah.

22 *Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed.*

23 *For they also built for themselves high places and sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree.*

24 *There were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord dispossessed before the sons of Israel. (1 Kings 14:22-24).*

Judah actually seems to have descended more readily into idolatry and the worship of false gods than did Israel. This process had begun with Solomon and the pagan practices of his foreign wives. It now returned with a vengeance.

- High Places.  
It was the custom throughout the entire fertile crescent to conduct worship in a "high place." The origin of this practice may go back all the way to the Tower of Babel.
- Sacred Pillars.  
This is different from a support pillar or column. This is an obelisk. They were used by the Canaanites as

fertility symbols.

- Asherim.  
An Asherah was a tree which was used for worship. Asherim (plural) were an entire grove of such trees.
- Male Cult Prostitutes.  
A part of the pagan worship involved homosexual acts within the places of worship. It was thought that participation in such actions would incite the various gods who ruled over the wind and the rain to participate and thus bring fertility to the land.

The people of Israel had been forbidden from participating in these pagan practices. But now they entered into them with a passion. As a result, the Lord soon brought judgment upon the land.

b. Invasion from Egypt.

25                    *Now it happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak the king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.*

26                    *He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house, and he took everything, even taking all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.*

27                    *So King Rehoboam made shields of bronze in their place, and committed them to the care of the commanders of the guard who guarded the doorway of the king's house.*

28                    *Then it happened as often as the king entered the house of the Lord, that the guards would carry them and would bring them back into the guards' room. (1 Kings 14:25-28).*

The 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty of Egypt had been friendly to Israel to the point of Pharaoh's daughter being wedded to King Solomon. However

The body of Shishak was discovered at an intact burial tomb at Tanis in 1938.
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these good relations did not last past Solomon's death.

Now there came a Libyan to the throne who founded a new ruling family - the 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty. He is known in historical records as Sheshonq (the Biblical Shishak). He was able to reunify the country which had been previously divided and brought a certain amount of stability to the crown. He then turned his attention to foreign policy, renewing an alliance with Byblos and regaining control of Nubia.

It is likely this same Sheshonq who had given refuge to such enemies of Israel as Jeroboam and Hadad the Edomite.

Now he marched into Judah. Archaeological records list 150 cities which he claimed to have taken in this campaign. Among the cities which were looted was Jerusalem and its temple.

We know from Egyptian records at Karnak that this raid extended all the way into Galilee.
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Egyptian records list the thousands of pounds of gold and silver that the son of Shishak offered to the Egyptian gods following his raid into Canaan. This was the plunder which he had taken from Solomon's Temple.

From this time on, the reign of Rehoboam would be only a shadow of its former glory. The golden shields of Solomon were replaced by shields of bronze, a less-valued commodity. The old forms continued, but they lost some of their luster.

## 2. Abijam (913-911 B.C.).

Rehoboam was followed by his son, Abijam. The reader should take care not to confuse Abijah, son of Jeroboam with Abijam, son of Rehoboam. Like his father before him, Abijam followed Yahweh sometimes and even showed a certain amount of faith when he was in trouble; but he worshiped other gods and was not consistent.

Judah and Israel went to war during his reign. At the Battle of Zemaraim, Israel ambushed the army of Judah in a pincer movement and with a force that outnumbered Judah by a factor of two to one.

In the midst of this situation, the Lord gave the victory to Judah. This ended the war as Jeroboam retreated back to Israel.

## **THE FIRST REFORMATION PERIOD**

### **1. Asa (911-870 B.C.).**

Abijam was succeeded by his son Asa. He was the first godly king of the Divided Monarchy. With his advent began a period of national reform in Judah.

#### **a. Religious reform.**

*Asa did what was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father. (1 Kings 15:11).*

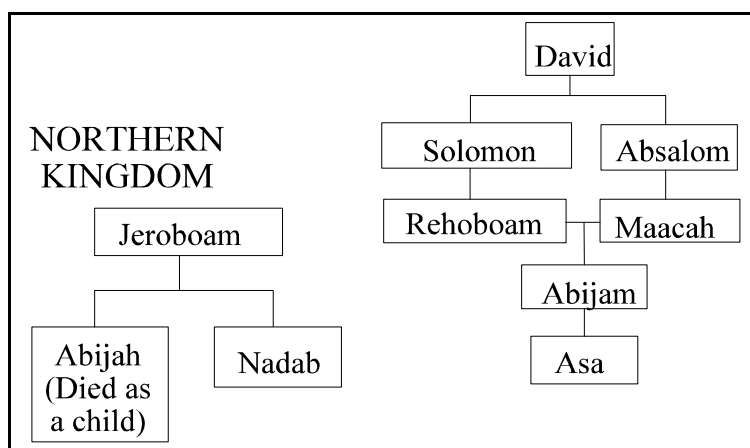
Throughout the rest of the book of Kings, we will read of each of the kings of Judah a summary statement of the way in which he conducted himself. This summary will say one of two things.

- (1) He walked in the sins of his fathers.  
Or...
- (2) He walked right in the sight of the Lord like David.

Asa tore down all of the heathen temples and altars in Judah, leading the Jews back into the exclusive worship of Yahweh and renewing the covenant promises. He even removed his own mother from the office of queen because of her idol worship.

*He also put away the male cult prostitutes from the land and removed all the idols which his fathers had made.*

*He also removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah; and Asa cut down her horrid image and burned it at the brook Kidron. (1 Kings 15:12-13).*



The writer of Kings make no mention of the prophet Azariah (2 Chronicles 15:1-7) who was a moving influence in the life of Asa. There are times when God will use a man or a woman as an influence for good behind the scenes.

b. Military reform.

He guaranteed peace and security for Judah by building up his military machine. When an army of Ethiopians threatened to invade from the south, they were beaten off.

c. War with Israel.

The reforms which Asa brought about in Judah served as a beacon for the worship of the Lord to all Israelites. He gave an open invitation to members of every tribe of Israel to come and to worship in the Temple.

*And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who resided with them, for many defected to him from Israel when they saw that the Lord was with him. (2 Chronicles 15:9).*

This was seen as a threat to the continued security of the Northern Kingdom and the response was an embargo against all traffic coming from or going into Judah.

*Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.*

*Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah. (1 Kings 15:16-17).*

Baasha was a usurper to the throne of Israel. He gained the throne by murdering all of the dynasty of Jeroboam. He invaded Judah and captured the city of Ramah, a scant 5 miles north of Jerusalem. There are several different cities in Palestine by this name. The name means “high place.” Those towns with this name were all built on top of a mountain.

The purpose of Baasha’s taking of this city was to prevent anyone from going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah. It was not enough for Baasha to walk in the path of idolatry. He also wanted to stop others from worshiping the Lord. Evil is like that. Evil always wants company.

d. Alliance with Aram.

<sup>18</sup> *Then Asa took all the silver and the gold which were left in the treasuries of the house of the Lord and the treasuries of the king’s house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Aram, who lived in Damascus, saying, <sup>19</sup> “Let there be a treaty between you and me, as between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent you a present of silver and gold; go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so that he will withdraw from me.”*

<sup>20</sup> *So Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah and all Chinneroth, besides all the land of Naphtali. (1 Kings 15:18-20).*

Instead of turning to the Lord for help, Asa responds to the



incursion by soliciting assistance from the King of Aram (modern Syria), the country to the northeast of Israel.

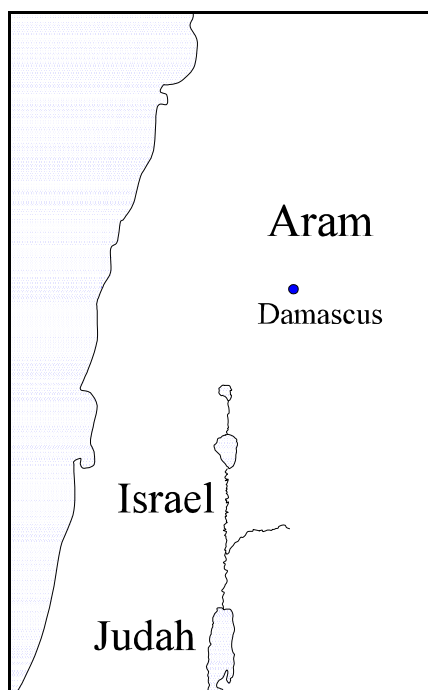
The Aramaeans had been long-standing enemies of Israel. David had subdued the Aramaean tribes, occupying Damascus (2 Samuel 8:6), but in the days of Solomon, Rezon ben Eliada had retaken Damascus, being “Israel’s adversary as long as Solomon lived” (1 Kings 11:23-25).

Now there was a new dynasty in Damascus headed by Ben-Hadad (there will be several kings of Damascus with this name. Hadad was the name one of the pagan deities of that day).

Asa stripped the treasures of the Temple and used them to bribe Benhadad into invading Israel from the north.

For relying upon a Syrian alliance instead of upon Yahweh, Asa was rebuked by the prophet Hanani. Instead of repenting, Asa responded by throwing Hanani. into prison.

As a result, the Lord afflicted him with political unrest and with a disease which affected his feet. Even then, he refused to return to the Lord.



2. Jehoshaphat (870-848 B.C.).

Jehoshaphat became co-regent with his father as his health continued to fail. Once his father died, Jehoshaphat became king. He followed his father’s early example in worshipping Yahweh.

a. Religious policy.

Jehoshaphat sent officials throughout Judah accompanied by Levites to teach the Law of the Lord to the people.

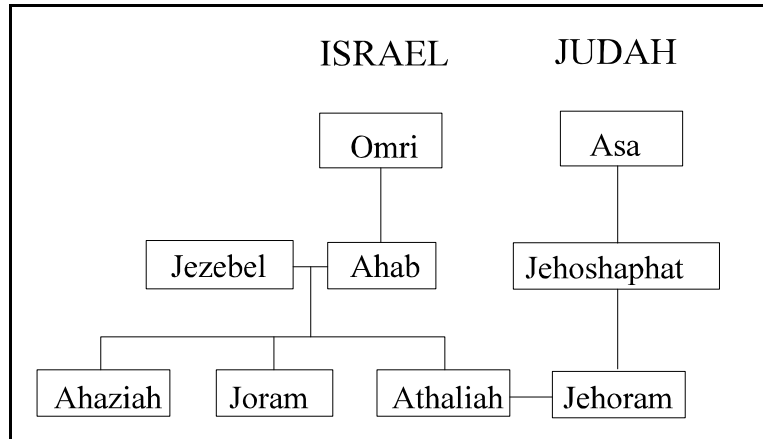
b. Military policy.

He had a strong military policy, fortifying the cities of Judah and even establishing garrisons within territories belonging to Ephraim. He was able to field an army of nearly a million men. Both the Philistines and the Arabians were vassal states to Judah during this period.

It was during his reign that Assyria was repulsed by a coalition of Israel, Aram and a number of other countries at Qarqar.

c. Alliance with Israel.

When Ahab approached him with the offer of an alliance, Jehoshaphat was agreeable. The alliance was sealed by the marriage of Ahab's daughter to Jehoshaphat's son.



Later in the same year, Ahab and Jehoshaphat marched against Damascus and were defeated. Ahab was killed in the battle and Jehoshaphat barely escaped.

d. Repentance.

Returning to Judah, Jehoshaphat was rebuked by the prophet Jehu for having entered into the alliance with an enemy of

Yahweh. Jehoshaphat repented of his sin and continued his religious reforms, establishing a judicial system invested in the Levites and priests.

3. Jehoram (848-841 B.C.).

Jehoshaphat had several sons. Jehoram, as the firstborn, was made co-regent for several years and then became king upon the death of his father.

a. Murder of his brothers.

The first thing that Jehoram did upon coming to the throne was to murder all of his brothers and other high-ranking nobles so that none might pose a threat to his authority.

b. Apostasy.

Jehoram had married Athaliah, daughter to Ahab and Jezebel. He followed after his wife in the Canaanite religious system. Shrines to Baal were set up in the high places around Judah.

c. Military defeats.

During his reign, Edom revolted and became an independent state. Perceiving this weakness, the Philistines and the Arabs raided Judah, murdering and pillaging. They even plundered the king's own palace and put to death most of his sons.

Ultimately, the Lord judged Jehoram with a disease which caused his bowels to fall out. He died a terrible and painful death.

4. Ahaziah (841 B.C.).

The young son of Jehoram came to the throne at the death of his father. Like his father and mother, Ahaziah worshiped false gods and practiced the Canaanite cultic rituals.

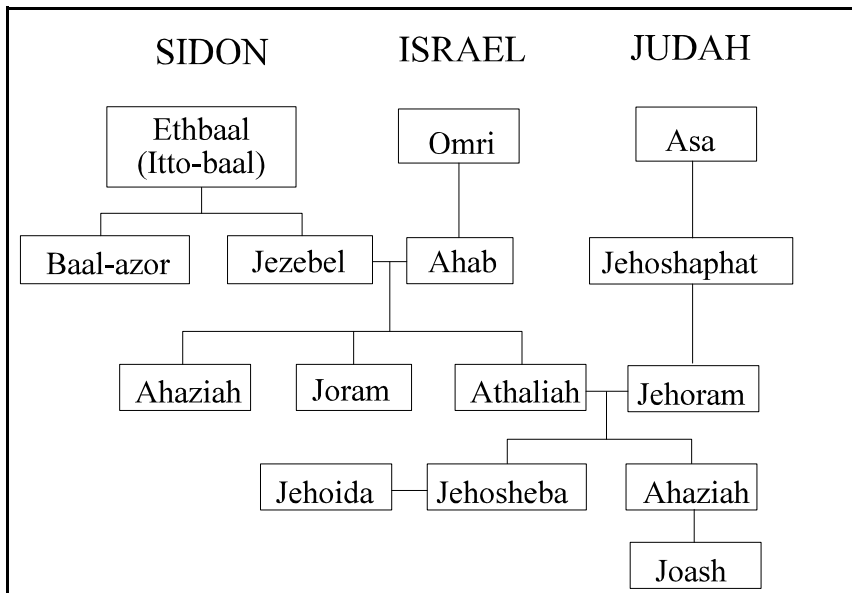
He joined with his uncle Joram, king of Israel, in a war against Aram. The battle ended in defeat and Ahaziah was wounded. He was convalescing in Jezreel when a palace revolt broke out in Israel, led

by Jehu. Ahaziah sought refuge in Samaria, but was captured, brought before Jehu, and put to death.

5. Athaliah (841-835 B.C.).

Athaliah, the queen mother used this opportunity to seize power, murdering all of her children and grandchildren. However, one of her daughters took her infant nephew and hid him in the temple, a building that had been all but deserted by the Jews. His name was Joash.

The young crown prince Joash was raised in the temple by Jehoida, a faithful priest. After six years, a conspiracy successfully placed the young prince upon the throne. Athaliah was put to death.



## THE SECOND REFORMATION PERIOD

The Second Reformation Period was to see only a partial return from the paganism that was beginning to be entrenched in Judah.

1. Joash (835-796 B.C.).

Joash was only 7 years old when he came to the throne of Judah. For many years, Jehoida, the high priest who had raised him, was the ruling power of Judah.

a. Policies during Jehoida's life.

As long as Jehoida lived to guide the young king, the nation prospered. Under his direction, the Temple was cleansed and restored. The sacrifices which had been abandoned were reinstated.

b. Policies after Jehoida's death.

After the death of Jehoida, Joash was swayed by the opinion of the young liberal party and began to worship false gods.

He even went so far as to have Zechariah, the son of Jehoida, stoned when he spoke out against this idolatry.

c. Invasion from Aram.

The Aramaeans invaded Judah and Jerusalem, pillaging the city and killing many of the king's officers. What was remarkable about this invasion is that the victorious invaders were vastly outnumbered by the military forces of Judah.

*Indeed the army of the Aramaeans came with a small number of men; yet the Lord delivered a very great army into their hands, because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash. (2 Chronicles 24:24).*

This military defeat was a judgment from the Lord against Judah and her wayward king. Joash was finally assassinated by his own servants.

2. Amaziah (796-767 B.C.).

Amaziah was 25 years old when he came to the throne, he was to rule Judah for the next 29 years.

a. Religious policies.

Amaziah was a good king, obeying all of the commands of Yahweh during the first part of his reign.

b. Spiritual failure.

After a successful expedition into Edom, he brought back the idols of the Edomites and set them up for display. It was not long before they were being worshiped.

c. Military defeat.

Soon after this, Amaziah was defeated in battle against the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom. The Israelites led Amaziah in chains back to Judah. They pillaged Jerusalem, tearing down a portion of the wall and looting the gold and silver in the Temple.

When a conspiracy was uncovered, Amaziah fled to Lachish to escape assassination. The conspirators followed him there and put him to death.

Apparently this was not considered to be a move against the Davidic Dynasty, but rather was designed to place a worshiper of Yahweh upon the throne (2 Chronicles 25:27).

3. Uzziah (767-740 B.C.).

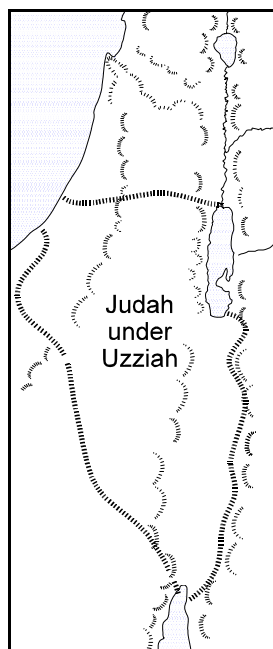
Uzziah had already served as co-regent with his father for 23 years when he was crowned king of Judah.

a. Religious policy.

Like his father before him, Uzziah began his reign with a return to Yahweh.

b. Military policy.

Uzziah concentrated on building up a very strong, professional military. He used this to conquer the Philistines and the Arabians.

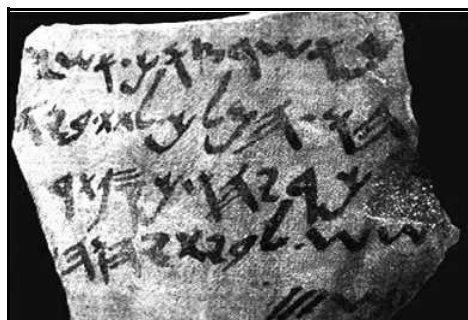


He also built up much of Jerusalem, adding towers, gates and

war machines to protect the city.

- c.     B e t h - Y a h w e h  
Ostraca.

Ostraca is a piece of broken pottery. It was used as scrap paper. In this case, it served as a receipt. Dated between the 7th and 9th century B.C., it is not known



Broken pieces of pottery were used for writing

where it was originally discovered, but it somehow made its way into the private collection of Shlomo Moussaieff (London, England). Since that time, there have been some who have questioned its authenticity in the light of counterfeit scandals.

Translation reads as follows:   *According to your order, Ashyahu the king, to give by the hand of [Z]echaryahu silver of Tarshish for the house of Yahweh 3 shekels.*

Language	Hebrew
Medium	Ostracon (pottery)
Size	8.6 centimeters high 10.9 centimeters wide 5 lines of writing
Genre	Temple receipt
Date	7th-9th century B.C.
Current Location	Private collection of Shlomo Moussaieff (London, England)

4.     Jotham (740-732 B.C.).

Jotham followed his father's example by obeying the Law of the Lord. However, it is notable that he never entered the Temple. There are several possible reasons for this.

He may have been showing respect for his father who had been judged for his sin in the Temple. Or he may have been superstitious about entering the Temple, thinking that he might also contract leprosy. As a result of Jotham's obedience, Judah prospered in both the areas of military strength as well as in the economy.

5. Ahaz (732-716 B.C.).

The name Ahaz is shortened from Jehoahaz, meaning Possession of Yahweh. Perhaps the reason that his name was shortened was that he was so rebellious to the Lord. Ahaz was the complete opposite of his father.

a. Religious policy.

As soon as he came to the throne, Ahaz began to follow the Canaanite religious practices, even sacrificing his own children to the false gods.

b. Military defeats.

Because of the sins of Ahaz, the Lord allowed the Philistines, the Edomites and the Syrians to invade and conquer the border cities of Judah. It was at this time that Judah lost the port of Elath on the Gulf of Aqaba.

c. Alliance with Assyria.

Because of these military threats, Ahaz made an alliance with the Assyrians, robbing the Temple to send money to bribe Tiglath-Pileser. In return, the Assyrians offered to attack Aram and Israel (they had been planning to do so anyway).

Isaiah confronted Ahaz and advised him to trust in the Lord instead of Assyria. He even offered to give Ahaz a sign from the Lord to prove the truth of his words. When Ahaz refused to choose a sign, the Lord Himself chose one, promising that a child would be born and that, before the child had reached a certain age, the kings of Aram and Israel would be overthrown.

It is in the midst of this prophecy that Isaiah tells of a Child



whose name would be Immanuel, literally “God with us.” While the New Testament looks at the ultimate fulfillment of this in the person of Jesus, the immediate application of this prophecy saw the promised overthrow of the kings of Aram and Israel within a single generation.

d. Destruction of Samaria.

Tiglath-Pileser III died in 727 B.C. and Israel took this opportunity to revolt, stopping payment of the annual tribute. Ahaz wisely continued to pay the required tribute as the Assyrians swept down from the north, laying siege to the capital city of Samaria. For three years, Samaria held out under the siege until famine and disease had decimated the population. When the city fell in 721 B.C., the surviving population was deported. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had ceased to exist.

The Jews of the Southern Kingdom were terrified as they watched the inhuman cruelties which the Assyrians inflicted upon their captives. Now, the Assyrians began to eye the Southern Kingdom of Judah. It was only a matter of time before they attacked.

## **THE THIRD REFORMATION PERIOD**

The Third Reformation Period took place at a time when Judah seemed to be on the verge of extinction. The power of the entire Assyrian Empire was poised about the tiny Kingdom.

1. Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.).

Hezekiah was 25 years old when he came to the throne. The prophet Isaiah had already been ministering for 35 years. With the advent of Hezekiah, a great revival began.

a. Religious reform.

Hezekiah began his reign by destroying all of the Canaanite idols and then repairing the Temple of God.

b. Envoys from Merodach-baladan.

Merodach-baladan had managed to snatch Babylon and hold it from the Assyrians. Looking for allies against Assyria, he sent envoys to Hezekiah, king of Judah. In a moment of pride, Hezekiah foolishly showed these envoys all of the treasures of the temple. As a result, the word got out of the great wealth that was stored up in Jerusalem.

c. Solicitations to rebellion.

Philistia, Egypt and Ethiopia sent envoys to Hezekiah, urging him to join in a rebellion. Isaiah warned him not to put his trust in Egypt.

*And the Lord said, "Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush, <sup>4</sup> so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.*

*"Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast." (Isaiah 20:3-5).*

Hezekiah listened to the warning of Isaiah and continued to pay homage to Assyria.

d. Revolt against Assyria.

When Assyria was drawn into an extended conflict with Merodach-baladan, Hezekiah was persuaded to join Egypt; in a revolt. The cities of Philistia also joined in, along with Tyre and Sidon.

In 701 B.C. Sennacherib conducted a massive campaign against this western alliance. The Phoenician cities each submitted or were destroyed. The Egyptians were routed and Judah was left to face Sennacherib alone.

Hezekiah offered to pay any tribute in return for peace.

Sennacherib set the price at 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold (in that day even a single talent was considered to be a fortune).

*And Hezekiah gave him all the silver which was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasuries of the king's house.*

*At that time Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the doorposts which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria. (2 Kings 18:15-16).*

Instead of keeping his agreement, Sennacherib changed his mind and decided to try to take Jerusalem.

e. Hezekiah's Tunnel and the Siloam Inscription.

*Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (2 Kings 20:20).*

*Now when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that he intended to make war on Jerusalem, <sup>3</sup> he decided with his officers and his warriors to cut off the supply of water from the springs which were outside the city, and they helped him. (2 Chronicles 32:2-3).*

*It was Hezekiah who stopped the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all that he did. (2 Chronicles 32:30).*

Hezekiah ordered a tunnel to be cut through the mountain on which Jerusalem rests. This tunnel served to bring water from the Gihon Spring down into the city. The tunnel can still be

seen today. It winds its way 1900 feet under the city of Jerusalem.

This tunnel was explored by Edward Robinson when he arrived in Jerusalem in April of 1838. He made the first scientific study of this amazing engineering feat. The conduit, cut from solid rock in a rather circuitous route, was 1,750 feet long, with an average width of 2 feet, and an average height of six feet. Because the



Author and guide in Hezekiah's Tunnel

workmen's chisel marks changed directions at about the half-way point, Robinson speculated that two crews had dug the tunnel, starting at opposite ends, finally meeting in the middle. His theory was later confirmed.

In 1880 a boy was wading in the pool of Siloam and entered Hezekiah's Tunnel. Nineteen feet inside the entrance, he noticed marks on the wall of the tunnel. It was an inscription. It was later cut out and taken by the Turkish government to the Ottoman Museum in Constantinople. It related how a team cut through each end of the mountain to some together at a point in the middle.

*"The boring through is completed.  
And this is the story of the boring through:  
while yet they plied the drill, each toward his  
fellow, and while yet there were three cubits  
to be bored through, there was heard the  
voice of one calling unto another, for there  
was a crevice in the rock on the right hand.  
And on the day of the boring through the stone  
cutters struck, each to meet his fellow, drill  
upon drill; and the water flowed from the*

*source to the pool for a thousand and two hundred cubits, and a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the stone cutters.”*

While the Biblical narrative recounts Hezekiah’s part in the construction, this inscription tells the same story from the point of view of the workers who dug the tunnel.

f. Jerusalem delivered.

This time, Hezekiah turned to the Lord for help and was promised deliverance. In a single night, the Assyrian army was overthrown.

*Then it happened that night that the angel of the Lord went out, and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead.*

*So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home, and lived at Nineveh. (2 Kings 19:35-36).*

The palace of Sennacherib was discovered in 1847 by the English archaeologist Austen Henry Layard at Kuyunjik. A total of 71 rooms were uncovered. Many of the walls were lined with sculptured slabs. One of Sennacherib’s campaigns is described on the Taylor Prism, a clay octagonal cylinder which today resides in the British Museum (an even better copy is on a prism at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago). It contains the following:

*“As for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not submit to my yoke, 46 of his strong walled cities, as well as the small cities in their neighborhood, which were without number, by escalade and bringing up siege engines, by attacking and storming on foot, by mines, tunnels and breaches, I besieged and took 200,150 people, great and small, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle*

*and sheep without number, I brought away from them and counted as spoil. **Himself, like a caged bird, I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city.** Earthworks I threw up against him. The one coming out of his city gate I turned back to his misery. The cities of his which I had despoiled, I cut off from his land and gave them to Mitinti king of Ashdod, Padi king of Ekron, and Silili-bel king of Gaza. Thus I diminished his land. I added to the former tribute and laid upon him as their yearly payment a tax in the form of gifts for my majesty. As for Hezekiah, the terrifying splendor of my majesty overcame him and the Urbi and his mercenary troops which he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city, deserted him. In addition to 30 talents of gold and 800 talents of silver, there were gems, antimony, jewels, large sandu stones, couches of ivory, house chairs of ivory, elephant's hide, ivory, maple, boxwood, all kinds of valuable treasures, as well as his daughters, his harem, his male and female musicians, which he had them bring after me to Nineveh, my royal city. To pay tribute and to accept servitude he dispatched his messengers."*

It is interesting to note Sennacherib's description of this campaign. He brags about how he had besieged the city of Jerusalem, closing up Hezekiah as a bird in a cage, but makes no mention of the outcome of the battle.

The remaining years of Hezekiah's life were peaceful and prosperous as the Lord continued to bless him.

2. Manasseh (686-642 B.C.).

Manasseh has the distinction of being one of the worst kings that Judah ever had.

a. Murder of Isaiah.

One of Manasseh's first acts was the arrest and execution of the prophet Isaiah. The old prophet was placed inside a hollow tree trunk and then sawn apart.

b. Apostasy.

Manasseh was involved in all of the practices of the Canaanite religious system.

- (1) Worship of false gods.
- (2) Child sacrifice.
- (3) Sorcery.
- (4) Idols in the Temple of God.

c. Assyrian invasion.

Because of Manasseh's sin, the Lord allowed the Assyrians to invade Judah. The Scriptures tell how Manasseh was captured and taken in chains to Babylon. At this time in history, Babylon was a part of the Assyrian Empire and Esarhaddon, the king of Assyria, used it as his southern palace.

d. Repentance.

In Babylon, Manasseh repented and turned back to God. Soon after this, he was released and allowed to return to Jerusalem. He now led Judah back to the Lord, tearing down the false idols in the land.

3. Amon (642-640 B.C.).

Amon was 22 years old when he came to the throne. He quickly undid much of what his father had accomplished, leading the Jews back into idolatry. He was murdered by his own servants after a short reign of only two years.

## **THE FOURTH REFORMATION PERIOD**

The Fourth Reformation Period of Judah was to be the last before the nation disintegrated in the Babylonian Captivity.

1. Josiah (640-609 B.C.).

Josiah was only an 8 year old boy when he came to the throne. Even as a boy, he served Yahweh and began to bring a revival to Judah.

a. Religious reform.

As he grew older, Josiah began a program of reforms, breaking down the idols and executing the Canaanite priests. Then he began the work of rebuilding the Temple.

While the Temple was being restored, a copy of the Scriptures was located. It was brought to Josiah and read to him.

*Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king.*

*And it came about when the king heard the words of the book of the law, that he tore his clothes. (2 Kings 22:10-11).*

When Josiah heard the terms of the covenant of Yahweh read, he was struck with the realization that Judah had transgressed that covenant.

Accordingly, he now led the nation in a prayer of repentance. For this, he was informed by the prophetess Huldah that the nation would not be judged in his lifetime.

b. Fall of Assyria.

The final years of Josiah's reign saw a great number of changes on the international scene. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell to the combined assault of the Medes and the Chaldeans in 612 B.C.

A remnant of Assyrians escaped to Carchemish where they allied themselves to the Egyptians in an attempt to hold off the Medes and the Chaldeans.

c. Battle of Megiddo.



When Pharaoh Echo, the king of Egypt, began to march through Palestine toward Carchemish, Josiah tried to intercept him at Megiddo.

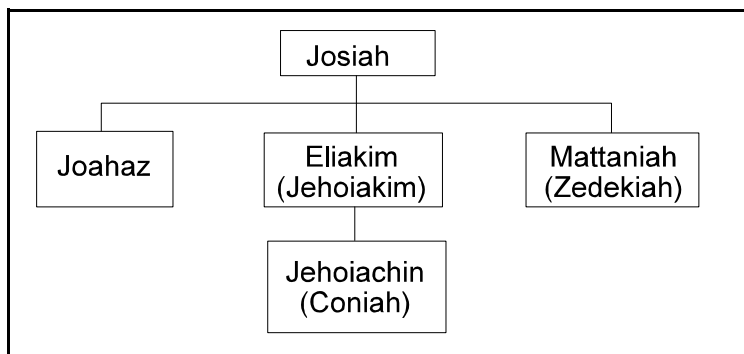
*After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco king of Egypt came up to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to engage him.*

*But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, "What have we to do with each other, O King of Judah? I am not coming against you today but against the house with which I am at war, and God has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from interfering with God who is with me, that He may not destroy you."*

*However, Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to make war with him; nor did he listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to make war on the plain of Megiddo. (2 Chronicles 35:20-22).*

In spite of the warning of Necho that he had been sent by God, Josiah met him in battle in the Valley of Megiddo. In the heat of the battle, Josiah was shot by a stray arrow and he ultimately died from his injury.

Josiah had left three sons and a grandson. Each one of them would sit for a time upon the throne of Judah.



With Josiah dead, the people of Judah placed Jehoahaz (also

known as Joahaz) upon the throne.

2. Joahaz (609 B.C.).

Joahaz remained on the throne for three months. At the end of that time, Pharaoh Necho came to Jerusalem and deposed Joahaz, placing a tribute on the land of Judah of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold. Joahaz was taken to Egypt for the remainder of his life.

3. Jehoiakim.

Necho now placed Eliakim upon the throne of Judah and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim's first act was to raise a levy of taxes to pay a bribe to the Egyptians.

Jeremiah had been prophesying for nearly 20 years when Jehoiakim became king. The prophet denounced the wickedness of the leadership of Judah and warned that Jehoiakim would die and, instead of a royal burial, he would be given that accorded to a beast of burden.

a. The Battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.).

Pharaoh Necho met Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish on the Euphrates in 605 B.C. The Egyptians were defeated with enormous losses. They retreated south with Nebuchadnezzar hot on their heels.

b. Nebuchadnezzar in Palestine.

Prince Nebuchadnezzar pursued the Egyptian forces all the way down to Palestine, encountering no serious resistance along the way.

As Nebuchadnezzar arrived in Canaan, he called for Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to swear allegiance to him and pay a tribute. Jehoiakim complied and was permitted to retain his throne.

Nebuchadnezzar also took hostages from among the Hebrew nobility at this time. Among these hostages was Daniel and his companions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These

were taken to Babylon to receive a Chaldean indoctrination.

c. The Chaldean/Egyptian War.

Nebuchadnezzar mounted an invasion into Egypt in 601 B.C. The outcome of this campaign was indecisive with each side inflicting heavy casualties upon the other. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon to regroup and strengthen his forces.

d. Judah's Rebellion (597 B.C.).

Jehoiakim saw this and interpreted it as a defeat for Nebuchadnezzar. He promptly rebelled and allied himself with the Egyptians. Retribution from Babylon was quick in coming.

Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and threw Jehoiakim into chains, and placed his 18 year old son Jehoiachin on the throne.

4. Jehoiachin (597 B.C.).

Jehoiachin, also known as Coniah, was only 18 years old when he became king of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar set him upon the throne and then moved down against Egypt. While he was in Egypt, young Jehoiachin foolishly rebelled, contrary to the advice of Jeremiah.

Nebuchadnezzar returned, recaptured Jerusalem, and took Jehoiachin, his family, servants and princes, threw them into chains, and marched them away to Babylon.

This second deportation was made up of about 10,000 of the nobles of Judah. Among them was the prophet Ezekiel.

5. Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.).

Having deposed Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar now placed Zedekiah, uncle to Jehoiachin, upon the throne of Judah.

a. Intrigue with Egypt.

Zedekiah was constantly vacillating between Egypt and Babylon. In 593 B.C. when Pharaoh Necho died, representatives from the city-states of Edom, Moab, Ammon and Tyre met in Jerusalem, hoping that the new Egyptian ruler would join them in a new rebellion against Babylon.

However, the new pharaoh, Psammetichus II, adopted a policy of non-interference. The plot against Babylon left Zedekiah on the spot and he had to travel to Babylon where he swore allegiance once again to Nebuchadnezzar.

b. Rebellion.

In 588 B.C. Psammetichus II died and Pharaoh Hophra (Apries) came to the throne of Egypt. He immediately persuaded the countries of Palestine to join him in a revolt against Babylon.

c. Jerusalem under siege.

Nebuchadnezzar assembled his army and invaded Palestine, setting up his headquarters at Riblah on the Orontes River.

From there, he launched simultaneous invasions of Judah, Ammon, Edom and Tyre with a small reconnaissance patrol to the Egyptian border.

Zedekiah sent messengers to Jeremiah, asking for help from the Lord. Jeremiah's response was that the city of Jerusalem was doomed.

*You shall also say to this people,  
“Thus says the Lord, Behold, I set before you  
the way of life and the way of death.*

*“He who dwells in this city will die by  
the sword and by famine and by pestilence;  
but he who goes out and falls away to the  
Chaldeans who are besieging you will live,  
and he will have his own life as booty.*

*“For I have set My face against this  
city for harm and not for good, ‘ declares the  
Lord. ‘It will be given into the hand of the*

*king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire.”  
(Jeremiah 21:8-10).*

Judah was quickly overrun except for the cities of Jerusalem, Lachish and Eziekah. The siege of Jerusalem began on January 588 B.C. It would be another year and a half before the city was taken.

d. The siege lifted.

The siege of Jerusalem was temporarily interrupted when Pharaoh Hophra led the Egyptian army up into Palestine in an attempt to relieve Tyre and Sidon.

Meanwhile, Pharaoh's army had set out from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who had been besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them, they lifted the siege from Jerusalem (Jeremiah 37:5).

Many of the inhabitants of the city were heartened by this, thinking that it indicated a turn in their fortunes. Instead of heeding the warnings of Jeremiah, they strengthened their resolve to hold out against Nebuchadnezzar.

As Pharaoh Hophra marched up along the Way of the Philistines, the Chaldeans who had been besieging Jerusalem pulled out and hit the Egyptians, driving them back into Egypt. Having defeated the Egyptian threat, they returned to Jerusalem.

e. The fall of Jerusalem.

The siege continued for many long months as the food ran out and disease and starvation spread through the city.

On July 10, 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's forces broke through the northern wall of Jerusalem. It would be another month before the southern wall could be taken.

*On the ninth day of the fourth month  
the famine was so severe in the city that there  
was no food for the people of the land. Then*

*the city was broken into, and all the men of war fled by night by way of the gate between the two walls beside the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. And they went by way of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho and all his army was scattered from him. Then they captured the king and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and he passed sentence on him. During this siege, Zedekiah and the remnants of his army broke out of Jerusalem and fled east toward Jericho, only to be captured and brought to Riblah where Nebuchadnezzar still maintained his headquarters. When he was come. Nebuchadnezzar began to call him a wicked wretch and a covenant-breaker and one that had forgotten his former words, when he promised to keep the country for him. (Antiquities 10:8:2).*

Zedekiah was forced to watch his sons being executed and then his eyes were put out. He was thrown into chains to be dragged back to Babylon where he would die in prison.

The Jewish survivors were hauled across the Syrian Desert to Babylon, many of them perishing en route. The Southern Kingdom of Judah had ceased to exist.

Jerusalem was burned and the walls of the city were torn down. All military, civil and religious leaders were either executed or carried away into captivity.

Only the poorest of the peasants of Judah were allowed to remain in the land that was by now completely desolate.

6. The Lachish Letters.

Lachish was one of the city-forts in Judah at the time of the Babylonian Captivity. It lay about 20 miles to the southwest of Jerusalem. Tel Lachish was partially excavated from 1932 to 1938

by James L. Starkey who led a large-scale British expedition. This work ended abruptly when Starkey was murdered by Arab bandits while traveling from Lachish to Jerusalem.

Starkey uncovered massive fortifications built in the 17th century B.C. which extended down the entire slope of the tel, ending at the bottom in a dry moat (*fosse*). Subsequent digs uncovered more of the history of this city.

Level	History
7	Egyptian influences. No fortifications discovered - possibly due to protection from Egypt. Destroyed by fire, but soon rebuilt (See Joshua 10:31-32).
6	Another Canaanite city was built showing a marked architectural change from Level 7, but with a clear cultural continuity and having a marked Egyptian presence and influence. Destroyed by fire after 1150 B.C., after which the site was abandoned and not rebuilt until the 10th century B.C. No fortifications have been discovered.
5	Judean palace-fort in the days of Solomon.
4	Judean palace-fort in the days of the divided Kingdom. There were two city walls and gates during this period.
3	The city appears to have been densely populated and fortified with two walls. An Assyrian siege ramp has been found along with a Judean counter-ramp. City destroyed by Sennacherib in 721 B.C.
2	City was rebuilt in 701 B.C. as a fortified city. This is the period from which the Lachish Letters were written. The city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 588-586 B.C.
1	The city was rebuilt during the Persian period with a palace and a fortified city wall and gate. It continued into the Hellenistic period.

Archaeologists have not found walled fortifications at either Level 6 or Level 7, the two Canaanite occupations of the Late Bronze Age.

A cartouche was discovered bearing the name of Rameses III at Level

6, indicating that the destruction of this level did not take place until after his period (Rameses III is dated at 1182-151 B.C.).

In 1935, J. L. Starkey discovered an ostraca in what was thought to be a guard room adjoining the gate of Lachish. The ostraca was buried in a burnt layer of charcoal and ashes. There were 18 ostraca found here. Most of them were letters written by a man named Hoshaiiah who was a military officer reporting to a higher commander at Lachish named Jaosh. They are written just prior to the final fall of Lachish in 588 B.C.

- a. Letter #3 reads as follows: *“Your servant Hoshaiiah has sent to inform my lord Yaosh. May Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of peace! And now you have sent a letter but my lord has not enlightened your servant concerning the letter which you sent to your servant yesterday evening, for the heart of your servant has been sick since you wrote to your servant. And as for what my lord has said, ‘You do not know it! Read any letter,’ as Yahweh lives no one has undertaken to read me a letter at any time, nor have I read any letter that may have come to me nor would I give anything for it! And it has been reported to your servant saying, ‘The commander of the host, Coniah son of Elnathan, has come down in order to go into Egypt and unto Hodaviah son of Ahijah and his men has he sent to obtains things from him.’ And as for the letter of Tobiah, servant of the king, which came to Shallum son of Yaddua through the prophet, saying ‘Beware,’ your servant has sent it to my lord.”*

Is this the same Hoshaiiah who is mentioned in Jeremiah 42:1? We have no way of knowing and this may have been a fairly common name.

- b. Letter #6 contains the following message: *“Who is thy slave, a dog, that my lord has sent the letter of the king and the letter of the officers, saying, Read, I pray thee, and thou wilt see; **the words of the (prophet) are not good, to loosen the hands, to (make) sink the hands of the country and city.**”*

This is remarkably similar to the words recorded in Jeremiah:

*Thus saith the Lord, “This city shall*



*surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore the princes said unto the king, “We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus **he weakeneth the hands of the men of war** that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.” (Jeremiah 38:3-4).*

7. Gedaliah (587-583 B.C.).

To maintain order over the desolate country, Nebuchadnezzar appointed a Jewish noble named Gedaliah. A seal which has been discovered at Lachish indicates that he had served as the chief minister on Zedekiah's cabinet. His family had evidently been pro-Chaldean and friendly to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:24). He was given command of a Babylonian garrison at Mizpah.

On the back of one clay seal found at Lachish were marks of the papyrus document to which it had been affixed. It contained the inscription, “The property of Gedaliah who is over the house.” This was the same name of the man whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed governor of Judah after 596 B.C. (2 Kings 25:22). The title “who is over the house” is found in Isaiah 22:16 and 36:3 for governors and kings.

Nebuchadnezzar had underestimated the poor of Judah. Once again they rose up, killing Gedaliah and wiping out the Babylonian garrison. In 582 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar made another march to Palestine and another deportation left the land almost unpopulated. Refugees from this incident fled to Egypt. Jewish tradition has it that Jeremiah was taken along to Egypt at this time.

# MESOPOTAMIA IN THE AGE OF THE EMPIRES

The Sumerian period of dominance came to a close with the advent of a group coming in from the west known as the Amorites, literally “westerners.” This was in conjunction with a mass of migrations which were all taking place around 2000 B.C.



- Indo-European groups moved into the Greek peninsula to begin what would become the Mycenaean Civilization.
- Some of the Hamitic peoples in Greece moved south onto the Island of Crete to begin the Minoan Civilization.
- Lu'ians crossed the Hellespont into Anatolia to begin the Hittite Kingdom.
- Amorites moved into Mesopotamia from the west.
- Elamites contributed by invading from the east and taking Ur.

As a result of these invasions, Mesopotamia was shattered into a mosaic of tiny competing kingdoms. As a rule, these kingdoms were dominated by either Akkadian or Amorite rulers. The Akkadians were highly civilized. The Amorites started as uncultured but soon assimilated the Sumero-Akkadian culture. It was 250 years before one man managed to bring all of Mesopotamia under one rule.

## **HAMMURABI**

Hammurabi was an Amorite king who came to the throne of Babylon around 1750 B.C. During his 50-year reign, he managed to carve out a small empire that stretched from the Persian Gulf to the borders of Anatolia. He is most famed for his law code.

Code of Hammurabi	
Location	A copy first found at Susa
Excavator	Found in 1902 by de Morgan
Description	Stela of black diorite, topped by a base relief showing Hammurabi before the sun god. Followed by 51 lines of text which form a prologue for the Code.

The law code itself includes nearly 300 paragraphs of legal provisions which set forth the law of Hammurabi. It was not the first of its kind. It borrowed heavily from the old Sumerian legal system. It included the following areas:

1.     A Caste System.

The society of that day was divided into three classes: Patrician, serf and slave. The serf was bound to his land which he could not sell and was under obligation to the state.

The penalties differed depending upon who committed the crime and against whom it was committed. Eye for an eye only took place within the same class distinctions.

2.     The Death Penalty.

The death penalty was prescribed for theft, murder, adultery, kidnaping, rape, the receipt of stolen property from a temple or a palace, and for a false accusation of a capital crime.

3.     Lex Talionis.

Punishment for infractions attempted to be in accordance with the level of the crime (“an eye for an eye”). If a man built a house badly, and it fell and killed the owner, the builder was to be slain. If the

owner's son was killed, then the builder's son was slain.

4. Wages were prescribed by the state for workers and craftsmen.
5. Trial by ordeal.

When the witnesses of a law suit could not agree, then the accused was thrown into the Euphrates River. If he drowned, then he was considered to have been guilty (swimming seems to have been an unknown art).

6. Marriage.
  - Marriage was only legal when recorded in writing.
  - The penalty for adultery was death.
  - Married women were permitted to own property.
  - Monogamy was the rule, and a childless wife might give her husband a maid (who was no wife) to bear him children, who were reckoned hers. She remained mistress of her maid and might degrade her to slavery again for insolence, but could not sell her if she had borne her husband children. If the wife did this, the Code did not allow the husband to take a concubine. If she would not, he could do so. The concubine was a wife, though not of the same rank; the first wife had no power over her.

Hammurabi's empire did not continue overlong after his death. His descendants saw the flare of rebellion as both northern and southern provinces regained their independence.

## **THE MARI TABLETS**

Mari or Tell Hariri is situated on the Euphrates River about fifteen miles north of the present Syria-Iraq border about midway between Babylon and Haran. It had been an important city of Mesopotamia during the Sumerian period, though the major archaeological discoveries date to the period of Hammurabi.

André Parrot, the chief archaeologist at Mari, conducted digging seasons from 1933-38 and 1951-56. Further work was done by Jean Margueron in 1979. Over twenty thousand tablets and a number of inscriptions on objects have been unearthed. The language of the texts is Akkadian. The period of the texts covers from 1800-1750 B.C. and comes to a close when Hammurabi conquered the city. Their subject content crosses a wide range of topics, but most deal with financial and business transactions.

1. Biblical Names.

Mari was an Amorite city and, since Amorite is similar to Hebrew, there are a number of names which are similar to the Hebrew names of personages in the Bible.

- Terah
- Nahor
- Haran
- Ishmael
- Serug
- Variations of Abraham and Jacob

These names formed by a verb in the imperfect form are very numerous and very typical of Amorite names found at Mari, but are very rare for Canaanite-Phoenician names.

2. Travel and Commerce.

One tablet at Mari entailed a wagon contract. The contract stated that as a condition of rental the wagon must not be driven to the Mediterranean sea. This serves as an indication that such long-distance travel as Abraham undertook was normative.

3. Covenants and Sacrifices.

The Mari tablets describe the sacrifice of a young donkey as part of the ritual for concluding a treaty. The traditional language of “entering into a covenant” was “to kill a young ass” in the Mari texts.

Mari was destroyed by Hammurabi and it was his Babylonian scribes who went through the tablets, collecting and organizing them. Those considered of greater importance were taken away, but some 20,000 tablets were left behind along with the catalog label seals from the Babylonian scribes who organized them.

Mari Tablets	
Location	On the west bank of the Euphrates by Tell Hariri
Excavator	Excavated by the Louvre Museum under Andre Parrot.
Description	20,000 tablets

## THE HITTITES

The Bible makes several references to a people known as the Hittites. These passing references depict them as a group of warriors whose coming would strike fear in their enemies. At the same time, we note the loyalty of Uriah the Hittite to David, even though that loyalty was not returned.

The French Encyclopedia of 1871 contained a total of three sentences on the Hittites:

*The Hittites: A Canaanite tribe encountered in Palestine by the Israelites, resident and along side the Amorites in the region of Bethel. They were pressed into service by Solomon. Still later, however, an independent and monarchically governed Hittite tribe existed nearer Syria. (Meyers Neus Konversationislexikon, 1871).*

This stood in complete contrast to the Biblical reference in 2 Kings 7:6 which implied that the Hittites were a mighty warrior race comparable to Egypt. As a result, secular scholars attacked and ridiculed the Bible as being a book of myths and fairytales.

Then, in the late 19th century, a discovery was made which was to rock the archaeological world.

*For the Lord had caused the army of the Arameans to hear a sound of chariots and a sound of horses, even the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the HITTITES and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us."*

*Therefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents and their horses and their donkeys, even the camp just as it was, and fled for their life." (2 Kings 7:6-7).*

1. Charles Felix-Marie Texier.

Texier was a French explorer who received permission from the Turkish government to explore the wilds of central Anatolia. He was

searching for the ancient city of Taviurn which had been built by the Gauls in the days of the Romans. Hie expedition set out on July 18, 1834.

a. Ruins at Boghazkoy.

In the course of his travels, Texier came to a small village called Boghazkoy, about 90 miles east of Ankara.

When he asked the villagers if there were any ruins in the neighborhood, he was told to look in the hills above the village.

One of the villagers guided him up into the hills. There, he came upon huge blocks of stone which had once formed the foundations of a building. Walking a little further, he came to a massive wall which stretched on for miles.

He finally reached a vantage point from which he could see the entire complex. He realized that he had discovered a huge city as large as Athens at the height of her glory.

b. Conclusions.

Texier returned to France where he published a book on his findings. He described the ancient ruins and the massive size of the stones and concluded that this was the lost city of Tavium.

However, after the book had been written and published, he reviewed his notes and stated that he had been wrong and that the ruins at Boghazkoy could not have been Tavium.

This came as something of an embarrassment to scholars since here was an entire city with carvings and inscriptions that no one knew about. By all rights, the city should not have been there.

2. Archibald Henry Sayce (1845-1933).

In 1879, a British scholar, Oxford professor and Bible student named Sayce examined the ruins in Anatolia. He concluded that these had all been built by the Biblical Hittites which made up a great Hittite

Empire.

All of the archaeologists and historians of that day rose up in opposition against Sayce. Sayce and his handful of followers (mostly Bible-believers) were ridiculed.

In the face of strong criticism, Sayce and his followers began to look for further evidence of this city belonging to the Hittites. They discovered several facts:

a. Assyrian documents.

They found Assyrian documents which repeatedly spoke of their invasions into the land of “Hatti.”

b. Egyptian writings.

Egyptian inscriptions made several references to battles against the “Heta.” At Tell el-Amarna a treaty was found between Rameses II of Egypt and Hattusilis III from “Heta.”

However, archaeologists and historians continued to dispute Sayce and explain these items away.

3. Hugo Winckler was a specialist in ancient languages, not a professional archaeologist.

a. First expedition.

In 1905, he led an expedition to Boghazkoy. He stayed only three days that then had to leave, due to the early seasonal rains. In those three days, he had found 30 fragments of clay tablets.

b. Second expedition.

Winckler returned to Boghazkoy the next year. Although he was an excellent language expert, he was only an amateur archaeologist. The result was that these excavations were carried out in a very unscientific manner.

Winckler would sit in his tent all day while hired Turkish natives would bring in fragments of inscriptions. Winckler



would then either translate it, or if the language was unknown, he would put it to the side for later study.

One day, Winckler's assistant followed an unsuspecting native to see where he was finding these inscription fragments. The native traveled over a winding mountain path, eventually coming to a large clearing. There, he saw the native walk over to a long row of perfectly good tablets, pick out a few, and break them up with his axe. Loading the fragments into his wheelbarrow, he took them back to Winckler.

In spite of these crude methods used in obtaining the inscriptions, much progress was made.

c. Breakthrough.

On the 20th day of the expedition, Winckler was brought a complete tablet written in Akkadian, a language which he could easily read. The tablet contained a treaty between Rameses II and Hattusilis. It was almost an exact duplicate of the treaty which had been found at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt.

This proved that there had been a Hittite Empire which had been comparable to Egypt in strength. Once again, the truths of the Bible had been substantiated by the findings of archaeology.

4. Hittites in Babylon.

We know today that around 1600 B.C. the Hittite king Mursilis led his army all the way to Babylon and conquered that city. They did not retain their control and soon packed up their loot and returned to their own country.

## **THE ASSYRIANS**

The Assyrians settled in the northeastern area of Mesopotamia which lies around the banks of the Tigris River. In contrast to southern Mesopotamia which is full of marshy reeds and swamp lands, this is a high plateau, broken up by small river valleys. The summers are blistering hot and the winters of

this land are very cold.

Early Assyrian Period	1750-2000 B.C.	Kassites dominate Babylon Kingdom of Mitanni (Hurrians) in northwest Mesopotamia uses the spoked chariot to become strong, but eventually conquered by Hittites.
Dark Ages	1200-900 B.C.	Introduced by a new wave of migrations; Hittite Kingdom falls, Sea People invade Egypt. Assyrian military machine introduce cavalry with stunning success.
Neo-Assyrian Empire	900-626 B.C.	Assyria expands her borders to take in all of Mesopotamia. Provides a constant threat to the kingdoms along the Levant. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aram</li><li>• Israel</li><li>• Judah</li></ul>
Fall of Assyria	626-612 B.C.	Assyria entered an era of decline and was set upon by a coalition from Media, Scythia and Babylon.

1. A Literary People.

The Assyrians were writers and story tellers. Our best copies of the Gilgamesh Epic come from the libraries of Assyria.

2. The Assyrian Eponym Lists.

The Assyrians kept detailed historical records, giving a name to each year. It was the custom to name the year after an officer of the state. It could be the king or it could be some other high ranking officer. The man thus honored would be the EPONYM and the year named for him would be the eponym year.

The Assyrians also recorded the advent of celestial phenomenon such as solar eclipses, tallying them with their eponym years. This has been a blessing to archaeologists and historians as it has allowed them to pinpoint exact dates in historical

Total Solar eclipses were visible in Nineveh in 832, 763 and 585 B.C.
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chronology. Faulstich makes this observation:

*During the reign of Ashur-dan III of Assyria, an eclipse of the sun is mentioned in the notation for the eponym of Bur-Sagale. This eclipse was calculated in 1887 to have occurred on June 15 (Julian calendar), 763 B.C. (1986:162).*

By pinpointing a specific year on the calendar, scholars have been able to work forward and backward along the eponym list and determine the occurrence of other dates.

This was utilized in conjunction with a later set of observations known as the Canon of Ptolemy. Named for Claudius Ptolemaeus, an Egyptian astronomer in the second century after Christ, he claims to have had access to Greek and Babylonian historical records and thus produced a list of kings of antiquity and integrated that list with a series of observations made of lunar and solar phenomenon including the 1460 year cycle of the Egyptian correlation of the rising of Sirius (July 19th of each year) with the first day of the Egyptian month.

3. Assyrian Military Machine.

The Assyrians were renown for their military prowess. Reared in an invigorating climate and schooled for a thousand years by constant warfare, they made formidable soldiers.

Isaiah gives a graphic representation of the disciplined professionalism of the Assyrian army: *No one in it is weary or stumbles, None slumbers or sleeps; Nor is the belt at its waist undone, Nor its sandal strap broken (Isaiah 5:27).*

- a. Foot soldiers: They were equipped with a curved bow from which they shot short arrows. They also carried a sword and an iron-tipped lance which served as a javelin.
- b. Chariots: While the Assyrians had chariots, they did not use them to the same effect as the Hittites. Chariots were usually reserved for nobility.
- c. Cavalry: The Assyrians had learned of the value of cavalry from the Scythians - barbarian horsemen to the north. They utilized mounted archers and swordsmen, riding small horses with neither stirrups nor saddles.

- d. **Terror tactics:** The idea of terror-tactics was to so demoralize the enemy with fear of the cruelty of the Assyrians that they would submit rather than fight. Unfortunately, it often had the opposite result. Knowing the torture, mutilation and death that they would face if they lost a battle, Assyria's enemies were often ready to fight to the death rather than to submit.

*"I built a pillar over against his city gate and I flayed all the chief men... and I covered the pillar with their skins; some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes... and I cut off the limbs of the officers... Many captives from among them I burned with fire... From some I cut off their hands and their fingers and from others I cut off their noses, their ears... of many I put out their eyes... their young men and maidens I burned in the fire." - Assurnasipal II.*

4. Notable Kings of Assyria.

Name	Dates	Accomplishments
Tiglath-Pileser I	1116-1076	Conquered most of Syria, Urartu and Babylon. Took tribute from Sidon and Byblos. The kings which followed him did not follow in his conquests and the empire went into a period of decline.
Adad-Nirari II	910-889	Brought Assyria back as a local power.
Assurnasirpal II	884-859	Marched all the way to the Mediterranean Sea.

Shalmaneser III	859-824	Fought a coalition at Qarqar which included Ahab of Israel and Ben-hadad of Damascus. He later lay siege to Damascus but was unable to take the city.
Shamshi-Adad V	824-810	(Jonah revival?)
Adad-Nirari III	810-783	Assyrian trend toward monotheism (brought about by Jonah?). Besieged Damascus, but did not take the city. These attacks on Syria were beneficial to Israel and allowed Jeroboam II to expand his kingdom.
Shalmaneser IV Ashur-Dan III Ashur-Nirari V	782-772 771-745 753-746	All three of these kings were brothers; sons of Adad-Nirari III. Under their reign, Assyria gradually gave up all her foreign possessions.
Tiglath-Pileser III	745-727	His name was originally "Pul." He gained the throne via assassination. Conquered Merodach-baladan of Babylon. Raided Galilee (2 Kings 15:29). Bribed by Ahaz of Judah to attack Aram (2 Kings 16:7-10). Inaugurated regular system of deportation of conquered peoples.
Shalmaneser V	726-722	At the beginning of his reign, Hoshea of Israel entered into an alliance with Egypt against Assyria. Shalmaneser besieged Samaria for three years.

Sargon II	721-705	Younger brother of Shalmaneser V. Completed conquest of Samaria and deported 10 tribes into captivity. Captured Ashdod. Built capital city of Khorsabad.
Sennacherib	705-681	Younger brother of Sargon II, took throne when his brother was assassinated. Besieged Jerusalem, but failed to capture it in the days of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19). Assassinated (2 Kings 19:37).
Esarhaddon	681-669	Invaded Egypt. Imprisoned Manasseh, king of Judah.
Assurbanipal	669-626	Scholar-king; collected a library of over 6000 cuneiform texts.

5. The Fall of Assyria.

The Old Testament prophets foretold the fall of Assyria, predicting that their capital city of Nineveh would be so completely destroyed that even her location would be forgotten.

*“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hands is My indignation.” (Isaiah 10:5).*

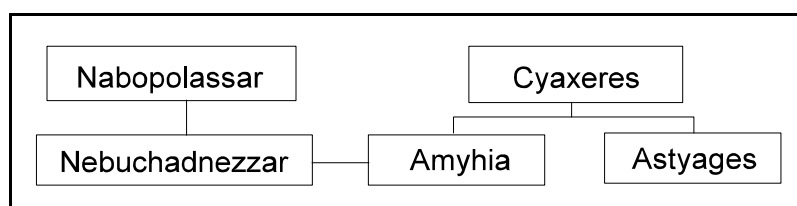
*And He will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and He will make Nineveh a desolation, parched like the wilderness.*

*And flocks will lie down in her midst, all beasts which range in herds; both the pelican and the hedgehog will lodge in the tops of her pillars; birds will sing in the window, desolation will be on the threshold; for He has laid bare the cedar work.*

*This is the exultant city which dwells securely, who says in her heart, “I am, and there is no one besides me.” How she has become a desolation, a*

*resting place for beasts! For everyone who passes by her will hiss and wave his hand in contempt. (Zephaniah 2:13-15).*

This fall which was promised by the prophets came to pass within a single generation. It began with an alliance of two of Assyria's traditional enemies, Nabopolassar of Babylon and Cyaxeres of the Medes. In 614 B.C. they sealed their alliance by the marriage of their children.



The Assyrians sought aid from the Scythians to the north and the Scythians initially agreed to attack the Medes. But when Cyaxeres offered them a portion of the spoils of Nineveh, the Scythians changed sides and all three groups converged on the Assyrians. The city fell to this coalition in the summer of 612 B.C. Remnants of the Assyrian military retreated westward to Haran and from there to Carchemish.

The Assyrians formed an alliance with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt who agreed to come to their aid at Carchemish. Josiah was ruling in Jerusalem at this time and he was determined to stop help from coming to the beleaguered Assyrians. Going against the advice of Jeremiah, he intercepted Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo, but was defeated and killed in the ensuing battle. Pharaoh Necho continued unimpeded to link up with the Assyrians at Carchemish. The battle which was fought there in 605 B.C. is one of the classic military engagements of history. The winner of this conflict was the young Babylonian prince Nebuchadnezzar.

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR (605-562 B.C.)

His name is Akkadian, Nebo-kudurri-ussur, meaning

Until 1956, most of the facts we had about Nebuchadnezzar were from the Bible and Josephus. This change in 1956 with the discovery of the tablets of the Babylonian Chronicle which record the first 11 years of his reign.

“Nebo has protected my inheritance.” Of his early life, we know almost nothing. He was the eldest son of Nabopolassar, and was described as a very tall, very strong man.

We have already mentioned that when Nabopolassar allied himself with the Medians, the alliance was cemented by a marriage between Nebuchadnezzar and the daughter of Cyaxeres. However, Nebuchadnezzar’s greatest claim to fame was in the area of the military. He would demonstrate his genius in this area throughout his career.

1. The Battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.).

Nebuchadnezzar met the Assyrian-Egyptian Alliance at Carchemish in 605 B.C. This ancient Hittite city guarded the major ford across the Euphrates River.

*In the twenty first year the king of Akkad stayed in his own land. Nebuchadnezzar, his eldest son, the crown-prince, mustered and took command of his troops; he marched to Carchemish which is on the banks of the Euphrates and crossed the river to go against the Egyptian army which lay in Carchemish. (Chronicles Tablet 21946, British Museum).*

He seems to have crossed the Euphrates River unopposed, a feat that is surprising because Carchemish guarded the river fords. It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar’s advance was unexpected and that his attack came as a surprise to the Egyptians.

2. Nebuchadnezzar in Palestine.

Prince Nebuchadnezzar pursued the Egyptian forces all the way down to Palestine, encountering no serious resistance along the way.

*And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land again, 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).*

As Nebuchadnezzar arrived in Canaan, he called for Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to swear allegiance to him and pay a tribute. Jehoiakim complied and was permitted to retain his throne.



Nebuchadnezzar also took hostages from among the Hebrew nobility at this time. Among these hostages were Daniel and his three friends, Hannaniah, Mishael and Azariah. We know them by their Babylonian names: Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego. His plan in taking these hostages was that they be indoctrinated into Chaldean culture so that they could be future leaders of their people who would be loyal to Chaldean rule.

3. Ascent to the Throne.

It was while he was here that Nebuchadnezzar received news that his father had died in Babylon. Taking only a small cavalry contingent, Nebuchadnezzar took the quickest route back to Babylon, taking a short-cut through the Syrian Desert and arriving at the capital in 23 days.

Arriving in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar ascended to the throne on the same day and was immediately recognized as king.

4. Campaigns in Syria and Canaan.

Within a month, Nebuchadnezzar returned to continue his campaigns in Syria and Canaan, collecting heavy tributes from each of the kingdoms in the area. The Philistine city of Ashkelon held out the longest, but it was eventually captured and reduced to rubble.

5. War with Egypt (601 B.C.).

After several years of fighting, the Syrian frontier was thoroughly subdued, leaving Nebuchadnezzar free to invade Egypt. The two armies clashed on the Egyptian frontier and the outcome of the battle was indecisive with each side inflicting heavy casualties upon the other. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon to regroup and strengthen his forces.

6. Judah's Rebellion (597 B.C.).

Jehoiakim of Judah saw this and interpreted it as a defeat for Nebuchadnezzar. He promptly rebelled and allied himself with the Egyptians. Retribution from Babylon was quick in coming.

*In the seventh year, the month of kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his troops, marched to Hatti-*

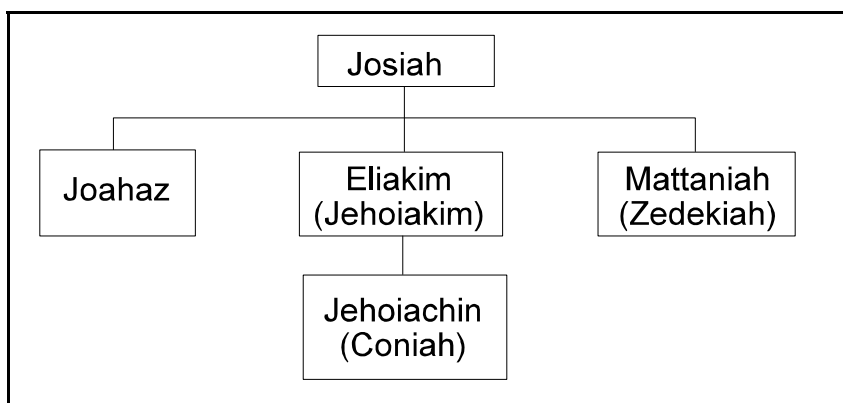
*land, and encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Adar he seized the city and captured the king. (Chronicles Tablet 21946, British Museum).*

In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar marched west into Syria and down into Judah. He captured Jerusalem, threw Jehoiakim into chains, and placed his 16 year old son Jehoiachin on the throne. Then he marched south to deal with Egypt. While Nebuchadnezzar was in Egypt, the young Jewish King Jehoiachin foolishly rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar returned, took Jerusalem, and took Jehoiachin, his family, servants and princes, threw them into chains, and marched them away to Babylon.

This second deportation was made up of about 10, 000 of the nobles of Judah. Among them was the prophet Ezekiel.

7. Zedekiah in Judah.

Having deposed Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar now placed Zedekiah, uncle to Jehoiachin, upon the throne of Judah.



Zedekiah was constantly vacillating between Egypt and Babylon. In 593 B.C. when Pharaoh Necho died, representatives from the city-states of Edom, Moab, Ammon and Tyre met in Jerusalem, hoping that the new Egyptian ruler would join them in a new rebellion against Babylon.

However, the new pharaoh, Psammetichus II, adopted a policy of non-interference. The plot against Babylon left Zedekiah on the spot and he had to travel to Babylon where he swore allegiance once again

to Nebuchadnezzar.

8. Second Revolt in Judah (587 B.C.).

In 588 B.C. Psammetichus II died and Pharaoh Hophra (Apries) came to the throne of Egypt. He immediately persuaded the countries of Palestine to join him in a revolt against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar assembled his army and invaded Palestine, setting up his headquarters at Riblah on the Orontes River. From there, he launched simultaneous invasions of Judah, Ammon, Edom and Tyre with a small reconnaissance patrol to the Egyptian border.

Judah was quickly overrun except for the cities of Jerusalem, Lachish and Eziakah. The siege of Jerusalem was temporarily interrupted when Pharaoh Hophra led the Egyptian army up into Palestine in an attempt to relieve Tyre and Sidon.

*Meanwhile, Pharaoh's army had set out from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who had been besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them, they lifted the siege from Jerusalem. (Jeremiah 37:5).*

As Pharaoh Hophra marched up along the Way of the Philistines, the Chaldeans who had been besieging Jerusalem pulled out and hit the Egyptians on their right flank, driving them back into Egypt. Having defeated the Egyptian threat, they returned to Jerusalem.

9. The Fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.).

On July 10, 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's forces broke through the northern wall of Jerusalem. It would be another month before the southern wall could be taken.

During this siege, Zedekiah and the remnants of his army broke out of Jerusalem and fled east toward Jericho, only to be captured and brought to Riblah where Nebuchadnezzar still maintained his headquarters.

*Zedekiah... fled out of the city, through the fortified ditch, and through the desert; and when certain of the deserters had informed the Babylonians of this, at break of day, they made haste to pursue after Zedekiah and overtook him not far from*

*Jericho... When he was come, Nebuchadnezzar began to call him a wicked wretch and a covenant-breaker and one that had forgotten his former words, when he promised to keep the country for him (Antiquities 10:8:2).*

Zedekiah was forced to watch his sons being executed and then his eyes were put out. He was thrown into chains to be dragged back to Babylon where he would die in prison.

By August of 586 B.C. Jerusalem belonged to the Babylonians. The vast majority of survivors were herded together and hauled away to Babylon in chains. The Southern Kingdom of Judah had ceased to exist. Jerusalem was burned and the walls of the city were torn down. All military, civil and religious leaders were either executed or carried away into captivity. Only the poorest of the peasants of Judah were allowed to remain in the land that was by now completely desolate.

The treasures of the temple were plundered and the temple itself was destroyed. It is interesting that, of the temple vessels and utensils, the Ark of the Covenant is not mentioned, save for a single reference in Jeremiah.

*“And it shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares the Lord, “they shall say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’” And it shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made again. (Jeremiah 3:16).*

The implication of this passage is that the Ark either had already been or was soon to be taken from the Temple and lost. The Ark was still in the Temple during Josiah’s reign (2 Chronicles 35:3), so it must have been removed after Josiah.

#### 10. Gedaliah.

To maintain order over the desolate country, Nebuchadnezzar appointed a Jewish noble named Gedaliah. A seal which has been discovered at Lachish indicates that he had served as the chief minister on Zedekiah’s cabinet. His family had evidently been pro-Chaldean and friendly to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:24). He was given command of a Babylonian garrison at Mizpah.

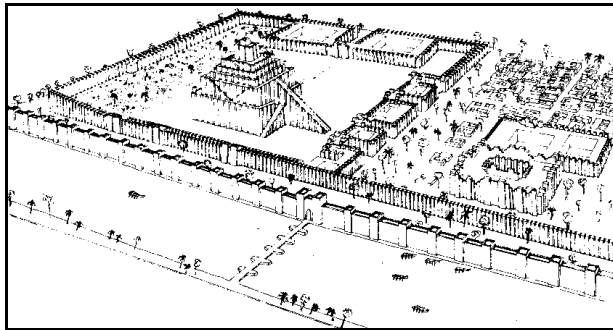
Nebuchadnezzar had underestimated the poor of Judah. Once again they rose up, killing Gedaliah and wiping out the Babylonian garrison. In 582 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar made another march to Palestine and another deportation left the land almost unpopulated. Refugees from this incident fled to Egypt. Jewish tradition has it that Jeremiah was taken along to Egypt at this time.

## **NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S BABYLON**

The city of Babylon now became the center of the ancient world. Not only was it the center of government, but it was the center of trade and culture as well.

### **1. Physical Description of the City.**

Herodotus, writing 150 years after Nebuchadnezzar, tells us that the city of Babylon was a vast square in design, each side having a length of 14 miles and making a complete circuit of 56 miles. He adds that the walls of the city were 300 feet high and were so wide that three chariots could race along the top side by side.



Babylon with the River Euphrates running through the city

The Euphrates River ran straight through the center of the city. The banks of the river were lined with brick and large gates crossed the river where it entered and exited from the city.

A large part of the city was given over to farmland. With both a food and water supply, Babylon could withstand a siege indefinitely.

### **2. The Defenses of the City.**

Herodotus states that the outer wall of the city was 300 feet high and 80 feet thick. Surrounding this outer wall was a huge moat which was fed through canals from both the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers.

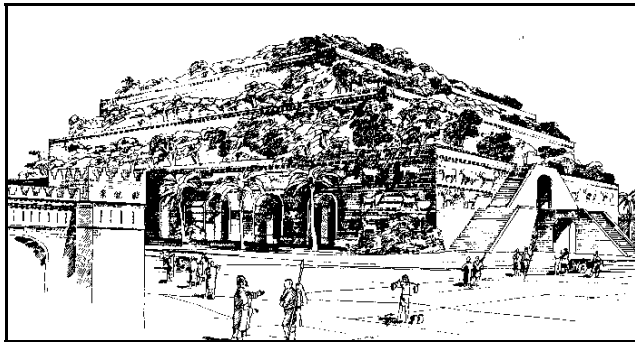
Around the center of the city was a second double-wall. If an invader managed to pass the outer wall and then also passed through the inner wall, he would find himself within a narrow space between the first and second inner wall which could be flooded in times of emergency.

3. The Hanging Gardens.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were considered by the Greeks to be one of the seven wonders of the world. They were 400 feet square and were raised on terraces one above the other to the height of the city wall. Viewed from a distance, they had the appearance of a forest-covered mountain, standing in marked contrast to the level plains of the Mesopotamian Valley.

It is said that Nebuchadnezzar built the Gardens for his wife, Amythia, the daughter of Cyaxeres, the king of the Medes. The Gardens were to relieve her homesickness for the mountains of her native Media.

In order to maintain the exotic plants of the Gardens under the blazing sun of the Babylonian plains, a powerful pump was built inside the terraced wall



Hanging Gardens of Babylon

which kept a steady flow of water, insuring that the soil was always moist.

4. Temples.

Under Nebuchadnezzar, every temple in Babylon was rebuilt. He lists eight which were built within the city itself.

The greatest of all was the Temple of Bal-Merodach. It stood in a square enclosure with each side measuring 1200 feet and entered by 12 gates. In the middle rose a tower of solid brick, like a pyramid. The sanctuary on the top rose in eight stories and was 300 feet high.

## **NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND DANIEL**

We have already noted that Daniel was one of the young nobles who was taken as a hostage to Babylon. He and his companions rose to positions of some prominence in the empire.

### **1. Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams.**

Daniel had not been in Babylon very long when he was called upon to interpret a prophetic dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. The dream pictured Nebuchadnezzar as a great empire-builder who would lead the way in a number of successive world empires which would culminate in the god of heaven establishing an eternal kingdom. After this time, Daniel was promoted to the position of prefect over all of the wise men of Babylon.

### **2. The Image of Gold.**

Daniel 3 relates an account of how Nebuchadnezzar had a great statue made of himself, standing 90 feet high. He mandated that, at appointed times, this statue be accorded worship.

When Daniel's three friends refused to partake in this idolatry, Nebuchadnezzar ordered their execution. They were thrown into a furnace of fire, but miraculously survived when there appeared with them "one like a son of the gods" (Hebrew of Daniel 3:25).

Archaeology has yet to find any images of Nebuchadnezzar let alone any that are of gold. That none remain which are of gold should not surprise us. Such a valuable item would have long since been melted down for its valuable ore.

The use of a fiery furnace has an Assyrian counterpart in the days of Ashurbanipal, whose brother, Shamash-shumukin, was put to death in such a furnace.

### **3. Nebuchadnezzar's Madness.**

Daniel 4 relates an account of Nebuchadnezzar being stricken with madness for a period of time lasting "seven times" (the Chaldean word *iddan*).

The fact that no ancient inscription testifies to such an incident in the life of Nebuchadnezzar has given critics of the Bible some ammunition. However, several important factors need to be considered.

- a. The scarcity of reliable information. The official records that we have from Nebuchadnezzar's career have some notable gaps and could easily accommodate such a period, whether it was seven months or seven years. Even if those records were extant, it is doubtful whether they would have included this dark episode in Nebuchadnezzar's reign.
- b. The Nabonidus prayer.

Found among the Dead Sea Scrolls was an Aramaic document known as the "Prayer of Nabonidus." It reads as follows:

*The words of the prayer made by Nabonidus, king of Assyria and Babylon, the great king, when he was smitten with a malignant disease, by the decree of the Most High God in the town of Tima. I was smitten with a malignant disease for a period of seven years, and became unlike men. But when I had confessed my sins and faults, God sent me a magician. He was a Jew from among those exiled in Babylon. He gave his explanation, and wrote an order that honor and great glory should be given to the Name of the Most High God. And thus he wrote: While you were smitten with a malignant disease in the town of Tima by decree of the Most High God, you prayed for seven years to gods of silver and gold, or bronze, iron, wood, stone and clay... "*  
*(Translated by J. T. Milik, Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judea, Pages 36-37).*

The fact that Nabonidus is substituted for Nebuchadnezzar should not surprise us when we consider that Herodotus used the same name for both of these men. Indeed, it is likely that Nabonidus adopted the additional name of Nebuchadnezzar in order to further legitimize his right to the throne. This would have added to future confusion between these two rulers.

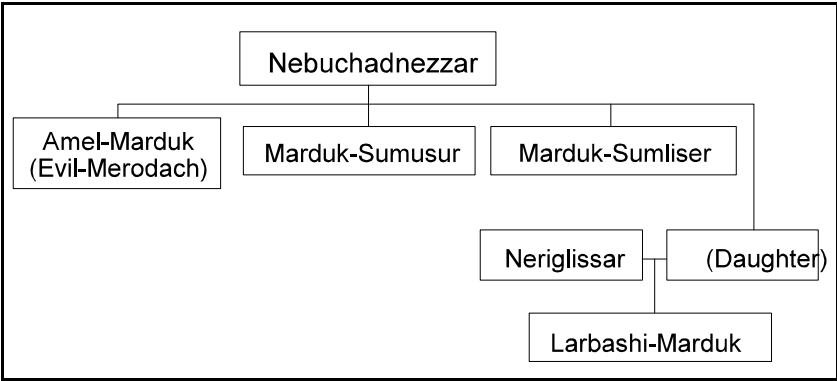


# THE LATER KINGS OF THE CHALDEAN EMPIRE

The Babylonian Empire reached its zenith under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Only 23 years after his death, Babylon would fall to Cyrus the Great and the Babylonian Empire would cease to exist.

King	Reign	Description
Nebuchadnezzar	605-562	Greatest king of Neo-Babylonian Empire. Dealings with Israel and with Daniel.
Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach)	562-560	Son of Nebuchadnezzar
Nergal-shar-usur (Neriglissar)	560-556	Brother of Amel-Marduk. Murdered his brother to take the throne
Labashi-Marduk	556	Son of Nergal-shar-usur only reigned a few months.
Nabunaid (Nabonidus)	556-539	One of the conspirators who overthrew Labashi-Marduk.

1. Amel-Marduk (562-560 B.C.).



Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. leaving three sons and a daughter. Amel-Marduk took the throne at the death of his father. He is described by Josephus as a tyrannical ruler who had no respect for the laws of his people. On the other hand, he released Jehoiachin, the dethroned

king of Judah, from prison and elevated him to a respected position within Babylon (Jeremiah 52:31-34).

After a short reign of only two years, he was assassinated by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, who now took the throne.

2. Neriglissar (560-556 B.C.).

Neriglissar had been a commander in Nebuchadnezzar's army (He is referred to as Nergil-sharezer in Jeremiah 39:3, 13). He led the armies of Babylon in a raid of Cilicia on the southeastern edge of Anatolia, culminating in the invasion of Pitusu, a island just off the Mediterranean Coast.

However, the Empire was suffering from a rising economic inflation, made worse by the heavy taxation required for the great building projects.

3. Larbashi-Marduk (556 B.C.).

Larbashi-Marduk was very young when he came to the throne. He reigned for only nine months before he was murdered. This time, a successor who was satisfactory to the priests of Babylon was chosen to serve as the king.

## **NABONIDUS (556-539 B.C.)**

Nabonidus was the only son of Nabu-balatu-iqbi, governor of Haran. His mother was a priestess of the moon god, Sin. The fact that he was married to one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters made him politically acceptable. He was nearly 70 years old when he came to the throne.

1. Archaeological Interests.

Nabonidus seems to have spent most of his time excavating the ruins of ancient temples and then rebuilding them. He was so completely taken up with this quest that he neglected the rulership of his kingdom. Newsome makes this observation:

*Many years later, almost all of the desert communities which Nabonidus mentions in his inscrip-*

*tions are found to contain small colonies of Jews.  
(1979:109).*

We do not know the significance of this Jewish presence in the colonies which Nabonidus frequented. It is interesting that he fell out of favor with the pagan priests of Babylon during this time.

## 2. Co-Regency with Belshazzar.

The book of Daniel describes the last king of Babylon prior to the coming of the Persians as being Belshazzar. For many years critics of the Bible pointed to this as being an error in the Scriptures. But today we know differently.

Nabonidus had a son named Belshazzar. In 554 B.C. this son was made co-regent of Babylon and left in control of the city while Nabopolassar left for a nine-year archaeology expedition. This is why Belshazzar can offer Daniel the position of “the third ruler in the kingdom” (Daniel 5:16).

Belshazzar proved to be a very poor ruler and Babylon’s economic problems became steadily worse. Nabonidus

The Nabonidus Chronicle lists the 7th, 9th, 10th and 11th years of Nabonidus as those years in which he did not return from his residence in Tima to Babylon. Because of this, the annual new year’s festival was not celebrated in Babylon during those years.

returned to Babylon in 545 B.C. where he continued his temple reconstructions (to the delight of the priests at Babylon).

## 3. The Rise of Cyrus.

Meanwhile, a young man by the name of Cyrus had succeeded in welding the two kingdoms of Media and Persia together into a united alliance under his rule. From this base he had moved out and captured the Kingdom of Lydia in Central Anatolia.

After this, many of the smaller kingdoms which made up the Babylonian Empire began to defect and give their loyalty to Cyrus. It was only a matter of time before Cyrus marched on the city of Babylon.

With Cyrus preparing his forces for an attack on Babylon, Nabonidus decided that it might be a good time to go on another archaeological

expedition, this time to Borsippa, about 30 miles to the south of Babylon. Nabonidus left his son, Belshazzar, in charge of Babylon.

## **BELSHAZZAR**

Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus and the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar through his mother. Historical accounts describe him as a proud, cruel man.

On a hunting trip, one of Belshazzar's nobles was the first to bag his limit. This made the king so mad that he drew his sword and killed the nobleman on the spot. This set a precedent which caused manly hunters throughout the Babylonian Empire to pretend poor marksmanship.

On another occasion, Belshazzar hosted a party similar to the orgy described in Daniel 5. During the party, a young man named Gadates was admired by one of the king's concubines. For this offense, the man was taken out and castrated.

In 539 B.C. one of the general of Cyrus named Gobryas led an army against the city of Babylon. Belshazzar was confident in the ability of the fortifications of the city to stand up to any attack and the city was stocked with enough supplies to last a 10-year siege.

### **1. Belshazzar's Party.**

With an army completely surrounding his city, Belshazzar decided to throw a party. Only this time, he had the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple brought in.

*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. (Daniel 5:3).*

As these Temple vessels were brought in, Belshazzar and his friends drank to their gods of Babylon. In effect, they were committing blasphemy against the God of Israel. Because of this, God stepped into the picture.

### **2. The Handwriting on the Wall.**

In the midst of the festivities, a hand appeared and wrote four words on the wall. The mood of the party was instantly changed and Belshazzar commanded that all of the astrologers and priests be brought in to interpret these words.

When the priests and astrologers were unable to help, Belshazzar's mother, Queen Nitocris, came to the Regent and advised him to seek out the Jewish prince Daniel who had interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar.

When Daniel was brought in, he told Belshazzar that the writing was a prophecy that God had judged Belshazzar because of his pride and would give his kingdom to the Medes and Persians.

### 3. The Fall of Babylon.

The Cyrus Cylinder gives an abbreviated account of the fall of Babylon to Cyrus and that it was accomplished without siege or fighting.

*Marduk, the Great Lord, a protector of his people, beheld with pleasure his [Cyrus] good deeds and his upright heart and ordered him to march against his city Babylon. He made him set out on the road to Babylon going at his side like a real friend. His widespread troops — their number, like that of the waters of a river, could not be established — strolled along, their weapons parked away. Without any battle, he made him enter his city Babylon, sparing Babylon any calamity.*

Xenophon relates an account of how Gobryas, one of Cyrus' lieutenants, succeeded in damming up the Euphrates River. His army marched down the dry riverbed and into the city where they were able to capture the city gates and open them, admitting the entire Median-Persian Army.

*Gadatas and his men, seeing the gates swing wide, darted in, hard on the heels of the others who fled back again, and they chased them at the sword's point into the presence of the king. They found him on his feet, with his drawn scimitar in his hand. By sheer weight of numbers they overwhelmed him: and not one of his retinue escaped, they were all cut down, some*

*flying, others snatching up anything to serve as a shield and defending themselves as best they could (7:4:25-26).*

Belshazzar was killed in his palace only a few hours after Daniel had prophesied his end.

*And when it was day and those who held the heights knew that the city was taken and the king slain, they were persuaded to surrender the citadel themselves. Cyrus took it over forthwith, and sent in a commandant and a garrison, while he delivered the bodies of the fallen to their kinsfolk for burial, and bade his heralds make proclamation that all the citizens must deliver up their arms (Xenophon).*

Nabonidus was arrested within several days and kept in exile for the remainder of his life. The Babylonian Empire had passed from the scene, never to appear again.

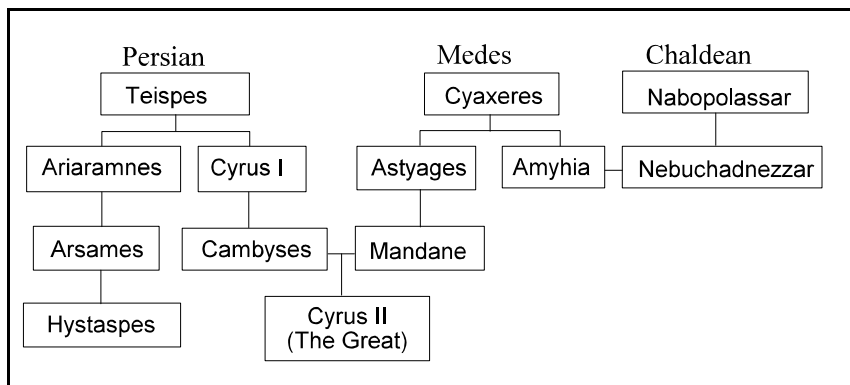
# ISRAEL AND THE PERSIAN PERIOD

The fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. was to mark a new epoch in world history. This marked a significant turning point for the survivors of the Babylonian Captivity. Within the space of a few short years, one man had risen to prominence and managed to bring nearly the entire known world under his sway. His name was Cyrus the Great.

## REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

### 1. Cyrus the Great.

Herodotus tells us that Cyrus was the product of a union between the nobility of Media and Persia. Both the Medes and the Persians lived to the east of Mesopotamia. Cyaxeres of the Medes, the same king who entered into an alliance with Nabonidus by marrying his daughter to Nebuchadnezzar, also allied himself through a separate marriage to the Persians who lived to the south of him.



Thus Cyrus the Great represented the ruling families of both the Medes and the Persians. He began as a vassal to his grandfather Astyages, but soon set out on a campaign of conquest. Anatolia fell to him when he conquered Croesus (known to the Greeks as Midas) and the kingdom of Lydia. Then Gobryas, the king of Elam, revolted and came over to him. Finally Babylon itself fell to him as he took

the city without a fight.<sup>1</sup>

Nabonidus and his son Belshazzar had been unpopular. The former had alienated the priesthood and the latter did the same with the general populace. Cyrus began a public relations campaign that was to have direct ramifications for the Jews.

In relating the fall of Babylon, Daniel 5:31 says that *Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two*. We know from history that it was Cyrus who received the kingdom. How are we to answer this discrepancy? There are several possibilities:

- a. Darius the Mede was an early governor of Babylon under Cyrus. This view was held by John Whitcomb, Old Testament professor at Grace Seminary.
  - From historical records, we know that the first governor of Babylon under the Persians was Gobryas, also known as Gubaru. He continued as governor during the reigns of both Cyrus and Cambyses.
  - There also seems to have been a Gobryas, also known as Ugabru, who originally took the city of Babylon but died three weeks later. This is the Gobryas described by Xenophon in his narrative of the fall of Babylon.

October 11, 539 B.C.	Sippar falls to the Persians
October 13, 539 B.C.	Babylon falls to the Persian general Ugbaru
October 29, 539 B.C.	Cyrus enters Babylon for the first time and appoints Gubaru as governor.
November 6, 539 B.C.	Ugbaru dies

- b. Darius the Mede was another name for Cyrus.

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<sup>1</sup> Xenophon tells a story of how Cyrus entered through the defenses of Babylon by diverting the course of the Euphrates River and marching his army up the dried riverbed. Cyrus's own official account of the capture of the city makes no mention of this and speaks only of his capture of the city without any resistance.



This view was held by D.J. Wiseman, professor of Assyriology at the University of London.

- The ages are correct for such a theory. Cyrus was indeed about 62 years old at the time of the fall of Babylon (Daniel 5:31).
- Cyrus was both Median and Persian.
- When Daniel 6:28 says that *Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian*, the Hebrew conjunction (ו) can be translated to say that *Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus the Persian*. Such a translation is found 1 Chronicles 5:26 where *the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria*.

## 2. The Return of the Jews.

One of the first things that Cyrus did after the fall of Babylon was to issue a decree allowing the Jews to return to Palestine and to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

*Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia - in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah - the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 23 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, 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 the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.'" (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).*

This decree was not an isolated act of kindness just to the Jews, but rather was the general policy of Cyrus. He realized that it is much easier to rule people who are happy in their own homes and who are not trying to overthrow their rulers.

Cyrus also realized that a tribute-paying nation would be more profitable than a devastated country. Thus, he looked forward to turning the desolation into a profitable source of revenue.

The Cyrus Prism was discovered in 1879 by Rassam which described this policy of Cyrus.

*I am Cyrus, King of the World, Great King, Legitimate King, King of Babylon, King of Kiengir and Akkad, King of the four rims of the earth, Son of Cambyases, Great King, King of Achamaenes, Grandson of Cyrus, Great king, King of Achamaenes, descendant of Chishpish, Great king, King of Achamaenes, of a family which always exercised kingship; whose rule Bel and Nebo love, whom they want as king to please their hearts. When I entered Babylon as a friend and when I established the seat of the government in the palace of the ruler under jubilation and rejoicing, Marduk, the great lord, induced the magnanimous inhabitants of Babylon to love me, and I was daily endeavoring to worship him.... As to the region from as far as Ashur and Susa, Akkad, Eshnunna, the towns Zamban, Me-turru, Der as well as the region of the Gutians, I returned to these sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which used to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I also gathered all their former inhabitants and returned them to their habitations. Furthermore, I resettled upon the command of Marduk, the great lord, all the gods of Kiengir and Akkad whom Nabonidus had brought into Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed, in their former temples, the places which make them happy.*

However, not all Jews wanted to return to Palestine. Many had settled down, started their own businesses, and were doing quite well financially. They had no desire to uproot and move away to the desolation that had been the homeland of their ancestors.

The total number of Jews returning to Palestine at this time numbered about 50,000. They were led by Zerubbabel and his uncle,

Sheshbazzar, descendants of the royal family of David through Solomon.

To Sheshbazzar were given the articles of the house of the Lord, but this apparently did not include the Ark of the Covenant. What happened to the Ark? Contrary to the Hollywood movie “Raiders of the Lost Ark,” the Ark was still in Jerusalem in the days of Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:3). So what happened to it? There are several theories:

- a. It may have been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar when the Temple was destroyed.
- b. It may have been carried off to Egypt by Jews who fled there in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. The claim is made to this day that the Ark resides in Ethiopia, however this has never been confirmed.
- c. It may have been hidden to protect it. 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees 2:4-5 relates such a tradition. However if this were the case, then it would have been brought out of hiding when the Jews were given permission to rebuild their Temple.

Jeremiah prophesied that it would be lost and that it would not be either remembered or remade (Jeremiah 3:16).

### 3. Work on the Temple Begun.

The first order of business was the rebuilding of the altar so that the regular sacrifices could be instituted once again. The actual reconstruction of the Temple began the following year.

### 4. The Death of Cyrus.

After the conquest of Babylon, only Egypt remained as an enemy to the Persian Empire. Plans were made for an invasion of Egypt and entrusted to Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. Although he was nearly seventy years old, Cyrus himself set out to deal with a revolt of nomads in the east.

It was a campaign from which he never returned. He was wounded in battle and died. His body was returned to a tomb in Pasargade. The following inscription was placed over his tomb.

*“Mortal! I am Cyrus, son of Cambyses, who founded the Persian Empire, and was Lord of Asia. Grudge me not, then, my monument.”*

With the death of Cyrus, his eldest son, Cambyses, came to the throne. He would reign from 530 to 522 B.C. During his reign, the work on the Temple would be halted.

5. Construction Halted.

The various deportations inflicted by the Assyrians and Babylonians had been messy affairs. There were Jews who could no longer give evidence as to which tribe they had come or even whether they were truly Israelites (Ezra 2:59). There were Israelites of various tribes who had come down to Jerusalem following the Assyrian deportation (1 Chronicles 9:3). Some of these retained their tribal identity while others lost track of from which tribe they had come. In the case of those who claimed to be of priestly families, this meant that they could no longer serve as priests (Ezra 5:62).

The name “Cambyses” is not found in the book of Ezra. However, there is a Persian king who is called both “Ahasuerus” and “Artaxerxes” in Ezra 4:6-7). This passage is introduced by a statement that the Jews were opposed in their building program from the days of Cyrus to the reign of Darius (4:5).

*Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

*Now in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.*

*And in the days of ARTAXERXES [literally “Artah-shashta], Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his colleges, wrote to ARTAXERXES king of Persia; and the text of the letter was written in Aramaic and translated from Aramaic. (Ezra 4:4-7).*

It is perhaps significant that the name translated “Artaxerxes” in chapter 4-6 is spelled slightly different than the same name found in chapter 7-8 and in Nehemiah; the difference is that the letter “sin” (ש) is

is replaced with the letter “samekh” (ס).

Because of this, I would suggest that the earlier mention of Artaxerxes in the book of Ezra is really to be identified as Cambyses.

<b>Cambyses</b>	<b>Artaxerxes</b>
Reigned from 530 to 522 B.C.	Reigned from 464 to 423 B.C.
Referred to as Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:6-23.	Mentioned by the same name in Ezra 7-8 as well as in Nehemiah.

Thus, it was during the reign of Cambyses that opposition to the rebuilding of the Jewish temple succeeded in stopping the work.

6. The Further History of Cambyses.

In order to stabilize his position as king, Cambyses secretly murdered his younger brother, Smerdis. The death of Smerdis was kept a secret to the general population. This deed would soon come back to haunt him.

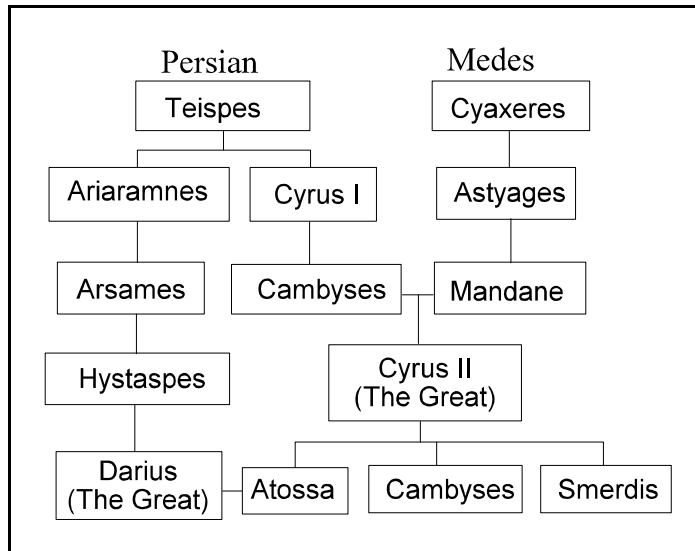
In 526 B.C. Cambyses invaded and conquered Egypt. Once he had control of Egypt, he adopted the royal costume of the pharaohs and laid official claim to be the son of Re, sun god. Then he decided to push south into Africa in order to other domains to conquer.

Cambyses sent a land expedition of 50,000 men westward toward Carthage. This expedition was apparently lost in the desert, since it was never heard from again. Meanwhile Cambyses led another expedition up the Nile River into Ethiopia. He got cut off from his supply lines and a great part of his army starved to death.

Back in Egypt, Cambyses received news that a man posing as his dead brother Smerdis had arisen to the throne and had won the favor of the people by remitting taxes for three years. Cambyses headed back for Persia, but he never arrived. His sudden death is still a mystery. Herodotus states that he died from a wound which was accidentally self-inflicted while mounting his horse. The Persian record suggests suicide. It is even possible that he was assassinated.

The pretender was able to hold the throne for several months, calling

himself Smerdis, the brother of Cambyses. A band of seven nobles who had been with Cambyses in Egypt managed to talk their way past the royal guards and then fight their way through a handful of protective eunuchs to assassinate the pseudo-Smerdis. One of the nobles, a prince by the name of Darius, now took the throne.



## **DARIUS HYSTASPES (522-486 B.C.)**

Darius was a distant cousin to Cambyses and so was able to take the throne without too much contest. Darius was 26 years old when he came to the throne of the Persian Empire. He was a handsome Aryan with a high forehead and a straight nose. He had long black curly hair and a long square beard which hung in four rows of curls according to the Persian custom.

As a young man, Darius had become the commander of the Royal Bodyguard, an elite group of the famous “Immortals.” It was in this position that he had accompanied Cambyses to Egypt.

### **1. The Capture of Babylon.**

When Darius came to the throne, he found the Empire in an uproar. Although the Medes and the Persians were ready to accept him as king, other provinces were not. Babylon rebelled and braced itself for a long siege. This city was considered impregnable and Darius

seemed to have been thwarted.

Darius had a general named Zopyrus who deliberately cut off his own nose and ears, shaved his head like a criminal's, and had welts raised upon his body with a whip. He then showed up before the gates of Babylon, claiming that Darius had turned against him and asking for refuge.

The Babylonians were suspicious of him and they decided to test his loyalty before trusting him completely. They sent him out against a force of Persians at the head of a small force. Zopyrus won the battle, just as he and Darius had planned.

Zopyrus was now the sudden hero of Babylon and he was made Commander of the Wall. His first official act was to open the gates of Babylon and let Darius and his army into the city. Darius burned the defenses of the city, pulled down the gates, and impaled 3000 of the leading citizens. This reprisal had a strong quenching effect on the other rebellious nations, causing them to have second thoughts. Thus, peace was restored to the Empire.

## 2. Reorganization of the Civil Government.

With peace restored to the Empire, Darius began to reorganize the government. He completed the division of the Empire into satrapies or provinces and fixed the annual tribute of each province.

He standardized currency, weights and measures. He developed highways and a postal system to draw the huge Empire together. Indeed, the United States Postal Service Motto is taken from the words of Herodotus as he describes the Persian postal system.

*These are stayed neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness from accomplishing their appointed courses with all speed. (Herodotus 8:96).*

Darius completed the construction of a canal 50 miles long linking the Red Sea to the Nile River. This project was begun by Pharaoh Necho II nearly a hundred years earlier.

## 3. Completion of the Temple.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah both prophesied during the

second year of the reign of Darius (Ezra 5:1; Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1). At their urging, Zerubbabel resumed the work of rebuilding the Temple. When challenged by the Persian officials, he made claim to the permission that had originally been granted by Cyrus (Ezra 5:13).

When this was reported to Darius, he called for a search to be made of the royal records at Babylon and Ecbatana. When Cyrus' edict was brought to light, Darius ordered it to be followed and allowed the Temple project to be funded by the royal treasury of Persia (Ezra 6:2-12). As a result, the temple was completed in the 6th year of Darius (516 B.C.).

4. Palaces at Susa and Persepolis.

Both Cyrus and Cambyes had ruled the Empire from the saddles of their warhorses. With the peace that came in the days of Darius, there was a need for a centralized capital.

(a) Susa.

Darius placed his seat of government at Susa, extending the city which had once served as the ancient capital of the Elamites. Darius took this city and further developed it, constructing a magnificent palace for himself. The ruins of this city remain to this day.

(b) Persepolis.

Cambyes had begun the building of a new city in a wide plain surrounded by protecting mountains to the east of the Persian Gulf. Called Istakhar by the Persians, the city has come to be known by its Greek name, Persepolis ("City of the Persians").

Darius had a second palace constructed at Persepolis. He used many of the same builders and artisans in this city which had built up Susa. For this reason, the cities were very similar.

5. The Behistun Inscription.

On a sheer cliff 225 feet above the plains of Persia is a giant inscription cut into the side of the mountain. This inscription depicts a life-sized Darius treading upon his enemy.



This inscription was first copied and studied by Sir Henry Rawlinson in 1835. To copy the inscription, he was required to climb up the mountain and finally stand on a ladder which rested on a narrow ledge which jutted 225 feet up the cliff. The inscription was written in three languages.

- (1) Babylonian dialect (Akkadian).
- (2) Elamite.
- (3) Old Persian.

This provided the key for scholars to translate cuneiform. Rawlinson was already familiar with modern Persian and he used this to translate the Old Persian. This in turn provided the key to the Elamite and Akkadian languages. Rawlinson did the work in Akkadian while Edwin Norris was able to translate Elamite in 1853.

Old Persian cuneiform contained about fifty signs, while Akkadian was found to use over five hundred.



Behistun Inscription

In 1946 George Cameron returned to Iran and worked from a scaffolding suspended by steel cables 200 feet above the inscription. He was able to make latex castings of the inscription.

## 6. Campaign Against the Scythians.

In 512 B.C. Darius decided to attack the Scythians who had been raiding along the east coast of the Black Sea. His plan was to attack them from the rear by marching around the west end of the Black Sea and coming up behind them.

That same year, Darius led his army across the Bosphorus over a bridge of boats tied side by side. From there, he marched north to the

Danube.

Darius advanced into the north country, but the Scythians would not meet him in open battle. Instead, they harassed his army and with their guerrilla warfare tactics until Darius was forced to flee with considerable losses.

7. The Greek/Persian Wars.

This defeat of Darius at the hands of the Scythians did not go unnoticed by the Greeks. In 494 B.C. the Ionian Greeks on the entire west coast of Anatolia revolted against the Persian rule. Darius sent an army against these Ionian cities and effectively defeated them. By 493 B.C. the rebellion had been crushed. Since the revolt of the Ionian Greeks had been actively encouraged by the European Greeks, Darius decided to take action against them.

- a. In 492 B.C. a fleet of 600 ships set sail from Anatolia to punish the inhabitants of Greece. This fleet was destroyed in a severe storm off Mount Athos in the Northern Aegean.
- b. In 490 B.C. another Persian fleet landed at Marathon. The Greeks met the Persians there and defeated them in a pitched battle. The remnants of the Persian fleet returned home. It would return under the leadership of Darius' son, Xerxes.

## **XERXES (486-464 B.C.)**

Xerxes was one of the sons of Darius. He was also grandson to Cyrus through his mother. Xerxes came to the throne at the age of 35. As the son of Darius and the grandson of Cyrus, he should have been prepared to rule wisely. He was not. It seems that he had no talent for economics and he reveled too much in court pleasures and in lavish building projects. His treatment of subjugated peoples was brutal, contrary to the habits of his predecessors.

1. Rebellion in the Empire.

In 485 B.C. Egypt rebelled. Xerxes put down the revolt, leaving the land in shambles. A Persian ruler was placed upon the throne to see that it did not happen again.

Babylon rebelled next, killing Zopyrus, their governor who had once betrayed them to the Persians. Since Babylon no longer had the fortifications of the past, she was no match for Xerxes and his army.

Xerxes ordered his army to smash all of the fortifications and the temples of the city. Priests were slaughtered and land was confiscated. The city was all but wiped out.

2. Invasion of Greece.

With civil problems now taken care of, Xerxes now determined to take up the invasion of Greece which Darius had begun. It was to be a miserable disaster.

a. Crossing the Hellespont.

In 480 B.C. Xerxes led an army numbering over a million men across the Hellespont and into Greece. The crossing was effected by the construction of two giant bridges built across hundreds of ships tied together.

b. Thermopylae.

The first Greek line of defense was found at the narrow pass near Thermopylae. The Greeks held this pass with 7000 men. The Persians were able to overwhelm the Greeks only after they had managed to circle around behind them and cut off their retreat.

c. Athens.

Xerxes marched on to Athens and took that city after a two-week siege. By this time, most of the inhabitants had fled westward to the island of Salamis.

d. Salamis.

On September 27, 480 B.C. the Persian navy engaged the small Greek fleet in the Bay of Salamis. The battle ended in a decisive Greek victory and Xerxes departed in humiliation, never again to return to Greece. The Persian forces that he left behind in Greece were defeated the following year in a battle at Plataea, destroying the bulk of the Persian army.

Though the Persians had been driven out of Greece, the empire was still strong and, over the next two hundred years it would confine itself to diplomatic means of attending to the Greeks by pitting the various Greek tribes against each other.

3. Esther and the Jews.

During the final 15 years of the reign of Xerxes, he sought the cure to his discouragement in lavish building projects and magnificent feasts and banquets. It was during this time that Xerxes married Esther and elevated her to the position of queen. When a plot to exterminate the Jews came to light, she was in a position to influence Xerxes to intervene and save her people.

4. Assassination.

Xerxes was murdered in his own bedchambers in 465 B.C. by a group of conspirators. Artabanus, one of the assassins and the commander of the Royal Bodyguard, took the throne and held it for seven months. He was then killed and succeeded by Artaxerxes, the legitimate heir to the throne.

## **ARTAXERXES I LONGIMANUS (464-423 B.C.)**

Artaxerxes was given the nickname Longimanus (“The Long-handed”) by the Greeks because his right hand was reported to be longer than his left hand. He is described as “remarkable for a gentle and noble spirit” (Plutarch).

1. The Commission of Ezra.

Although a small remnant of Jews had returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel more than 50 years earlier, the work of rebuilding the city had not progressed very far. The temple had been rebuilt, but the walls of the city were still in ruins.

In 457 B.C. Artaxerxes permitted the Jewish scribe Ezra to lead an expedition of about 5000 Jews back to Jerusalem to settle there and to continue the work of rebuilding the city. This work was met with violent opposition by the Samaritans who lived in the area to the north of Judah. These people had intermarried with Gentiles and so were not considered to be Jewish. The problem of such intermarriage

continued to be an issue among the Jews as even some of the Jewish priesthood had taken foreign wives for themselves.

## 2. Commission of Nehemiah.

In 444 B.C. Artaxerxes commissioned his Jewish cupbearer, Nehemiah, to be the new governor of Jerusalem and gave him permission to finish the walls of the city.

Under Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were repaired and the Temple services restored. This began a new period of national prosperity for the Kingdom of Judah that would last for the next 150 years.

In total, there were three major migrations of Jews returning to the land following the Babylonian Captivity.

RETURN	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
Reference	Ezra 1-6	Ezra 7-10	Nehemiah 1-13
Date	538 B.C.	458 B.C.	444 B.C.
Leaders	Sheshbazzar Zerubbabel	Ezra	Nehemiah
Persian King	Cyrus	Artaxerxes Longimanus	
Elements of the Decree	As many as wished could return & rebuild Temple.	As many as wished could return & complete the Temple. Allowed to have own civil magistrates.	Allowed to rebuild the walls around the city.
Related Events	Work begun but then halted until 516 B.C.	Problems with inter-marriage	Wall rebuilt in 52 days.
Prophets	Zechariah Haggai		Malachi

## THE ELEPHANTINE PAPYRI

Elephantine is an island on the Nile River just below the first Cataract; today the site of the Aswan Dam. The name comes from the Greek Ελεφαντινη,

“Elephant place.” In ancient times, the island, as well as the southern town, was called *Abu*, or *Yabu*, which also meant “elephant.” The island served as the last port before the inaccessible cataract. Several different excavations have been undertaken since the early 1900's, uncovering a number of papyri which make reference to a Jewish military colony posted to this island in the days of the Persian Empire.

One such papyri document is a letter written by the Jewish garrison commander to the governor of Judah. In it he tells of how the Jews living on the island had built their own temple to Yahu (another rendition of Yahweh) on the island before the days of Cambyses when the Egyptians were still autonomous.

Language	Aramaic
Medium	Papyrus - written on both sides
Size	24 centimeters high 32 centimeters wide 30 lines of writing
Genre	Official letter of petition
Senders	Yedaniah bar-Gemariah & his associates (priests at Elephantine)
Date	November 25, 407 B.C.
Place of Discovery	Elephantine, Egypt
Date of Discovery	January 1, 1907
Current Location	Staatliche Museum (Berlin, Germany)

This letter is a request to Darius II telling the specifics of how their temple on the island of Elephantine had been destroyed and asking permission to rebuild it.

*To our lord, Bagohi, governor of Yehud, (from) your servants: Yedaniah and his associates, the priests who are in the fortress of Yeb.*

*May the God of the Heavens perpetually pursue the welfare of our lord greatly and grant you favors before Darius the king and the “sons of the palace” a thousand times more than now. May you be joyful and healthy at all times.*

*Now your servant Yedaniah and his associates testify as follows: In the month of Tammuz, in the fourteenth year of Darius the king, when Arsames departed and went to the king, the priests of the god Khnub, who is in the fortress of Yeb, conspired with Vidranga, who was administrator here, to destroy the temple of Yahu in the fortress of Yeb. So that villain Vidranga sent this order to his son Nefayan, who was in command of the garrison of the fortress at Sawn: “The temple of the god Yahu in the fortress of Yeb shall be destroyed.” Nefayan consequently led the Egyptians with other troops. Arriving with their weapons at the fortress of Yeb, they entered the temple and burned it to the ground...*

The letter goes on to relate how Cambyses had come to Egypt and had destroyed all of the Egyptian temples while allowing this temple to continue. Finally permission is requested of Darius II for the temple to be reconstructed.

*If it seems good to our lord, remember this temple to reconstruct it, since they do not let us reconstruct it. Look to your clients and friends here in Egypt. Let a letter be sent from you to them concerning the temple of the god Yahu to construct it in the fortress of Yeb as it was before. And the grain-offering, incense, and burnt-offering will be offered in your name, and we will pray for you continuously—we, our wives, and our children, and the Judahites who are here, all of them—if you do this so that this temple is reconstructed. And you shall have honor before Yahu, the God of the Heavens, more than a man who offers him burnt-offerings and sacrifices worth a thousand talents of silver and gold. Because of this, we have written to inform you. We have also set forth the whole matter in a letter in our name to Delaiah and Shelemiah, the sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria. Furthermore, Arsames (the Persian satrap) knew nothing of all that was perpetrated on us.*

*On the twentieth of Marheshwan, the seventeenth year*

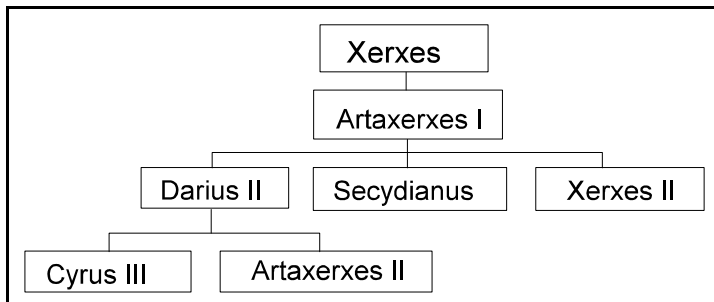
*of Darius the King.*

Other of the Elephantine Papyri include:

- An Aramaic version of the Behistun Inscription.
- A Jewish marriage contract.
- Permission from the Persian government for Jews to celebrate the Passover at their temple in Elephantine.

## THE LATER KINGS OF PERSIA

Artaxerxes died a natural death in 424 B.C. At the time of his death, he had three sons. All three of them had aspirations for the throne.



Xerxes II was the first to take the throne. He held it for 45 days and was then assassinated by his half-brother, Secydianus, while sleeping off a drunken party.

Secydianus had no sooner come to the throne when he was also murdered by his half-brother, Darius II.

### 1. Darius II (423-404 B.C.).

The reign of Darius II was filled with murder and court intrigue. Although there were no battles fought with the Greeks during this period, Persian diplomats were successful in inciting conflict between Athens and Sparta, thus strengthening Persia's hold over the Greek cities of Anatolia.

However, this did not change the course of Persia's history and revolts continued to spread throughout the Empire, involving Sardis, Media, Cyprus and Egypt.



2. Artaxerxes II (404-359 B.C.).

Darius II had two sons when he died: Artaxerxes II and Cyrus III. Artaxerxes was the oldest and so he was given the throne. At the coronation ceremony of Artaxerxes II at Persepolis, Cyrus tried to assassinate his brother. The attempt failed and Cyrus was caught.

Their mother, Queen Parysatis, interceded for Cyrus and the new king allowed his brother to go free, giving him the satrapy of Anatolia. It was to be a mistake.

Back in Anatolia, Cyrus raised an army made up largely of Spartan mercenaries. With this force, he marched east against his brother, meeting him at Cunaxa on the Euphrates River on September 3, 401 B. C.

The army of Cyrus was greatly outnumbered, but even so, the Persian chariot corps and infantry of Artaxerxes were no match for the Spartan phalanx.

In the heat of the battle, Cyrus spotted his brother and personally rushed in, striking him in the chest through his breastplate and wounding him. Just as he was about to finish him off, Cyrus was killed by a thrown javelin which hit him in the face.

There were 10,000 Spartan mercenaries still intact at the end of the battle. With Cyrus dead, they found themselves 700 miles behind enemy territory. Their generals had been killed and they chose Xenophon to lead them in their retreat. They managed to fight their way all the way back to the Black Sea, fighting off one Persian attack after another. Their success in this venture was taken by the Greeks as a sign of Persian weakness. Others also saw this and took it as an opportunity to revolt.

Egypt had declared her independence at the accession of Artaxerxes II and had never been reconquered. Now Egypt allied herself with other rebellious satrapies and prepared to march against Artaxerxes.

This imminent threat was postponed when an internal revolt broke out within Egypt, forcing Pharaoh Takhos to abandon his plans and surrender to Persia. However, rebellious disturbances continued to plague the Empire for the remainder of the reign of Artaxerxes II.

3. Artaxerxes III (359-338 B.C.).

Artaxerxes III (his real name was Ochus) came to the throne following the death of his father. His first official act was to murder all of his relatives, regardless of age or gender. The number ran up to several dozen. He set out to put down all of the rebellions that had been fermenting within the Empire.

- Egypt was reconquered, her cities taken and their walls pulled down.
- The Phoenician city of Sidon had sympathized with Egypt. It was burnt and left in ruins.
- The city-states of Greece had only now begun to recover from the devastating effects of the Peloponnesian Wars (431-404 B.C.).

Now many patriotic Greeks urged their fellow countrymen to unite against the Persian Empire. However there was still too much jealousy between the cities for any unification to take place. Only to the north was there any sense of unity. Philip of Macedon had succeeded in conquering all of the neighboring kingdoms and he proposed to invade Persia.

Thus, when Athens concluded a treaty with Persia, Philip attacked Athens and won a decisive victory. He now formed the League of Corinth, a coalition of all of the Greek states except for Sparta. This League had as its goal the liberation of the Ionian cities from Persia. That same year, Artaxerxes III was poisoned by a court eunuch who had his own political ambitions. This eunuch's name was Bagoas.

4. Arses (336-336 B.C.).

Arses was the youngest son of Artaxerxes III. Bagoas placed him on the throne after the murder of his father, expecting to use him as a puppet ruler. Evidently, Arses had too much of a mind of his own and so, after a short reign of only two years, Bagoas also had him poisoned.

5. Darius III (336-331 B.C.)

Darius III was a cousin of Artaxerxes III who had managed to escape

the genocide of his predecessor. He had distinguished himself in battle and then had become the satrap of Armenia. Bagoas chose him to be the new king of the Persian Empire.

Too late, Bagoas learned that the new king could think for himself and was not about to be used as a mere puppet in the hands of a eunuch. When Darius discovered a plot against his life, he forced Bagoas to swallow the poison that had been prepared for him.

Darius III became king of Persia in 336 B.C. That same year Philip of Macedon died, leaving his kingdom in the hands of his 20-year old son, Alexander the Great.

Alexander set out with his Macedonian force in 334 B.C. He met Darius III in three major battles over the next three years, defeating the numerically superior Persian army each time. After the third defeat, Darius fled to the east and was murdered by his own forces. The Persian Empire was left to Alexander and, in his hands, it became a Hellenistic Empire.

# THE AEGEAN WORLD AND THE GREEKS

*Long time men lay oppressed with slavish fear.  
Religious tyranny did domineer.  
At length the mighty one of Greece  
Began to assent the liberty of man. – Epicurus*

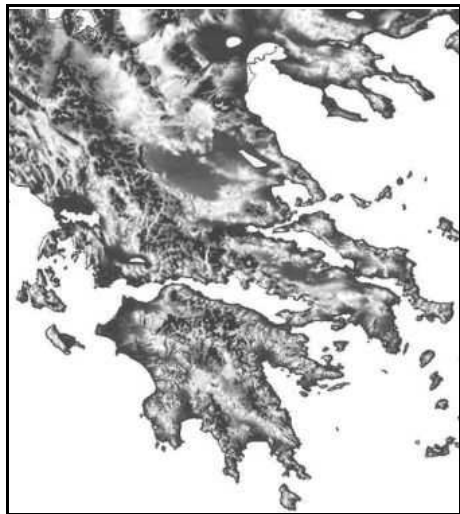
The name “Greece” seems to be taken from the Latin term *Graikos*, describing one of the Dorian tribes of early Greece. A similar term was used later in history by the Turks as a derogatory phrase to describe the Greeks. The Greeks themselves always described themselves as *Hellenoi* and their land was *Hellas*.

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF GREECE

The Greeks were molded and shaped by the geography of the land in which they lived.

### 1. An Irregular Coastline.

Because of her highly irregular coastline, Greece has more coastal land than any other area of the Mediterranean World. This irregular coastline produces many natural harbors, leading the Greeks to become a seafaring people. The sea turned them into fishermen, traders, and explorers. It would lead them to colonize a great portion of the Mediterranean.



The best of these harbors were to be found on the east coast of the

Greek peninsula. It would be here that the greatest centers of culture and commerce would arise.

2. River Valleys.

The Greek peninsula is filled with mountains that spill over from the Balkans to the north. These divide the land into many small valleys that served to isolate one tribe from the next.

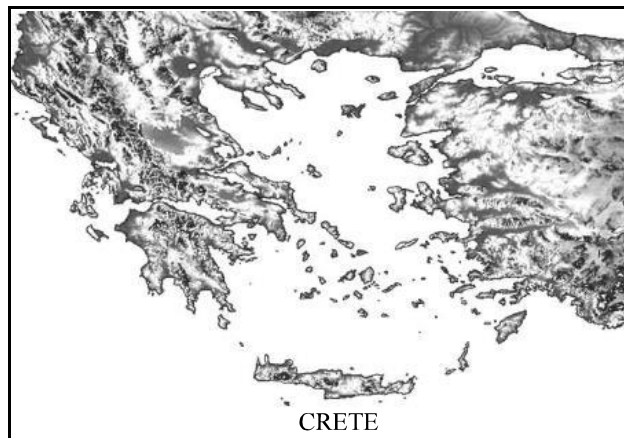
None of the rivers of Greece are navigable and so they have no unifying effect as is found in other river systems throughout the ancient world. It would be fairly late in history that there would be any kind of unification within the Greek city-states.

3. The Peloponnese.

The southern part of the Greek peninsula is connected to its northern neighbor by a narrow isthmus of a mere four miles in width. This natural boundary would give way to two different geographic locales and would eventually serve as a national boarder. It is no accident that the earliest Greek civilization grew up south of this isthmus and protected by that natural boarder.

## THE MINOAN CIVILIZATION

Homer's *Odyssey* describes the island of Crete in his day as "fruitful and fair, set like a jewel in the wine-dark sea, peopled by countless multitude of men and ninety cities" (*Odyssey* 19:171-4). Crete is the southernmost and the largest of all the islands of the Aegean. It stretches 160 miles from



east to west and 35 miles from north to south at its widest point. Its southern shore is rimmed by steep cliffs where the mountains drop into the sea, but its northern shore has an abundance of natural harbors.

Until fairly recent times, the history and even the existence of the Minoan Civilization was known to us only through the legends of Homer. Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a businessman turned amateur archaeologist named Heinrich Schliemann discovered the Mycenaean Civilization of Greece, excavating at both Mycenae and at Troy. His discovery served as the motivation for another archaeologist to begin a search for similar discoveries on the island of Crete. His name was Sir Arthur Evans and after obtaining official backing from the King of Greece, he went on to uncover a grand palace on Crete.

The palace covered five acres and consisted of hundreds of interlocking rooms, reminding Evans of the mythological legends of Theseus, the Minotaur, and King Minos. Accordingly, he dubbed this newly discovered civilization the Minoans.

Being an island, Crete was effectively cut off from the outside world except for those who would go to sea. As a result, the Minoan culture was to enjoy a long period of uninterrupted prosperity and peace. The island has been gifted with many small, natural harbors along its northern coast facing the Aegean. This and the fact that farm lands make up only a tiny percentage of the mountainous land mass means that the island was to become a major sea power.

Crete sits at the center of the eastern Mediterranean. It is only natural that this island was to become a major trading center between the east and the west. Minoan pottery would be found throughout the Mediterranean world.

1. The Early Minoan Period (3600 - 2000 B.C.).

This early period saw various small settlements and towns all over the island, with the greatest concentrations of population in the east and southern parts of the island and the western section more sparse in its settlements.

Migrations toward the end of this period saw peoples moving down from the north and a population influx on the island of Crete.

2. The Rising Minoan Period (2000 - 1700 B.C.).

With the greater influx of population, cities began to grow and prosper. The city of Knossos now began to assume the role of chief political power. The multi-tiered palace perhaps gave rise to the legend of the labyrinth where Theseus was supposed to have slain the monstrous Minotaur.

The architecture was highly advanced with elaborate frescos, running water, and flush toilets. Because of the sovereignty of their navy, the Minoans felt no need to build fortifications around their palaces. Crete was unique in the ancient world as a land of unwallled villages.

3. The High Minoan Period (1700 - 1450 B.C.).

Sea-going merchant ships made the Minoans rich. They were now masters of the sea, building a huge navy to protect their coasts. Their growth during this period brings to mind the British Empire of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They would typically gain permission from the local king or chieftain to establish a trading post. Next, they would build a port so that their ships would have a safe anchorage from which to import and export their products. This would develop into a trading colony that would hire them as protection from pirates. One of these trading colonies on the coast of Canaan would eventually give rise to the Philistines.

The religion of the Minoans seems to have been a form of nature worship in which the “mother-goddess” was central and a double-bladed axe was their cultic symbol. Their wall murals show acrobats balancing themselves upon the horns of bulls.



The Minoans used a pictorial script prior to 1800 B.C. but two other types of script were subsequently developed:

Linear A	This script has not yet been deciphered, but it consists of under a hundred characters that are assumed to represent syllables.
Linear B	This script was adopted by the Mycenaeans and seems to borrow certain letters from Linear A

The Mycenaean Greeks began to emerge as a culture around 1600 B.C. as they were influenced by their Minoan neighbors. These two cultures were quite distinctive:

<b>Minoans</b>	<b>Mycenaeans</b>
Lived in unwalled cities	Their walled cities were constructed like fortresses
Houses built as a collection of rooms around a central courtyard	Houses built around the central meeting hall with the fireplace along the wall
Paintings depict smooth shaven men	Paintings depict bearded men
Paintings of people in social gatherings, animals, plants, trees, and religious scenes	Paintings primarily military in character with some hunting scenes
Conquered by the Mycenaeans	Conquered by the Dorians

Mycenaean artwork depicts the use of bows and arrows, spears, and large body shields that are somewhat reminiscent of the Biblical accounts of armor bearers in the days of Saul and David.



Artwork on a Mycenaean ceremonial short sword, Museum of Antiquities in Athens

The kings of Knossos did not decorate their palace walls with inscriptions describing their military exploits. Instead, they had colorful wall paintings of religious, natural, and social life. This does not necessarily mean that they were ignorant to aspects of war, but that is not how they chose to decorate their buildings.

While the Minoan realm had been a land of unwalled cities and villages, the Mycenaean architecture was known for its massive walls and solid fortifications.



4. The Late Minoan Period (1450 - 1200 B.C.).

Around 1450 B.C. and near the time when Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt, the Minoan Civilization suffered a distinctive downturn. Some have theorized that this was the result of earthquakes and an eruption of the volcanic island of Santorini to the north of Crete and have even linked this to later legends about a civilization known as Atlantis that sank beneath the sea, but others have disputed the dates of those events. There is some evidence of Mycenaean occupation of some of the Minoan cities during this period.



The Lion's Gate at Mycenae

In 1200 B.C., both the Minoan as well as the Mycenaean cultures were brought to a violent end as they were overwhelmed by the onslaught of a group known as the Sea People.

## **THE DARK AGES (1200 - 800 B.C.)**

In 1200 B.C. the brown-haired Dorians swept down from the north, destroying everything in their path. This Dorian migration was taking place in the context of a much larger series of movements of peoples, tribes, and nations. The city of Troy was destroyed, giving rise to later legends about its fall. The Hittite Civilization fragmented and collapsed. The cities of the Mycenaeans and the Minoans fell to invaders. Rameses III of Egypt barely managed to keep out the Sea Peoples from sweeping through Egypt. The next 400 years would see a period of upheaval throughout the ancient world.

- A sharp decline in population. Either through war, famine, or plague, or a combination of all three, the population of the Aegean world was drastically reduced during this period.
- Economic and social upheaval. Palaces were burned and new ones

were not constructed to take their place.

- Commercial superiority on the Mediterranean passed from the Greeks to the Phoenicians as the latter became the dominant sea power and their colonies sprang up and they established trading monopolies.
- The rise of the city-states. In the place of the ruined Mycenaean Civilization, there eventually arose a number of small, barbaric states. These small city-states were fragmented and prized their individuality to the point of preventing any political unity within the Greek peninsula.

The Iron Age began around 1200 B.C. as the secret of smelting iron ore gradually made its way through the Mediterranean world. The Bible speaks of how the Philistines kept this a closely guarded monopoly during the days of the Judges so that Israelites were forced to come to them to have their farm implements sharpened. 1 Samuel 13:19 says that *no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears."* This led to a common saying that in time of war the Israelites would *beat their plowshares into swords and their pruning-hooks into spears* (Joel 3:10).

## THE ARCHAIC PERIOD

By 776 B.C. the names of the winners of the Olympic games were being recorded in the Phoenician alphabet. The use of this alphabet makes the beginning of the historic period of Greek history. Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey*, were penned around this time, depicting the political unrest of the previous era.

As population levels increased, the Greeks began to expand outward and to establish colonies throughout the surrounding areas. Greek colonies sprang up in southern Italy, in Sicily, in western Anatolia, in Libya to the west of Egypt, and even to the shores of France and Spain. To the north, they settled and formed colonies around the Black Sea that would later give rise to legends of Jason and the Argonauts.

However, there was no political unity within Greece; it continued to be a scattered collection of independent city-states. Two of these city-states would rise to prominence: Athens and Sparta.

The city of Athens was located in central Greece about five miles from the Aegean Sea. It was built around a high acropolis which provided a place of refuge in time of war.



Acropolis of Athens

Early in her history, Athens began to move toward a system of democracy. The term refers to the rulership of the people and this system brought with it an inherent lack of unity. This democratic outlook did not mean that the Athenians looked upon all people as equals. Only the landed aristocracy were initially allowed a voice in government and this franchise was never extended to either women or slaves.

The southern part of the Greek peninsula was populated with Dorian Greeks who had settled following the migrations of 1200 B.C. One of the cities which rose to prominence after the fall of the Mycenaean Civilization was Sparta. The Spartan government was headed by two kings from two separate families who held equal power. One of these kings would lead the army while the other stayed home.



The Spartans were primarily a military nation. Every Spartan citizen was in the military from the age of seven to his retirement at the age of sixty. As a result, Spartans developed the reputation for being the fiercest soldiers in the ancient world.

Although there were many sharp differences between Athens and Sparta, they also shared some important similarities:

- They both looked to a common origin of a segment of Indo-European population.
- Although they spoke different dialects, it was still a form of the Greek language.
- For the most part, the Greeks of both Athens and Sparta worshiped the same gods as described by Homer. Zeus was the chief of the gods, commanding the sky and the storm. Posidon was the god of the seas. Ares was the god of war and, for obvious reasons, was favored by the Spartans. Hades was the god of death and the underworld.
- They participated in the Olympic Games. These games were held every four years and citizens of all the different Greek city-states would stop their fighting to gather at the city of Olympia in western Greece to compete in these various sporting events.

The Athenians struggled to find a balanced and fair code of laws. In the seventh century, the scribe Draco succeeded in having his laws codified. The death penalty was mandated for breaking nearly any law, from murder to the theft of a cabbage. Even today, we use the word “draconian” to describe a harsh rule.

A hundred years later, Solon brought about a series of legal reforms in Athens that were fair and balanced. The democratic assembly had been changing the laws so often that they were confused and contradictory. Solon’s laws canceled all debts and helped to restore the economy. His final law was that none of these laws could be changed by anyone but Solon for a period of ten years and then he left Athens for ten years.

Herodotus tells the story of how Solon visited Croesus, the king of Lydia and reputed to be the richest man in the world. Croesus showed Solon his great wealth and proclaimed himself the happiest man in the world. Solon replied that no one could be counted truly happy until he had died, for one could never know how circumstances could one day change.

In his later years, Croesus sought to expand his kingdom in the vacuum that was left in Mesopotamia after the death of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Croesus consulted the Greek oracle as to the wisdom of going to war and the oracle replied that, if he went to war, he would destroy a great kingdom. However, the oracle did not point out that the kingdom which would be destroyed was his own.

Croesus was repulsed by the Persian forces under Cyrus the Great and was forced to retreat to Lydia. Cyrus followed up on his victory and another battle took place at Sardis in which Cyrus brought the baggage camels up to the front lines. The horses in the cavalry of Croesus would not go near the unfamiliar camels and Croesus found himself besieged in his mountain fortress at Sardis. The fortress was perched atop a sheer precipice and seemed to be ready to withstand an interminable siege. Herodotus tells us how one of the commanders of Cyrus

...had seen one of the Lydians fetch a helmet, which had rolled down this precipitous slope, and the sight of the man's climbing down had set him thinking (Histories 1).

That night, the Persians followed this same pathway while the guards of Sardis slept, climbed over the walls, and captured the city. Hundreds of years later, the Apostle John would be instructed to write an epistle to the city of Sardis and warn the church to awaken from its spiritual slumbers.



Fortress of Sardis on the cliffs above the city

Croesus was brought before Cyrus and ordered to be burned at the stake. As the Persians were carrying out these instructions, Croesus muttered that Solon had been right. Herodotus tells us:

He then related how Solon the Athenian once came to Sardis, and made light of the splendor which he saw there, and how everything he said – though it applied to all men and especially to those who imagine themselves fortunate – had in his own case proven all too true (Histories 1).



Croesus on the pyre to be burned

Herodotus goes on to tell us that Cyrus was so impressed that he released Croesus and awarded him with a retainer that he might serve as one of his advisors.

## THE PERSIAN WARS

When Cyrus the Great conquered Sardis and the kingdom of Lydia, he also inherited the Ionian Greek cities on the west coast of Anatolia. These cities had enjoyed a measure of autonomy under the Lydians and these now became part of the Persian Empire. This was to bring about a clash of cultures.

The Greeks	The Persians
Believed in the freedom of the individual, though not in the case of slaves	Submitted to a ruler whose power was absolute and to whom they bestowed worship

The Ionians submitted to the Persian rulership for a time, but conflict was inevitable. This conflict received it impetus by the movement of Darius across the Hellespont.

### 1. The Campaign of Darius against the Scythians.

The Scythians were a fierce tribe of nomadic horsemen living around the northern shores of the Black and Caspian Seas. After the fall of Nineveh, they had conducted raids down into northern Mesopotamia.

Herodotus tells the story of how their tribal chieftains were invited by Cyaxeres the Mede to a banquet and then massacred. This conflict continued in the days of Darius, but when he tried to confront them in open combat, they would simply retreat back into the steppes from which they had come.

Darius hit upon a plan. He would cross the Bosphorus Strait into Europe and circumnavigate the Black Sea, coming at the Scythians from their rear. He began this campaign in 512 B.C., marching through Ionian Anatolia and crossing the Bosphorus over a bridge made of boats tied side to side. From here, he turned north to cross the Danube. It was here that the Scythians began to conduct guerrilla raids against his forces until he was finally forced to retreat with considerable losses.



## 2. Revolt of the Ionian Cities.

The defeat of Darius at the hands of the Scythians did not go unnoticed by the Greeks. It was not long before unrest began among the Persian-controlled cities of Ionia. When the Ionian cities revolted in 499 B.C., Athens responded by sending twenty ships to help them. The Eretrians from the island of Euboea sent another five ships.

Encouraged by this assistance, the Ionians marched on Sardis, the capital of the Persian satrapy, and burning it. Once this had been

accomplished, the Athenian and Eretrian allies went home, leaving the Ionians to face the enraged armies of Persia alone.

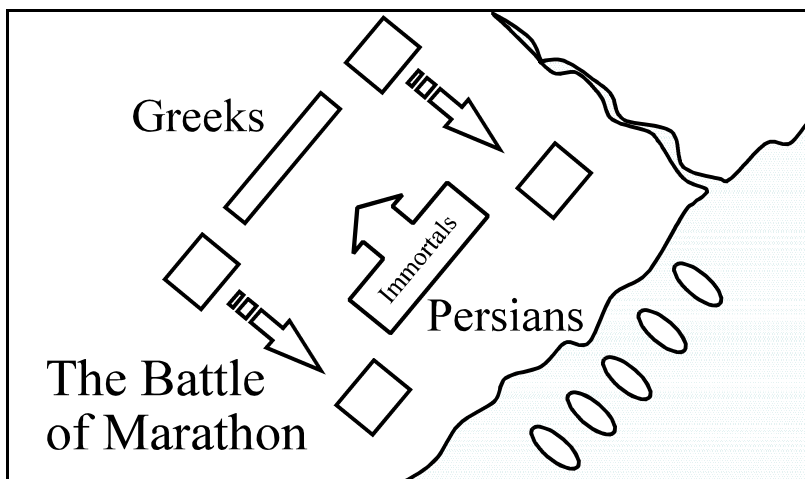
As punishment, the Persians burned the leading Ionian city of Miletus, hauling away most of its surviving population to a settlement on the Tigris River where it empties into the Persian Gulf. By 493 B.C., the rebellion had been crushed.

3. Darius Invades the Greek Peninsula.

Since the revolt of the Ionian Greeks had been actively encouraged by those of the Greek mainland, Darius decided to take action against them. In 492 B.C., he sent his son-in-law, Mardonius, with a fleet of 600 ships to punish the inhabitants of Greece. This fleet was destroyed in a severe storm while rounding the cape at Mount Athos in the Northern Aegean.

In 490 B.C., another Persian fleet sailed across the Aegean and laid siege to the city of Eretria on the island of Euboea. Eretria was captured, the city burned, and its population deported.

Now Darius turned his attention to Athens and the Persian fleet landed their forces near the city of Marathon. They were met by the Greek forces under the command of Miltiades. The Greek forces were comprised of 10,000 spearmen and some lightly armed troops, but they were outnumbered by the Persians by an order of two-to-one.



To avoid being out-flanked, Miltiades stretched out his troops along the center and then doubled the depth of his forces along both flanks.



His weakened center faced the Persian Immortals, the cream of the Persian military. The greatest danger Miltiades faced was the Persian archers. Persian strategy was to soften up the enemy by volley after volley of arrows followed by the full weight of the charge of the Immortals.

Miltiades marched his Greeks slowly forward until the two armies were nearly within bowshot of each other. Then he ordered his army to charge the Persians at a dead run. The Greek center, weakened as it had been, retreated from before the stronger Persian Immortals. But the two wings put the Persian flanks to route and then pivoted in to attack the Persian center from its rear and cutting it to pieces.

The Persians hastily retreated out to their ships where the fighting continued for some time in the water as the Greeks managed to set fire to several of the Persian ships. The rest of the Persian navy weighed anchor and sailed away, setting course to circumnavigate the the Achaian peninsula and come against Athens from the south. Herodotus tells us that there were 6400 Persians dead on the field and that the Greeks had lost 192 men.

A runner was dispatched to Athens with the news of the victory. Tradition has it that he arrived at the city after a run of 26 miles to declare, "We have won!" before falling down dead. This tradition is the basis of the marathon race that is still held today.

Miltiades hurriedly marched his army back to Paleron to meet the Persian navy that was sailing around Cape Sunium to approach Athens from the south. When the Persian navy arrived, they found Miltiades and the Greek force already waiting for them on the shore, so they departed and returned home to Anatolia.

#### 4. Xerxes and the Invasion of Greece.

Darius died before he could complete his plans for a new Persian invasion and the Greeks enjoyed a respite for the next ten years while Xerxes, the son of Darius, had to deal with revolts in Babylon and Egypt. It was not until 480 B.C. that Xerxes was ready to attempt the conquest of Greece.

Xerxes was determined to have the advantage on both land and sea. His plans called for a great army of a million men and a fleet of a thousand warships assisted by three thousand smaller vessels.

Herodotus tells us that he had a canal dug through the base of the Mount Athos peninsula so that he could avoid the cape where some of his father's ships had been wrecked. He ordered Egyptian and Phoenician engineers to build a mile-long bridge across the Hellespont by stying small boats side by side and laying planks across them.

When Xerxes arrived at the Hellespont, he found that violent storms had shattered the bridge. The engineers were beheaded for their incompetence and the waters of the Hellespont were ordered to be lashed for her impertinence. Two more bridges were constructed and the Persian army marched across into Europe.

The Greeks had consulted the Oracle at Delphi who had predicted that Zeus would grant Athens that "a wall of wood alone shall be uncaptured." The Athenian admiral Themistocles argued that these wooden walls were a reference to the Athenian fleet and he succeeded in convincing the Athenians to abandon Athens and commit their entire army to their ships while the rest of the citizens found refuge in the Peloponnese. Themistoclese set out to engage the Perisan fleet while the land forces prepared to defend the narrow pass at Thermopylae.

The Spartan general Leonidus marched to Thermopylae with an advanced force of 300 Spartans. Along the way, he picked up an additional 6000 Greeks. The Greeks did not expect the Persians to try to break through immediately. The pass at Thermopylae was particularly narrow with high cliffs on one side and the sea on the other. Since it was



Pass at Thermopylae

time for the Olympic

Games, they decided that only this advance guard would be necessary for the time being. They planned for the rest of the army to follow

Leonidas after the games.

The Persians did not wait, but decided to force the pass at once before further reinforcements could arrive. It took four days for Xerxes to march his long lines of Persian calvary into position. During this time, he sent a spy to find out what the Greeks were doing and what was the size of their force. The spy returned to report that the Spartans were combing their long hair and engaging in gymnastic exercise.

Xerxes attacked, but his forces were forced to withdraw with heavy losses. A second and a third attack were ordered, but again the Persians suffered high casualties with nothing to show for their pains. Finally, a Greek traitor came before Xerxes and offered to show the Persians a path through the mountains that led to a spot behind the Greek lines.

A force of a thousand Greeks had been stationed along the path to guard it against just this contingency, but when they saw the advance of the Persians, they retreated. When Leonidus learned that the main body of his force was in danger of being surrounded, he ordered most of them to withdraw, keeping only his 300 Spartans and 700 Tespian allies. His remaining force was surrounded and fought to the last man until all had been killed.

Xerxes was now unopposed in his move into Achaia and he found Athens abandoned except for a small group that had sought refuge on the Acropolis. These defenders held out for two weeks, but they were finally overwhelmed, slaughtered, and the city burned. Xerxes now advanced to the Ocean harbor and found himself looking across the bay to the island of Salamis where the Greek fleet had assembled.

Themistocles sent a trusted slave who pretended to be a runaway to Xerxes. The slave told Xerxes that the Greeks were frightened and planned to escape by means of their fleet which was now bottled up inside the harbor of Salamis by the numerically superior Persian fleet. Xerxes was just proud enough to believe it. He sent the Persian fleet into the bay after the Greeks, but this was a trap and they found that they had no room to maneuver their large number of ships. The Greek ships were smaller and more agile and fitted with rams that they were able to utilize to great advantage, darting in and out and sinking Persian ships at will. The Persian fleet suffered a great loss and was forced to retreat.

In a rage, Xerxes executed all of the Phoenician captains. The rest of the Phoenician sailors became furious and sailed back home. The Egyptian ships followed. Xerxes left his land forces under the command of Mardonius and left Greece, never to return.

Mardonius withdrew to Thessaly where he spent the winter. In the spring of 479 B.C. he marched south to meet the Greeks again. This time, he met a combined coalition of Greeks at Plataea and was killed in the following battle while his main infantry force was put to route. The last of the Persians departed from Greece.

## THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

Following the wars with Persia, the Greeks went back to doing what they enjoyed most, fighting among themselves. They were encouraged in this endeavor by the very Persians whom they had repelled and the Persians were quick to financially back various parties as long as it meant fermenting hostilities among the Greek city-states..

Tension began to develop between two city states in particular; Athens and Sparta. There were several circumstances that helped to fuel the conflict between these two:

- Athenian Imperialism.

In 477 B.C., Athens bound several of the Greek city-states into an alliance as a guard against further Persian aggression. This federation was known as the Delian League. Athens used her position as the head of this League to build a virtual Athenian Empire. Before long, she was forcing other nations to join this alliance upon pain of attack. It was only a matter of time before she clashed with Sparta.

- Cultural Differences.

There were some distinctive cultural differences between Athens and Sparta.

Athens	Sparta
Democratic government	Aristocratic monarchy

Artistically advanced	Culturally backward
Liberal in outlook	Conservative
Imperialistic	Provincial

- Economic Factors.

Athens was ambitious to control the Isthmus of Corinth which was the major trade route between Greece and the west. Corinth, on the other hand, was the chief ally of Sparta.

The Peloponnesian War was to last for 27 years (431 - 404 B.C.). It has been likened to a grizzly bear fighting a great white shark. Athens was far richer and had a greater navy, but was unable to stand up against the Spartan land forces. The outcome would depend largely upon whether the battle was being fought on land or on sea.

As the conflict began, Athens went on the defensive, allowing Sparta to invade from the land and being content to find refuge behind her walled cities while being supplied from the sea. The war might have gone on indefinitely except for three factors that eventually turned the tide in favor of the Spartans.

1. The Defection of Athenian Allies.

Many of the Athenian allies became disillusioned with Athens as they saw her democracy fail to bring forth any strong military leaders. Indeed, the one dynamic military leader that might have saved the day for Athens became the object of Athenian jealousy and was threatened with facing a trial and judgment.

2. Sparta's Alliance with Persia.

The Persians were well aware that a divided Greece would be less of a threat to their own interests than a Greece united under Athens. Sparta received enough financial aid from the Persians to make up for the economic imbalance with Athens.

3. The Construction of a Spartan Navy.

The early Spartan attempts to meet the Athenians at sea did not meet with any great success. But finally, the Spartans succeeded in

catching the bulk of the Athenian fleet while they were docked in a Thracian harbor and winning a great victory. With their fleet gone and threatened with starvation, Athens was forced to surrender.

The terms imposed on Athens were quite mild, though they were designed to reduce Athens to the position of a vassal. Her walls were torn down and she was forced to surrender all her foreign possessions and almost her entire navy.

## **THE THEBAN WAR**

Though Sparta had won the war against Athens, those that were appointed as rulers over the conquered territories were not as competent in winning the peace. The city of Thebes revolted in 371 B.C. and Sparta was defeated at the Battle of Leuctra through the use of some unconventional tactics that were witnessed by a young Macedonian prince named Philip. He would put these tactics to good use in the future.

Thebes tried to organize a new league of all the city-states of Greece with herself at the head, but this was doomed to failure. Athens rose up against Thebes in 362 B.C. and defeated the Theban army and Greece was again left fragmented. When unification did come, it would not be at the hands of Sparta, Athens, or Thebes, but from a small, insignificant mountain kingdom in the north known as Macedonia.

# THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

The period from the book of Malachi at the end of our Old Testament to the opening of Matthew at the beginning of our New Testament comprises about 400 years. These 400 “silent years” were only silent in the sense that there were no prophets from God who were writing Scripture. They were years which brought about dramatic and sweeping changes throughout the ancient world. These changes began with the arrival of a conqueror from the west known as Alexander the Great.

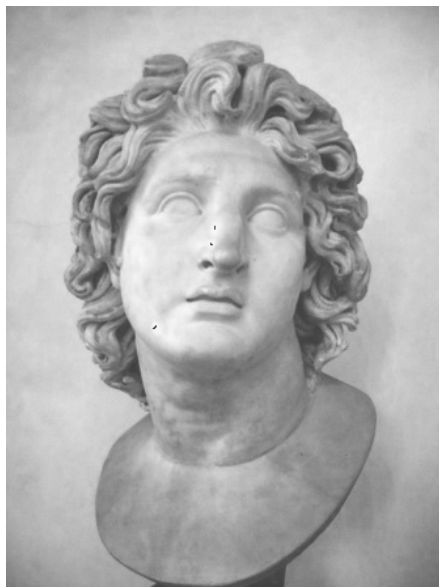
## ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Alexander was the son of King Philip of Macedon. It was a tiny backwoods kingdom, considered barbaric even by the neighboring Greeks of Athens and Thessaly. But from his earliest childhood, Alexander seemed destined for greatness. Even as a child he dreamed of world conquest. The Iliad was his Bible and Achilles was his hero. Alexander had grey eyes and a slight build. His hair was blond and he kept his face smooth-shaven.

### 1. Childhood.

When Alexander was seven years old, a group of Persian envoys came to the palace while Philip was away. Alexander came in and proceeded to cross-examine the guests about the size and morale of the Persian army, the distance to Susa, and the condition of the roads leading there.

Another tradition tells of an account when Alexander was about 9 years old. He had gone with his father, Philip, to buy a stallion. However, the king’s grooms



Alexander, Capitoline Museum, Rome

were not able to manage the horse who defied every attempt to ride him.

Philip was on the verge of giving the horse back when Alexander offered to ride him. Philip accepted. Alexander took the horse's bridle and turned him so that he was facing the sun and could not be spooked so easily. Then, after calming him down, he mounted and was able to ride him. The horse, whose name was Bucephalas, was given to Alexander as a present and became his favorite, carrying him into almost every major battle Alexander fought.

In 343 B.C. Philip commissioned Aristotle to be the tutor of Alexander. Aristotle was a boyhood friend of Philip who had studied under Plato. Alexander picked up much of Aristotle's scientific curiosity, his interest in medicine, biology and rhetoric, and even certain of his political ideas. In fact, when Alexander finally set out on his conquest of Persia, he took with him a whole group of geologists, biologists, and experts in other fields of science.

Alexander commanded the Macedonian Heavy Cavalry under Philip at the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C. Alexander was only 16 years old, and yet it was his responsibility to hold the entire left flank against the Theban Band who held the Athenian right flank.

When a gap opened up between the Allied Greek Infantry and the Theban Band, Alexander personally led a charge through and opened up a huge hole in the enemy line, breaking down all organized resistance.

Thus, when Alexander came to the throne of Macedon in 336 B.C. he was already used to the responsibility of authority, even though he was only 20 years old.

## 2. Conquest of Asia.

Alexander's ascension to the throne of Macedon galvanized him to action. Within his first year, he conquered all of Achaia, leaving only the Peloponnesian Peninsula out of his league of Greek nations. He then crossed over the Hellespont and into Asia Minor. The Persians were waiting for him and he defeated them at the battle of Granicus. This left all of Asia Minor open to him and he wasted no time in consolidating his hold upon that land.



3. The Battle of the Issus.

A second Persian army had been assembled on the plains of Syria to await Alexander's coming. As he moved through the gates of Cilicia and southward down the coast of the Mediterranean, this Persian army moved in behind him, cutting off his supply lines. Alexander was forced to turn and attack.

This time Alexander not only defeated the Persian army, he captured the wife and daughters of the Persian king Darius III who was forced to flee the field. Alexander was left free to make his way southward virtually unopposed.

4. Tyre.

Early in January 332 B.C. Alexander came Tyre, the most powerful naval port in the Mediterranean at that time. The city of Tyre stood on rocky island about a half mile off the coast. It was surrounded by massive walls that rose to a height of 150 feet. The city was considered invincible.

Nebuchadnezzar had attacked Tyre in 586 B.C. and had finally destroyed the mainland city. Even after a 13 year siege he had not been able to capture the island city.

Alexander sent envoys asking that the city come to terms with him. The envoys were murdered and their bodies thrown into the sea. Alexander settled down in what was to be the longest siege of his career.

Alexander had no navy and so he decided to bring the island to him. He began by demolishing the ruins of the mainland city and using the rubble to construct a causeway across the water which separated the island from the coast. It was grueling work and further hampered by constant raids that the people of Tyre made in their swift warships.

Alexander went to Sidon and Byblos and confiscated a fleet of ships which could bottle up the fleet of Tyre. The causeway was finally completed and Alexander launched a three-pronged simultaneous attack.

- His infantry attacked across the causeway.
- A portion of his new fleet assaulted the harbor on the north

side of the island, bottling the enemy fleet inside.

- The rest of his fleet breached a weakened portion of the southern wall of Tyre.

The city of Tyre fell to Alexander on July 29, 332 B.C. The siege had taken 7 long months. Thousands of the inhabitants were slaughtered. The 30, 000 remaining survivors were sold into slavery while 2000 captured troops were crucified.

Writing at some time between 592 and 570 B.C., the prophet Ezekiel gave the following predictions concerning the overthrow and eventual destruction of the city of Tyre.

*Behold, thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves.*

*"And they will destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; and I will scrape her debris from her and make her a hard rock.*

*"She will be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken," declares the Lord God, "And she will become spoil for the nations." (Ezekiel 26:3-5).*

Beginning in verse 7, we are given a more detailed picture of the destruction that will come against Tyre in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. However, in verse 12, there is a change as Ezekiel turns from what "he" will do to those whom he simply refers to as "they."

*"Also they will make a spoil of your riches and a prey of your merchandise, break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses, and throw your stones and your timbers into the water.*

*"So I will silence the sound of your songs, and the sound of your harps will be heard no more.*

*"And I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken," declares the Lord God. (Ezekiel 26:12-14).*

There are a number of points to this prophecy:

- Many nations will come against Tyre (26:3).
- Her walls and towers will be broken down (26:4).
- The debris of the city will be removed (26:4).
- Nebuchadnezzar will attack (26:7).
- Stones and timbers thrown into the water (26:12).
- Tyre will be a bare rock and a place for spreading of nets (26:14).
- The city will not be rebuilt (26:14).

The fulfillment of this prophecy was not the product of blind chance. There is not another city in all of the ancient world that had the same kind of destruction which Alexander brought against Tyre. This means Alexander was the unwitting servant of the Lord, bringing Divine judgment against the pagan city.

If you go to site of ancient Tyre today, you will find a place for the spreading of nets. A small fishing village occupies the site while, several miles down the coast, a modern city had taken for itself the name of Tyre.

## 5. Alexander and Jerusalem.

Following the destruction of Tyre, Alexander continued south, finally coming to the Philistine city of Gaza. Gaza was positioned on the top of a steep hill which rose 100 feet above the surrounding plain. Therefore, an enemy attacking Gaza faced walls that were 150 feet high, the bottom part of which was solid mountain.

Alexander built huge movable towers which could be rolled up to the walls of the city, allowing his archers in the tower to pick off the defenders. Even so, it was two months before the city of Gaza could be taken.

While the siege of Gaza was underway, Alexander took a small force and rode east to Jerusalem. Josephus relates how that the High Priest of Jerusalem led a procession of priests out to meet Alexander. The High Priest brought with him a scroll of the book of Daniel.

*And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and he was then glad. (Antiquities 11:8:5).*

Alexander was so impressed by the Jews and their Bible that he allowed Jerusalem to remain semi-independent and the Jews to practice their distinctive worship as long as they remained politically loyal to him.

6. The World of Alexander.

During the next eight years, Alexander drove his armies all the way to India. It was only when they refused to go any further that he finally agreed to turn back toward home. Returning to Babylon, he became sick and died. He was only 30 years old.

*Alexander had reigned twelve years when he died. His servants succeeded him, each in his own domain. After his death they all put on crowns, as did their sons after them. for many years, and they did much evil on the earth.” (1 Maccabees 1:7-9).*

When Alexander died in 323 B.C. he had conquered almost the entire known world. From Macedonia in the west to India in the east; from the mountains of Armenia in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south were all under Greek dominion. The only direction where Alexander had not extended his realm was to the west where lay the growing kingdoms of Rome and Carthage.

Although Alexander’s military empire would quickly shatter apart upon his death, many of his ideas and accomplishments would remain to show their effect upon future generations.

a. Cultural Interchange from East to West.

Alexander stimulated trade between the east and the west. This brought about prosperity as well as a change of cultures. Both Alexandria and Antioch became important trading centers.

b. Scientific Learning.

Alexander encouraged scientific investigations. Specimens of plants and animals had been collected by biologists who had accompanied his army. This brought about a renewed interest in science into the ancient world.

c. Hellenization.

Alexander began Hellenizing the Persian Empire. By bringing in Greek settlers into the east and encouraging them to intermarry with the Persians, he was able to indoctrinate the conquered peoples with Greek ideas. He tried to advance the idea that all men, whether Macedonian, Greek or Persian, should feel a sense of brotherhood.

He was largely successful in this endeavor with one important exception – the Jews. Alexander accomplished this in several ways.

- Intermarriage. Alexander encouraged his soldiers to intermarry with the Persians.
- Integrated military. He introduced Persians into his army and even into his elite Companion Cavalry.
- Greek cities. Alexander had founded many cities throughout his conquered territories. Alexandria in Egypt eventually developed into one of the greatest centers of learning in the ancient world. Another great Greek city that would spring up would be Antioch, located in western Syria near the Mediterranean.

d. Language.

Perhaps one of the most significant changes was in the area of language. Following Alexander's conquests, Greek became the common language of the ancient world. It was for this reason that when the authors of the New Testament sat down to write, they wrote in Greek and not in the Hebrew of the Old Testament.

## **THE BREAK-UP OF ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE**

Alexander had left no heir to the throne when he died. After his death, a son was born to his wife Roxanna. but both she and her son were eventually murdered.

As he lay on his deathbed, Alexander's generals and friends had asked to whom he was going to bequeath his kingdom. Alexander had answered, *Hoti toi kratiso* – "To the strongest." These words guaranteed a power struggle among his generals. After seven years of war, several leaders emerged.

1. Antigonis.

Antigonis, also known as the "One-Eyed," was 59 years old at the death of Alexander. He took control of Anatolia. Northern Syria and Mesopotamia.

2. Ptolemy.

It is generally believed that Ptolemy was an, illegitimate half-brother to Alexander through their father, Philip. He had been one of Alexander's seven bodyguard generals.

Ptolemy took over Egypt, Palestine, Phoenicia, and Southern Syria. Ptolemy's number one general was a man named Seleucus. would play a very important role in ancient history.

3. Cassander.

Cassander was only 31 years old at the time of Alexander's death. His father, Antipater, had been left as regent of Macedonia during Alexander's absence. When his father died, Cassander took the throne of Macedonia, allying himself with Ptolemy. To form a tie with the royal family, he married Alexander's half-sister.

4. Lysimachus.

Lysimachus had also been one of the bodyguard generals. He was given the governorship of Thrace to the east of Macedonia.

Of these four men, Antigonis was the strongest. His intention soon became known, he sought to reunite the empire, setting himself up as the sole ruler. He might have succeeded in taking over the empire if he had been allowed to attack his enemies one by one. However, in 315 B. C. Ptolemy, Cassander and Lysimachus formed an alliance against him.

The next 15 years saw a series of wars that left two major powers still standing; Ptolemy in the south with Egypt and Seleucus holding the north lands of Syria, Mesopotamia, Media and Persia. Between these two giants

lay the tiny kingdom of Judah.

## PTOLEMY AND THE SEPTUAGINT

The Ptolemaic dynasty was to rule over Egypt for the next 300 years, culminating in the infamous person of Cleopatra.

Name	Reign	Notes
Ptolemy I Soter	323-284 B.C.	One of Alexander's generals; originally ruled in the name of Alexander's half-brother and Alexander's son.
Ptolemy II Philadelphus	284-246 B.C.	Organized Library of Alexandria. Erected the Pharos Lighthouse; Septuagint translated.
Ptolemy III Euergetes I	246-222 B.C.	Major building programs in Egypt.
Ptolemy IV Philopator	222-205 B.C.	Battle of Raphia in 217 B.C. stopped Seleucid incursion.
Ptolemy V Epiphanes	204-180 B.C.	Ascended throne as a child; lost Palestine to Antiochus III.
Ptolemy VI Philmetor	180-145 B.C.	Also ascended throne as a child; Antiochus IV invaded Egypt.
Ptolemy VII, Neos Philopater	145 B.C.	Only a child at his father's death; replaced on throne by his uncle.
Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II	145-116 B.C.	Uncle to Ptolemy VII
Ptolemy IX, Soter II	116-80 B.C.	Ptolemy IX ruled 116-110 and was ousted by his younger brother, Ptolemy X who ruled for a year. The two brothers went back and forth, bringing a series of revolts to Egypt.
Ptolemy X, Alexander I		
Ptolemy XI, Alexander II	80 B.C.	Lasted only 19 days before being murdered after he had murdered his own stepmother.

Ptolemy XII, Auletes	80-51 B.C.	Illegitimate son of Ptolemy IX; bribed Romans to retain throne.
Cleopatra VII	50-30 B.C.	Took throne from her brother, Ptolemy XIII. Had a son by Julius Caesar, but lost to Octavius at Actium.

There were a number of cities named Alexandria in the ancient world. The most famous is the one which resides on the western edge of the Nile Delta. It was here that Ptolemy II Philadelphus had a great library/museum constructed.

Aristeas (180-145 B.C.), a Jewish scholar who later worked in this Library, tells of the building of the great library. This massive production was commissioned by Ptolemy Soter and delegated to Demetrius, the former tyrant of Athens, who had studied under Aristotle along with Alexander the Great.

According to Aristeas, Demetrius recommended that Ptolemy gather a collection of books on kingship and ruling in the style of Plato's philosopher-kings, and furthermore to gather books of all the world's people that he might better understand subjects and trade partners. Ellen Brundige gives the following description has been given as to the library's interior:

*They consisted of pigeonholes or racks for the scrolls, the best of which were wrapped in linen or leather jackets. Parchment skins--vellum-- came into vogue after Alexandria stopped exporting papyrus in an attempt to strangle its younger rival library, set up by the Seleucids in Pergamum (2014).*

As the head of the Library, Demetrius had the job of gathering books and scrolls, as well as supervising a massive effort to translate other cultures' works into Greek. This process began with the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, for which project Ptolemy hired and housed 72 rabbis. Because of this, the translation was known as the "Septuagint" (Latin: "*Seventy*") and is often abbreviated by the Roman numeral LXX. This was to become the most popular and widely used translation of the Bible. It meant that people of every culture could now read the Scriptures in a common language.



The library of Alexandria would continue to be the most important center of learning in the world until its destruction by the Muslims in 642 A.D. The story of its destruction is relayed in Ibn al Qifi's *History of the Wise Men*. He tells how the Caliph of Egypt ordered its destruction, commenting that if the books in the library did not agree with the Koran, they needed to be destroyed and, if they did agree with the Koran, then there was no need for them. In reality, it is thought that many of the contents of the library were confiscated and distributed throughout the Muslim world, giving rise to a period of science and learning throughout that area of the world.

The variety of the translators is proved by the unequal character of the version: some books show that the translators were by no means competent to the task, while others, on the contrary, exhibit on the whole a careful translation. The Pentateuch is considered to be the part the best executed, while the book of Isaiah appears to be the worst.

## THE SELEUCIDS

Seleucus had been one of the sub-commanders under Ptolemy. He had captured Babylon in 311 B.C. and had set himself up as a sovereign independent of Ptolemy. The dynasty which he founded has become known as the Seleucids.

Name	Reign	Notes
Seleucus I	311-281 B.C.	Carved out an empire extending from Phoenicia to India.
Antiochus I	281-261 B.C.	Founded the city of Antioch in Syria
Antiochus II	261-246 B.C.	Married Bernice, the daughter of Ptolemy II to form a temporary alliance.
Seleucus II	246-226 B.C.	His stepmother Bernice was murdered, sparking war with Egypt.
Seleucus III	226-223 B.C.	Older brother to Antiochus III - he was poisoned after 3 years.

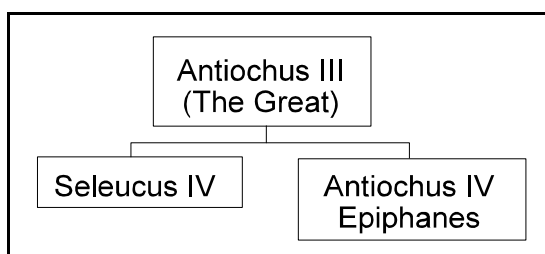
Antiochus III (the Great)	223-187 B.C.	Pushed Egypt back to the Sinai; conquered Anatolia and Parthia. Invaded Greece at the urging of Hannibal, but was defeated by the Romans at Magnesia (190 B.C.).
Seleucus IV	187-175 B.C.	Older brother of Antiochus IV; he was murdered.
Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)	175-163 B.C.	Invaded Egypt, but retreated under threat from Rome. Set up abominations in Temple which led to Jewish war for independence.

When Antiochus III was defeated by Rome at Magnesia in 190 B.C., he was forced to surrender his navy, his war elephants, and his youngest son, Antiochus IV was taken to Rome as a hostage. In order to pay the enormous tribute demanded by Rome, he was forced to raise taxes throughout his empire, plunder the treasuries of the various cities, and even plunder temples. It was as he was going into one temple for this purpose that the citizens rioted and murdered him.

1st Punic War: 264-241 B.C.  
2nd Punic War: 218-202 B.C.  
3rd Punic War: 149-146 B.C.

## ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES

When his father, Antiochus III, lost the Battle of Magnesia to the Romans, Antiochus IV was sent as a hostage to Rome where he spent 12 years. Though he was nominally a prisoner, he was treated well in Rome and sent to Latin schools. While he was here, he learned to respect the power and the endurance of the Romans.



When Antiochus III was killed in 187 B.C. Seleucus IV came to the throne and reigned for 12 years until he was murdered in 175 B.C. By this time, Antiochus IV had escaped from Rome and returned to Syria so that, at the death of his brother, he was able to take the throne.

Antiochus IV embarked on a policy of conquest and his first target was Egypt. He heard that Egypt was making offers to Judah to turn against him,

so he decided to make sure that his hold there remained undisturbed.

In order to stabilize his position in Judah, he appointed men whom he could trust to positions of responsibility. One of these positions was that of high priest. He could hardly have imagined what an impact this would have.

1. First Invasion of Egypt (170 B.C.).

Antiochus invaded Egypt in 170 B. C. Although he failed to capture the capital city of Alexandria, he succeeded in gaining possession of almost all of Upper Egypt. He even marched south to Memphis where he had himself crowned as Pharaoh.

2. First Revolt in Judah.

While Antiochus was in Egypt, a rumor reached Jerusalem to the effect that he had been killed. To celebrate the news, the Jews took all of the Seleucid officials and threw them off the walls of the city.

Antiochus, still very much alive, heard the news of the rebellion while he was still back in Egypt. He promptly left Egypt and marched into the city of Jerusalem. In three days he killed 80,000 people and led an equal number away as slaves. He also entered the Holy of Holies in the Temple and set up pagan idols there and sacrificed pigs upon the altar.

Before returning to Syria, Antiochus established the following laws in Jerusalem.

- a. Jews could not assemble for prayer.
- b. Observance of the Sabbath was forbidden.
- c. Possession of the Scriptures was illegal.
- d. Circumcision was illegal.
- e. It was illegal to refuse to eat hogs or any other food that was prohibited by the Mosaic Law.
- f. It was illegal not to participate in the monthly sacrifice honoring Antiochus. This involved eating of the meat that had been offered in sacrifice.

These laws were designed to extinguish the religious faith of the Jews. The penalty for breaking any of these laws was death.

3. Second Invasion of Egypt (168 B.C.).

The Seleucid control over Egypt did not last long once Antiochus left. He returned to Egypt in 168 B.C. to complete the job. Once again, he was victorious. Only the capital city of Alexandria stood against him.

Rome at this moment was heavily engaged in Macedonia in a war with Perseus, son of Philip V. Antiochus had calculated that the Romans would be able to do nothing to stop his Egyptian venture. What he did not know was that the Roman Senate had sent an emissary to meet him.

As Antiochus marched on Alexandria, who should come out of the city to meet him but his old friend Popilius at the head of a small embassy.

*On their first approach he [Antiochus] saluted them and held out his right hand to Popilius; but Popilius put into his hand a written tablet containing the decree of the Senate and desired him first to read that. (Livy).*

The Senate's message was a crisp order to Antiochus to put an end to his Egyptian campaign and retreat. Antiochus replied that he would call his advisors together and consult them on what was to be done. Popilius responded by taking a swagger stick that he had been carrying and using it to draw a circle around Antiochus on the sand. He warned Antiochus not to step out of the circle until he had given his decision concerning the contents of the letter. Antiochus hesitated for a few moments, astonished at the authoritative attitude of Popilius. Then he agreed to leave.

4. Second Revolt in Judah.

As Antiochus left Egypt, he received news that the Jews had rebelled again. He was furious. To let out his frustrations, he sent an army under his general Apollonius to Jerusalem.

Apollonius entered Jerusalem under the guise of peace and was

therefore unopposed. On the Sabbath day when the Orthodox Jews would not fight, the Seleucid army fell upon the Jews, killing thousands and carrying off the women and children as slaves.

Antiochus now began an intense persecution of the Jews. He set up a statue of Zeus in the Temple and forced the Jews to worship it. The statue had an uncanny resemblance to Antiochus.

Two women were brought in for circumcising their children and they led them publicly about the city with their babies hanging at their breasts, and then threw them down from the top of the wall (2 Maccabees 6:10).

There is another story told of one woman and her seven sons who were dragged before the king. They were commanded to reject their faith and to worship Antiochus. They refused and were killed one by one in agonizing torture. The spark had been set to the powder keg. It was only a matter of time before the explosion was set off.

## **THE MACCABEAN REVOLT**

The Maccabean Revolt started in 166 B.C. in the small, village of Modi'in, 17 miles to the northwest of Jerusalem. A Seleucid officer arrived in the village early one morning with a few soldiers. They proceeded to erect an altar in the middle of the town square.

Assembling the villagers, the Seleucid official ordered that Mattathias, a Jewish priest, slaughter a pig upon the altar and offer it to Zeus. The villagers would then eat of the pig's flesh, signifying their acceptance of the Greek religion. When Mattathias did not respond, the old man was offered wealth and honor if he would obey. Mattathias refused.

Suddenly one of the villagers stepped out of the crowd and walked up to the altar, announcing that he was willing to make the sacrifice. Mattathias was enraged. Grabbing the sacrificial knife from the villager, he slit the villager's throat and then turn and killed the Seleucid official. Before the astonished soldiers could take in what was happening, the five sons of Mattathias attacked them and slaughtered them.

The villagers banded together under the leadership of Mattathias and his five sons, stripping the soldiers of their weapons and uniforms and hiding the

bodies. The handful of rebels moved out into the hills. The revolt had begun.

In the following months, Mattathias and his sons created a small guerrilla force, attacking small Seleucid troops by night in ambush. The resistance movement grew as small villages began to join. The decision was made to fight on the Sabbath day if necessary. When Mattathias became sick and died, one of his sons, Judas, took his place as leader.

## **JUDAS THE MACCABEE**

Judas was given the nickname of *Maccabee*, meaning “Hammer” because of his hammer strikes against the Seleucids.

### **1. Initial Attacks.**

The first attacks of Judas were made against patrols that went out from the Seleucid garrison in Jerusalem. These patrols failed to come back. The Seleucid commander set out a second series of patrols when the first did not return. These were also ambushed and wiped out.

Worried, the Seleucid commander in Jerusalem now sent out a larger force to encamp in the hills north of Jerusalem to begin a systematic search of the villages for the rebels. At the same time, he sent a report to General Apollonius who was headquartered in Samaria.

### **2. Defeat of Apollonius.**

General Apollonius marched south to attack the rebels. He had 2000 infantrymen marching in traditional Greek phalanx formation. He also had a small cavalry detachment.

Judas ambushed them with 800 men as they marched through a narrow gorge. The Jews closed in on all four sides, trapping the Seleucids and massacring them. Apollonius was killed in the battle.

### **3. Defeat of Seron.**

Back in Syria, Antiochus heard the news of the revolt, but he had more important business at hand. The Parthians in the east had

rebelled and so Antiochus was forced to take the greater part of his army there to put it down.

Seron, the commander of the Syrian forces in the west, was given the job of restoring law and order in Judah. Seron marched south along the coast of the Mediterranean with 4000 infantry and a small cavalry. Judas ambushed with a force of 1000 men. His force attacked while the Seleucids were marching up from the coast through the pass at Beth Huron. Seron was killed and the surviving troops fled back to the plains in disarray.

#### 4. Campaign of the Three Generals.

Lysias had been left as regent in the absence of Antiochus. He now appointed three generals to lead an expedition against Judah. This expedition was made up of 40, 000 infantry and 7000 cavalry. The Seleucids marched south along the Mediterranean coast until they came to Jaffa, then turned east to Lod, setting up camp in the same place where Seron had several months before. They brought slave traders with them and even set the price for Jewish slaves who would be taken after Judas was defeated.

Meanwhile Judas had established his base at Mizpeh, several miles northwest of Jerusalem. He had 6000 men. Both armies waited, the Seleucids on the plains, the Jews in the hills.

One night, a portion of the Seleucid army moved out, marching up into the hills to the camp of the Maccabees, intent on surprise. Judas had learned of this move and so the Jews had left their camp with the campfires still burning.

The Seleucid ambush force crept into the Jewish camp, only to find it deserted. The Seleucids concluded that the Jews must have retreated in fear. They began to fan out, searching for escaped fugitives.

At daybreak, the Jews were down on the plain, ready to attack the main Seleucid camp. As the Jews attacked, the Seleucids quickly pulled into phalanx formation. However, the Seleucid cavalry did not have time to organize itself for protective duty on the flanks.

Therefore as the Seleucid army attacked, the Jews fell back before their main thrust and concentrated on attacking their flanks which

had been weakened by the disorganized cavalry. As the flanks broke up, the Seleucids were forced to retreat. The Jews came in and burned the Seleucid camp. When the Seleucid ambush patrol saw their own camp in ruins, they also fled.

5. The Campaign under Lysias.

Finally, in 164 B.C. Lysias himself marched south from Antioch with 60,000 infantry and 5000 cavalry. By this time, Judas had raised his force to 10,000 fighting men.

Lysias marched along the same route as his previous generals, coming down to Jaffa and then across to Lad. From here, Lysias moved south, thinking to surprise Judas by coming at Jerusalem from the south. Judas was waiting for him at the pass near Beth Zur. Lysias was defeated and forced to retreat.

6. Judas Takes Jerusalem.

Judas now moved into Jerusalem. The Temple was purged of all idols and rededicated to the Lord. To this day, the Jews continue to celebrate the Feast of Hanukkah which commemorates that victory. It had been just over two years since the revolt at Modi'in.

7. Death of Antiochus IV.

Antiochus IV died in 163 B.C. while returning from his eastern campaigns which had been largely unsuccessful. His son, Antiochus Eupator, was only 9 years old. Before he died, Antiochus IV named Philip, one of his leading generals, as regent.

Back in Antioch, Lysias had Antiochus Eupator crowned king and set up himself as the real power behind the throne. Philip decided to continue his campaigns in the east before returning to Antioch to battle Lysias for the regency.

8. Battle for the Jerusalem Garrison (162 B.C.).

Even though Judah controlled Jerusalem, the Seleucids still maintained a heavily fortified garrison within the city. Judas now decided to take the Seleucid garrison. He calculated that Philip and Lysias would not attempt to attack with the shaky political situation at its present state in Antioch. He was wrong.



An all-out assault was made against the garrison and it failed. The Jews were compelled to fall back on a siege. Unknown to Judas, messengers from the garrison escaped through underground tunnels and arrived at Antioch appealing to Lysias for help.

Lysias and the young king Antiochus Eupator set out with a huge array made up of 100,000 infantry, 5300 cavalry and 22 war elephants. Marching down along the coast, they passed to the west of Jerusalem and then swung around, coming up toward Jerusalem from the south.

Judas and his army made their stand at Beth Zechariah, 11 miles to the south of Jerusalem. The Jews were decisively defeated in the following battle and Eleazer, the younger brother of Judas, was killed when he tried to attack an elephant.

9. Siege of the Temple Mount.

Now Lysias and the boy-king marched to Jerusalem where they entered without resistance. Only a small hand of Jews opposed them and these had fortified themselves in the Temple. Lysias could do nothing by a direct attack and so he laid a siege to the Temple Mount.

As the siege continued, the Jews in the Temple began to suffer greatly. Their food had been limited from the beginning since this was the Sabbatical Year. Soon they were starving. However Lysias did not know this.

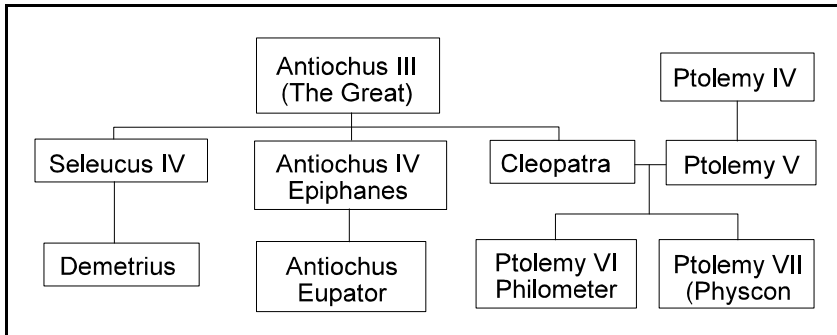
At the last moment, news reached Lysias that Philip was on his way back from his campaigns in the east and that he was seeking to take over the government.

Anxious to return to meet this new threat, Lysias offered a peace treaty with Judas which guaranteed religious freedom in Judah. He then pulled his army out of Jerusalem and returned to Antioch, but not before pulling down the walls of Jerusalem and establishing Alcimus, a Hellenistic Jew, as high priest.

10. The Rise of Demetrius.

In the following conflict between Lysias and Philip, Lysias emerged as the victor. However, that same year Demetrius, son of Seleucus

IV, escaped from Rome and sailed to Syria where he was proclaimed king by the population.



Lysias and the boy-king Antiochus Eupator were put to death. Demetrius confirmed the selection of Alcimus as high priest of Jerusalem, sending him with general Bacchides to rule over the temple.

11. Alcimus.

What the Seleucids had not managed to do by force of arms, they succeeded for a time in the person of the renegade Alcimus. Because he was both a Jew and a descendant of Aaron, he was at first accepted by the Jews.

He began an intense Hellenization program, ordering the execution of those who did not go along with it. His popularity quickly fell and Judas expelled him from the land.

12. The Death of Judas.

In 161 B.C. Judas sent delegates to Rome to negotiate an alliance. He hoped that if Judah had an alliance with Rome the Seleucids would be more hesitant to attack. It had just the opposite effect. Demetrius reckoned correctly that the Senate, although willing to become allies on paper, was not about to enter into a costly war over the tiny kingdom of Judah.

Therefore he sent General Bacchides to attack Judah with a force of 20, 000 infantry and 2000 cavalry. Bacchides took Jerusalem without any opposition. Making his base there, he marched north to confront Judas.

It was here that Judas made the greatest tactical mistake of his entire career. Rather than retreating and melting away into the hills under the overwhelming odds, he met the Seleucids with a direct frontal attack. It was a disaster and Judas was killed and his army destroyed.

## **JONATHAN (160-143 B.C.)**

The Maccabean veterans now chose Jonathan, the youngest of the brothers of Judas, as their new leader. The Maccabean rebellion was little better off than when it had begun under Mattathias 5 years earlier.

### **1. Renewed Operations.**

Jonathan moved the remnants of the Jewish army into the desert regions of Tekoa, 10 miles to the south of Jerusalem. Here they began to rebuild their scattered forces.

Jonathan waited for an entire year until Alcimus died and Bacchides and his army returned to Antioch before he resumed his guerrilla operations.

As the rebellion began to renew itself in intensity, the Seleucid garrisons in and around Jerusalem sent to Antioch, requesting that Bacchides return and restore order. By this time, Jonathan had re-fortified the ruined fortress of Beth-basai, less than a mile to the southeast of Jerusalem.

### **2. The Battle of Beth-basai.**

In 156 B.C. Bacchides marched to Jerusalem and then down to lay siege to Beth-basai. Jonathan had been expecting this and had split his forces in two, taking one to hide in the desert and the other to hold Beth-basai. On an appointed signal, Jonathan attacked with his hidden forces while the Jews in Beth-basai rushed out and attacked, catching the unsuspecting Seleucids in a trap. Bacchides was forced to retreat to Jerusalem with the remnants of his army.

### **3. Peace.**

Jonathan dispatched envoys to Bacchides to negotiate for peace.

Bacchides agreed and the terms were drawn up. Independence was not granted to the Jews, since Bacchides did not have the power to do this. However, he did agree to the following terms.

- a. Amnesty for all rebels.
- b. Permission for all Maccabean veterans to return and live in Judah.
- c. The return of all Jewish prisoners of war.
- d. The affirmation of all Jewish religious freedoms. In return, Jonathan promised to keep peace and accept the continued status of Judah as a Seleucid dependency. This took place in 155 B. C. For a short time there would be peace.

4. Rise of Balas (152 B.C.).

In 152 B.C. a man named Balas arose in Syria who claimed to be the son of Antiochus IV. Calling himself Alexander Epiphanes, he enlisted the support of both Anatolia and Egypt.

In a struggle for popularity, both Balas and Demetrius sought to gain Jonathan's support which could very well have been the deciding factor in the struggle. At this point, everyone got into the picture, offering Jonathan titles, lands, governorships and even the high priesthood. Jonathan took it all and then sided with Balas.

5. Jonathan as Governor (150 B.C.).

Balas and Demetrius met in battle in 150 B. C. In the following battle, Demetrius was killed. Jonathan was officially appointed governor of Judah because of his support. For the next three years, the Jews prospered under Balas.

6. The Battle of Antioch (147 B.C.).

In 147 B. C. Demetrius II, the teenage son of the late Demetrius, managed to take over the Phoenician coast and part of Syria. Egypt turned her support from Balas to Demetrius II. Egypt's policy was always to support the weaker of any two rivals to the Seleucid throne. She thought that in this way the Seleucid Empire would grow weak.

In the following Battle of Antioch, Balas was killed and Demetrius II took the throne.

7. Antiochus VI and Tryphon.

When Balas was killed, he left an infant son named Antiochus VI. One of his former officers named Tryphon now sought to place this infant son on the throne.

Tryphon made an alliance with Jonathan in which his brother, Simon, was made military commander of all the coast lands between Egypt and Tyre.

In the following conflict, Tryphon was able to take all of the lands as far north as Galilee and made successful campaigns all the way to Damascus.

8. Murder of Jonathan.

Tryphon decided that Jonathan was becoming too powerful and so he tricked him into coming to Ptolemais where he had him killed.

Under the rulership of Jonathan, the Kingdom of Judah had grown to be very strong, and, although it was not yet independent, this was only a matter of time.

## **THE HASMONEAN KINGS**

Simon, the only remaining son of Mattathias, now became the leader of the Jews. Tryphon decided that, if he were ever to defeat the Jews, now would be the time. He marched south along the Mediterranean coast and then moved inland to come up at Jerusalem from the south, outmaneuvering Simon and the Jewish army which waited for him west of Jerusalem. Just a few miles away from Jerusalem, Tryphon was caught in a snowstorm and forced to retreat to the warmth of the Jordan Valley. Jerusalem was saved.

In May 142 B.C. Simon entered into negotiations with Demetrius II who still held all of northern Syria. In the following agreement. Judah was recognized as an independent state. Judah was once more a free nation.

The last king of Judah had been Zedekiah, son of Josiah. Since the

Babylonian Exile, Judah had been ruled by governors and prophets. The Maccabees were seen as military rulers, but did not take for themselves the title of king. Jonathan was given the position of high priest. This position continued to be held by the ruling sons of Mattathias.

For a time there was prosperity and a continued spiritual awakening. But as the period of prosperity continued, the religion of the Jews began to take on more of a ritualistic attitude. At the same time, the rulers of Judah became greedy. Simon, the last of the sons of Mattathias was murdered by his son-in-law in 135 B.C.

1. John Hyrcanus (135-104 B. C. )

In 135 B. C. both Simon and two of his sons were murdered by an ambitious son-in-law. A third son managed to escape and take the leadership of Judah. His name was John Hyrcanus. He went on to reign for 31 years.

During his rule Hyrcanus hired foreign mercenaries and plundered the tomb of King David. He conquered Samaria, taking the city after a year-long siege and burning it to the ground. He also conquered the Idumeans and the Galileans and forced them to convert to Judaism. This would have major repercussions. It would make it possible for an Idumean to ascend to throne of Israel. It also served to polarize the Jews into two distinct parties:

a. The Hasidim.

The term Hasidim literally means “the pious ones.” This group came to be known as the Pharisees, the separated ones because they sought to retain the separation of their culture from the Greek influences of Hellenization.

b. The Hellenists.

These were Jews who embraced Greek influences. They came to be known as Sadducees. The name is taken from the High Priest Zadok because this view was popular among the priests as well as the aristocracy.

2. Judah Aristobulus (104-103 B.C.).

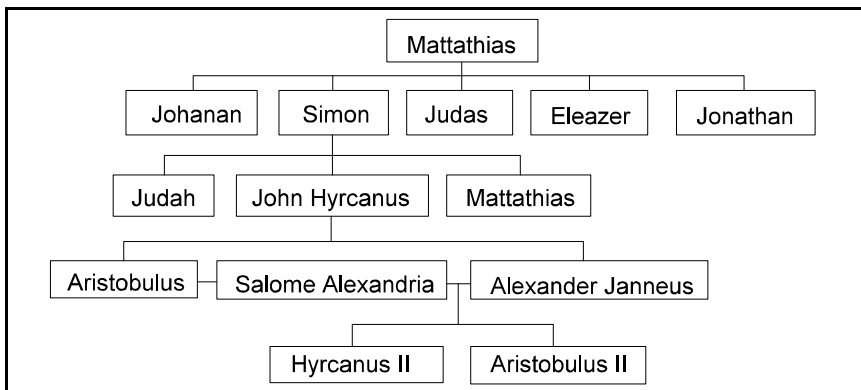
The death of Hyrcanus started a dynastic struggle for the leadership

of Judah. Aristobulus, the eldest son, emerged as the victor and promptly threw his mother and four brothers into prison where all but one of the brothers died.

Not content with the office of High Priest, Aristobulus crowned himself as king. This is significant because he was the first to carry the title of king since the Babylonian Captivity. His reign, however, was short-lived and his health quickly deteriorated so that he died within a year of coming to power.

3. Alexander Janneus (103-76 B. C. ).

Aristobulus had been married to a remarkable woman named Alexandria. When Aristobulus died, she immediately freed his one surviving brother and married him. He was a teenager while she was nearly 30 years old, but this served to secure his hold upon the throne of Judah.



As Alexander Janneus grew to manhood, it became evident that he was not much better than his murderous brother had been. Civil war broke out during the Feast of Tabernacles when he took a libation that was to be poured out on the altar in the Temple and instead poured it on the ground at his own feet. The Jews responded by pelting him with fruit. Janneus called in his soldiers and put 6000 Jews to death.

This action led to six years of civil war. The Pharisees looked to the Seleucids for military aid and managed to drive Janneus into hiding for a time. Realizing that they might be handing over the independence of their nation, they made peace with Janneus. Instead of keeping the peace, Janneus crucified 800 Pharisees after executing their wives and children before their eyes.

In the following years, he extended his kingdom all the way to the borders of Egypt, eastward into the Trans-Jordan lands, and north to Lake Hulah.

4. Salome Alexandra (76-67 B.C.).

When Alexander Janneus died in 76 B. C. his wife, Salome Alexandra, took the throne for herself. She was nearly 70 years old. Her brother was the leader of the Pharisee Movement and she was a religious conservative. The nine years of her reign were to be the golden age of Israel.

a. Public school system.

Alexandra started a public school system in Israel and brought in compulsory education.<sup>1</sup> The result was that years later in the time of Jesus, almost every Jew living in the land of Israel could read.

b. Her two sons.

As a woman, Alexandra could not officiate as High Priest, so she appointed her oldest son to this position. Her younger son was made general of the armed forces.

(1) Hyrcanus II.

Being the oldest and the heir to the throne, he was appointed to be High Priest. He was by nature a peaceful man, following the teachings of the Pharisees.

(2) Aristobulus II.

As general of the military, he was popular with the Sadducees who envisioned an imperial Jewish state.

The differences between these two sons would eventually

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Atkinson points out that, “during her reign, children were required to attend school, a decree that presumably included young girls” (Biblical Archaeology Review, July/Aug 2008; Pg 65).



make Israel a house divided and would lead to the fall of the Jewish state.

c. Strife between Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Pharisees were dominant during the reign of Alexandra. They used their dominance to seek revenge upon the Sadducees for the persecutions that they had suffered under Alexander Jannaeus. Leaders from the Sadducees were put to death, bringing the nation to the brink of civil war.

5. Hyrcanus II (67 B.C.).

When Alexandra died, Hyrcanus, being the oldest and therefore the heir, was placed upon the throne. Aristobulus gathered an army of Sadducees and marched on Jerusalem. Hyrcanus surrendered without a fight.

6. Aristobulus II (67-63 B.C.).

Hyrcanus gave up the office of High Priest and Aristobulus became both King and High Priest. The two brothers swore eternal friendship and even sealed their alliance by the marriage of their children. For a time there was peace.

After a time, Aristobulus became jealous of his older brother and Hyrcanus was forced to flee to Aretas, king of the Nabatean Arabs. It was here that he met a young Idumean prince named Antipater who would change the course of Jewish history.

## **POMPEY THE GREAT**

Antipater became good friends with Hyrcanus and encouraged him to make an attempt to regain his kingdom. Enlisting the aid of King Aretas, they led a force of Nabateans against Jerusalem, catching Aristobulus by surprise and besieging him within the city.

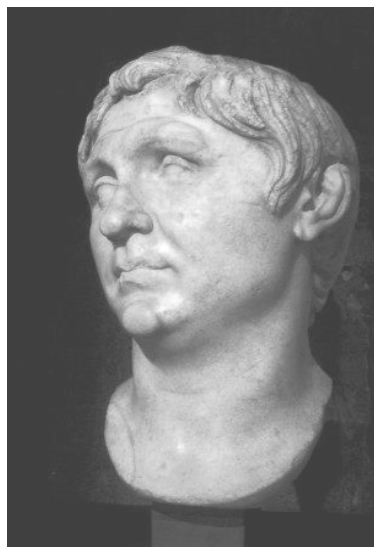
Meanwhile, far to the north, the Roman general Pompey the Great had just conquered the Seleucid Empire and was marching south toward Jerusalem. His arrival would completely change the life of the Jewish people.

1. Solicitations to Pompey.

As Pompey marched down from Syria, both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus sent ambassadors to try to gain his favor.

- Antipater went representing Hyrcanus.
- Aristobulus was represented by a man named Nicodemus.

As they both came before Pompey, Nicodemus began accusing Pompey's two commanding generals of accepting a bribe from Hyrcanus. In this way, Pompey's military advisors turned against the cause of Aristobulus from the very beginning.



Pompey the Great

2. The Peace of Pompey.

Pompey ordered that the two brothers should make peace with each other and that Hyrcanus should lift the siege. Hyrcanus agreed and was withdrawing his army when Aristobulus gathered his forces and attacked those of Hyrcanus, inflicting a crushing defeat.

3. Pompey's Judgment.

Pompey was angry at this breach of trust and he ordered both the brothers to appear before him. When they did, Pompey indicated that Hyrcanus should rule over the Jews.

4. Pompey Takes Jerusalem (63 B.C.).

Although Aristobulus had surrendered to Pompey, his followers did not. They had taken control of the Temple Mount and the Old City. Pompey marched to Jerusalem and besieged the defenders, throwing up a wall around that portion of the city.

The siege lasted three months. Pompey took advantage of the Jewish reluctance to attack on the Sabbath day and each Sabbath had his work crews out building great ramps up to the Temple Mount. Finally, an assault took them through the defenses.

*And no small enormities were committed about the temple itself, which, in former ages, had been inaccessible, and seen by none; for Pompey himself went into it, and not a few of those that were with him also, and saw all that which was unlawful for any other men to see, but only for the high priests. (Antiquities 14:4:4).*

Josephus goes on to say that, though Pompey entered the Holy of Holies in the Temple, he did not touch anything and ordered the priests to cleanse and restore the Temple.

5. Pompey's Territorial Arrangements.

Pompey annexed all of the lands of Israel to the Roman Empire. With this annexation came a number of changes.

a. The province of Judea.

The Kingdom of Judah was placed under the authority of Scaurus, the governor whom Pompey had placed over Syria. The name of Judah was changed to "Judea."

b. Liberation of Greek cities.

Pompey "liberated" the Greek cities along the coast and granted the Samaritans a measure of independence. The Greek cities on to the east of the Sea of Galilee were organized into a federation known as the Decapolis.

c. Hyrcanus was reinstalled as High Priest.

Although he held no official position, Antipater remained a dominant power in Judea.

## **ANTIPATER**

Antipater had married the daughter of an Arabian noble. By her he had four sons and a daughter. Of these children, one was destined to go down in history as "the Great."

1. The Roman Civil War.

For a time there was peace and prosperity under the Roman rule. Then in 49 B. C. the entire Roman Empire was plunged into a civil war. The civil war which erupted at this time pitted the two greatest military leaders that Rome had ever seen.

- On the one side was Julius Caesar, a military and administrative genius who had just defeated the Gauls and even invaded England.
- On the other side was Caesar's old ally Pompey the Great, conqueror of all of the lands to the east.

Hyrchanus and Antipater naturally sided with their friend and benefactor, Pompey. It was to be the wrong decision.

2. Antipater and Caesar.

In 48 B.C. Caesar defeated Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalus on the east coast of Greece. Pompey managed to escape and flee to Egypt. Caesar followed Pompey to Egypt, but when he arrived, he found that Pompey had been murdered by some of the Egyptians who were trying to curry favor with Rome.

Now Caesar found himself in trouble. In his haste to capture Pompey, he had come to Egypt with a very small force. To make matters worse, he had stepped into the middle of another civil war between the son and daughter of Ptolemy 12th. Caesar soon found himself besieged within the royal palace at Alexandria.

It was Antipater who came to the rescue with a large force of Nabateans. In gratitude, Caesar made Antipater a Roman citizen with exemption from taxation and appointed him procurator of all of the lands of Israel. Hyrchanus was confirmed as High Priest and given the title of Ethnarch of the Jews.

3. Antipater as Procurator.

Antipater set about quelling the revolts that had flared up during the Roman Civil War. He then set up two of his sons into positions of responsibility.

- a. Phasael was made governor of Judea.
- b. Herod was made governor of Galilee.

On March 15, 44 B. C. Julius Caesar was assassinated as he was entering a meeting of the Senate. He died at the feet of the statue of Pompey. This brought about a new power struggle as the Senate, led by Brutus and Cassius, sought to overthrow an alliance made up of the friends of Caesar, notably Marc Antony and Octavius.

4. Alliance with Cassius.

Cassius, one of the murderers of Caesar, came east and took the governorship of Syria. In order to finance his war with the pro-Caesar faction, he demanded heavy taxes from Antipater.

Antipater appointed Herod to collect these taxes and he did such a good job that Cassius promised him the kingship of Judea.

5. Death of Antipater (43 B.C.).

Antipater was poisoned by his butler, leaving Phasael and Herod in charge of the kingdom.

## **HEROD THE GREAT**

The death of Antipater left Hyrcanus in the position of authority in Israel, but Phasael and Herod were the real power behind the scenes. Herod at this time was nearly 30 years old. He is described as being tall and handsome with curly black hair and golden skin.

1. Herod and Cassius.

When Cassius left Syria to lead his armies westward against Antony, he left Herod in charge of all of southern Syria. Herod had already shown his ability by capturing and executing an infamous robber and his band of outlaws.

Cassius met Antony and Octavius at Philippi in 42 B. C. Cassius was defeated and committed suicide. This put Herod and Phasael in a bad light because they had backed Cassius and Brutus.

2. Herod and Marc Antony.

When Marc Antony came to Damascus, the Jews brought official complaints to him against Herod and Phasael. Antony summoned Hyrcanus and asked him who was the best qualified ruler. Hyrcanus answered in favor of Herod and Phasael. Antony therefore appointed Herod as Tetrarch of Judea and Phasael as Tetrarch of Galilee.

3. The Jewish/Parthian Revolt (40 B.C.).

Some of the Jews who were in opposition to Herod and Phasael now made an alliance with the Parthians, requesting them to come down and assist them in a revolution. Their forces arrived at Jerusalem on the Feast of Pentecost and were admitted into the city.

Phasael was captured and thrown into prison where he eventually died. Hyrcanus was captured and his ears were bitten off so that he would be unsuitable to hold the High Priesthood under the Levitical Law.

Herod barely managed to escape with his family to the fortress of Masada. From here, they moved across the Dead Sea and then to Petra, the Nabatean capital.

4. King of the Jews (40 B. C.).

Herod made his way to Rome where he was warmly received by Marc Antony. Antony and Octavius took him before the Senate where he was appointed King of the Jews, also awarding him the lands of Samaria and western Idumea.

Herod was now officially a king, but he was a king without a country. The Parthians had placed Mattathias Antigonus, a Hasmonean, upon the throne as a puppet king.

5. Conquest of Israel (39-37 B.C.).

Herod landed back in Palestine with a Roman legion in 39 B. C. It took two years of fighting to wrest the kingdom from the rebels. Jerusalem was finally taken in the summer of 37 B.C.

Herod moved in and ruthlessly took control, murdering almost the

entire Sanhedrin. To secure his position upon the throne, he married Maniamne, the last living Hasmonean.

6. Antony and Cleopatra.

Meanwhile Antony had fallen in love and married Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemies of Egypt. Together they now attempted to secure Egypt's independence. They were opposed by Octavius and the Roman Senate.

Herod sided with Antony and remained loyal to him, even though Cleopatra hated him and wished to add Judea to her possessions.

7. The Battle of Actium (31 B.C.).

Antony and Cleopatra were defeated by Octavius in the naval battle of Actium, off the west coast of Greece. Antony and Cleopatra escaped to Egypt where they both committed suicide.

Herod was summoned to appear before Octavius and to account for his alliance with Antony. Herod came before Octavius at Rhodes and admitted to having been a close friend and ally of Antony. He went on further to say that he would have been at Actium to fight for his friend had it not been for troubles from the Arabians. Then he promised that he would now be as faithful to Octavius as he had been to Antony.

Octavius confirmed Herod as King of the Jews and even added certain lands to his domain.

8. Herod's Building Projects.

Herod embarked on a fantastic series of building projects which were rivaled only by those in the days of Solomon.

a. Herod's Temple.

The Temple in Jerusalem had been rebuilt in 520 B.C. by Zerubbabel after the Babylonian Captivity. However Zerubbabel's Temple had assumed the proportions of a fortress. Herod now decided to expand it to greater dimensions than had existed even in the days of Solomon.

Construction began in 20 B.C. and continued throughout the remainder of Herod's reign. This construction was still underway during the ministry of Jesus (John 2:20) and would not be completed until 63 A.D. The result would be one of the most beautiful buildings in the world.

b. The Antonia Fortress.

The Hasmoneans had originally built a fortress which overlooked the Temple Mount. Herod rebuilt it and named it after his old friend, Marc Antony. It was located at the northwest corner of the Temple Mount and had two sets of stairs descending down into the Temple compound.



The Antonia Fortress was located on the northwest side of the Temple Mount

This later became the base of the Roman garrison at Jerusalem. It was here that Paul was initially taken after his arrest in the Temple.

c. Other Fortresses.

Herod built a long line of forts stretching from Galilee all the way down to Masada. These fortresses gave Herod a strict control over Israel. Among these were Herodium and Masada.

d. Caesarea.

Israel did not possess any good natural harbors so Herod decided to build one on the Mediterranean. He constructed a 200 foot wide breakwater to enclose the harbor so that it



was only open to the north. This city took 12 years to build.

These were only a few of the fantastic building programs of Herod. The finances were managed so that the people were not heavily taxed as they had been under Solomon.

9. Herod's Domestic Troubles.

In spite of the financial prosperity of Israel under Herod, there was much dissension in the land. It is said by historians that Herod made two mistakes during his reign. The first, was to marry Mariamne, the last of the Hasmoneans. The second was to fall in love with her.

Herod began to uncover numerous assassination plots against his life which involved placing his two sons by Mariamne on the throne in his place. Eventually he killed Mariamne in a fit of rage.

Later he murdered Mariamne's two sons for conspiring to take over the throne. It was this act that brought about the comment by Octavius:

It is better to be Herod's *hus* [pig]  
than to be Herod's *huios* [son].

Herod would not kill a pig and eat it because he followed the Jewish dietary laws, but he had killed his own sons.

Herod never fully recovered from the death of Mariamne. From this time on, he was moody, jealous, and suspicious of everyone. It is in this context that we can read the account of the Magi coming to visit Jesus and the attempt of Herod to put Jesus to death by murdering all the male children of Bethlehem.

10. The Death of Herod.

Following the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem, Herod became very sick and was afflicted with a horrible disease. Josephus describes his condition.

*There was a gentle fever upon him, and an intolerable itching over all the surface of his body, and continual pains in his colon, and dropsical tumors about his feet, and an inflammation of the*

*abdomen, and a putrefaction of his privy member that produced wonms. Besides which he had a difficulty of breathing upon him, and could not breathe but when he sat upright, and had a convulsion of all his members. (Wars of the Jews 1:18:5).*

As Herod lay on his deathbed, he commanded that all notable Jews from all parts of the nation come to him. When they arrived, he had them all locked up with orders that all of these leaders should be killed at the moment of his death. Fortunately his orders were not carried out and Herod died a miserable death in the spring of 4 B.C. He died only five days after having put to death Antipater, his oldest son.

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS

In this chapter we will look at the life of Jesus and the contributions which archaeology and history make in understanding His life and times.

## CHRONOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

### 1. The Calendar of Dionysius.

In 525 A.D. Pope John I asked a Scythian monk named Dionysius to prepare a standardized calendar for the western world. At that time there were several methods being used to record years.

- Events were tabulated from the founding of the city of Rome.
- The beginning of the reign of Diocletian was also used as a standard

It was agreed that from henceforth the birth of Christ would be used as the new standard. At that time, Christ was thought to have been born on December 25, 753 AUC (Anno Urbis Conditae – “From the foundation of the city”). Therefore Dionysius used 754 AUC as his new Year One.

<b>Christian Year</b>	4 B.C.	3 B.C.	2 B.C.	1 B.C.	1 A.D.	2 A.D.
<b>Old Roman AUC</b>	750	751	752	753	754	755

The years prior to 754 AUC were denoted by B.C. (Before Christ) while those after are A.D. (Anno Domini – “Year of our Lord”). It was not until hundreds of years later that scholars suggested that Dionysius had been in error as to the exact date of the birth of Christ.

2. The Death of Herod.

Matthew 2 is very clear in stating that Herod the Great was still alive when Jesus was born. The chronology of the reign of Herod is as follows:

40 B.C. —	Herod proclaimed King of the Jews by the Roman Senate.
37 B.C. —	Herod regained possession of Palestine with the help of a Roman legion.
4 B.C. —	Herod died.

Josephus tells us that there was a lunar eclipse shortly before Herod's death (Antiquities 17:6:4). Astronomers today are able to give us the precise dates when lunar eclipses were visible from Palestine.

Date	Observations
7 B.C.	No eclipses
6 B.C.	No eclipses
5 B.C.	March 23 - center at about 8:30 p.m. September 15 - center at 2:20 a.m.
4 B.C.	March 13 - center at 2:20 a.m. (partial)
3 B.C.	No eclipses
2 B.C.	No eclipses
1 B.C.	January 10 - center at 1:00 a.m.

Josephus also states that the Passover was celebrated shortly after Herod's death and that his total reign had been 37 years and that he died 34 years after his recapture of Jerusalem. The Passover on that year began on April 11. It is because of this that most scholars have concluded that Jesus was born prior to March of the year 4 B.C.

The events of Matthew 2 took place at least 41 days after the birth of Christ. Luke 2:22-24 tell us of Mary bringing Jesus to the temple and this could not have taken place until she was ritually purified, a process that required at least 41 days to complete.

Time from Birth	Events
—	Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem
8 Days	Circumcision of Jesus (Luke 2:21)
41 Days	Mary and Joseph present Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:22-38)
After 41 Days	The Magi come to Herod looking for the King of the Jews

## THE CENSUS OF AUGUSTUS

*Now it came about in those days that 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.*

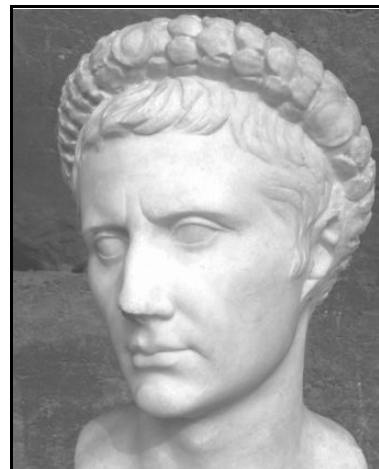
*And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone in his own city. (Luke 2:1-3).*

Luke's account of the birth of Jesus is tied to the events of history. This is not merely a story of long ago and far away, it is rooted in space and time, solidly in the context of history.

### 1. Caesar Augustus.

This is a reference to Gaius Octavius Augustus, the nephew of Julius Caesar who became emperor after defeating Antony and Cleopatra at Actium.

Augustus was famed as an administrative genius. His long reign is said to have been the golden age of Rome. Building projects abounded throughout the empire. Augustus once quipped that he had “found Rome brick and left her marble.” This was the time of Pax Romana, the peace of Rome. It was during this time that the Prince of Peace was born.



Octavius Augustus

2. The Census.

This census presents us with several problems. Verse 2 says that *this was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria*.

- Quirinius was governor of Syria in 6-7 A.D. Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. and we know from Matthew's Gospel that Herod was still alive when Jesus was born.
- We do not know of any census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Critics have often pointed to this passage as being a case of a historical mistake in the Bible. In response, Christians have proposed the following solutions:

- a. It has been suggested that the passage can be translated to read: *This census was taken before Quirinius was governor of Syria*.
- b. Another proposed translation reads: *This census was before that while Quirinius was governor of Syria*.

The problem is that the Greek text does not easily lend itself to these translations. This would be a forced reading of the text.

An alternative and more likely answer is found in the specifics of Quirinius and his role as "governor" of Syria. The term that Luke uses is a general one. He says that *this was the first census taken while Quirinius was **governing** Syria*. The specific word used by Luke to describe this *governing* is used in Luke 3:1 both of Pontius Pilate as well as of the Emperor Tiberius. This means that Luke uses it in a general sense and not merely to refer to someone who held the official title of governor.

An additional piece of the puzzle is seen in the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, a resume of the acts of Octavius Augustus. A number of copies have been found in various temples, most of them inscribed on the walls. The following quotes are taken from *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 2:8.

28 B.C.	<i>In my sixth consulship, with Marcus Agrippa as my colleague, I made a census of the people. I performed the lustrum after an interval of forty-one years. In this lustration 4,063,000 Roman citizens were entered on the census roll.</i>
8 B.C.	<i>A second time, in the consulship of Gaius Censorinus and Gaius Asinius, I again performed the lustrum alone, with the consular imperium. In this lustrum 4,233,000 Roman citizens were entered on the census roll.</i>
14 A.D.	<i>A third time, with the consular imperium, and with my son Tiberius Caesar as my colleague, I performed the lustrum in the consulship of Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Apuleius. In this lustrum 4,937,000 Roman citizens were entered on the census roll.</i>

Note that the lustrum mentioned above was the expiatory sacrifice made at the close of the census; it is synonymous with the census. The census had not been taken since 69 B.C. At that time the number of citizens of military age was only 450,000. The increase in the census of 28 B.C. is probably due to the exact enumeration of citizens throughout the empire.

Thus is it possible that Luke is referencing the census that is described by the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* as having been taken in 8 B.C. The problem is that this date seems to be rather early for the birth of Christ, but such a problem is not insurmountable.

A possible reference to an earlier governorship of Quirinius can be found in an inscription called the “Lapis Tiburtinus.” This is a tombstone which records the achievements of an unknown governor who served in the days of Augustus. Although the stone is broken in such a way that we are not able to read his name, we can read that this unknown governor served as *pro praetor* of Syria twice. The interesting thing about this is that we have no record of any governor of Syria serving two separate terms. Furthermore, we know that after Quirinius served as co-consul with Augustus in 12 B.C. he traveled to Syria where he commanded the Roman legions in the area.

Another possibility is that this census was one that was conducted exclusively in the domain of Herod the Great. Josephus tells us that Herod sent to Caesar *his testament, wherein Antipater was appointed*

*to be his successor* (Antiquities 17:3:2). He goes on to indicate that this resulted in Quintilius Varus being sent *as an assessor to Herod* (Antiquities 17:5:2).

This would be in keeping with the testimony of Tertullian who states that the census of Luke 2 “*taken in Judea by Sentius Saturnius*” (Against Marcion 4:19). Saturnius was the governor of Syria from 9-6 B.C. and was succeeded by Quintilius Varus around the same time that Quirinius was serving as general of the legion and therefore also holding a position of rulership over the area. If this is the case, then Quirinius oversaw both a first and a second census.

It is noteworthy that in 1905 a Greek papyrus was discovered in Egypt which mentions an imperial census taking place which mandated people to return to their homes:

*Gaius Vibius Maximus, the Prefect of Egypt, declares: The census by household having begun, it is essential that all those who are away from their homes be summoned to return to their own hearths so that they may perform the customary business of registration and apply themselves to the cultivation which concerns them. Knowing, however, that some of the people from the countryside are required by our city, I desire all those who think they have a satisfactory reason for remaining here to register themselves before... Festus, the Cavalry Commander, whom I have appointed for this purpose, from whom those who have shown their presence to be necessary shall receive signed permits in accordance with this edict up to the 30th of the present month...*

Notice that this is said to be a “customary census.” We are not told how long this custom had been in effect, but it apparently involved each person returning to his home.

## **JESUS AND THE MAGI**

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Where is He who has been*



*born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him.” (Matthew 2:1-2).*

When we read about the Magi, we are inclined to think of Christmas card pictures of three kings or three “wise men.” The truth is that the Magi were an ancient order of priests from Parthia. They believed in one God who had created all things and who was the author of all that was good. They allowed no images or statues into their temples.

In the days of Herod, the Magi had become a very powerful political body. No Parthian King was ever permitted to rule on the throne of Parthia until he had first been accepted by the Magi.

Do you remember who Herod had to fight to regain Israel in B.C. 40? It was the Parthians. You can imagine his consternation as a delegation of Parthian King-makers arrive in Jerusalem, seeking the one who has been “born King of the Jews.”

Herod was the king of the Jews. But Herod was never born the King of the Jews. He was a foreigner. He was not a true king. He was not of the royal line of David. He was not even Jewish. He had never been accepted by the Jews.

*And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

*And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he began to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born.*

*And they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet, 6 ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah, for out of you shall come forth a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.’” (Matthew 2:3-6).*

I want you to try to picture the situation. One day a caravan arrives in Jerusalem. This in itself is not unusual. Caravans are always arriving in Jerusalem. However, these are no ordinary merchants. They are Magi from the east. They are from the land of Herod’s enemies - the Parthians. They are from the same Parthians who had forced him to flee for his life over 30 years ago. The Parthians have been continuously at war with Rome during all these years. Herod has remained loyal to Rome. And now this group of religious King-Makers have come to Jerusalem.

We do not know how many were in the party. Undoubtedly there were many. And they are all asking the same question: “Where is the new King who has been born?” The news reaches Herod. Could this be a plot on the part of the Parthians to overthrow him and place another on his throne? Herod has heard nothing of a newborn king.

As Herod hears reports from the Magi, it becomes evident to him that they have come to seek out the Messiah, the One whose coming was foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. Therefore Herod calls a convention. The chief priests and the scribes are called in. These are the experts. When they have all been assembled, Herod asks them a question:

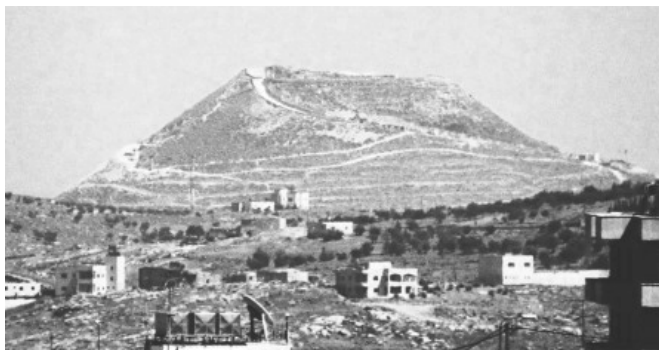
“Where is the Messiah to be born?”

The experts all agree on the same answer. They are all of the same opinion. There is no debate. The Old Testament prophet Micah has made it very clear. The Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem.

You know the rest of the story. Herod pretends to have a desire for worship while his plan is really that of an assassin. He engages the unwitting assistance of the Magi, but they are warned by God in a dream. They leave Bethlehem by an alternate route and Joseph, Mary and the baby escape to Egypt. In a futile attempt to capture them, Herod orders the execution of every child under 2 years of age.

Archaeology and history are silent with regard to the slaughter of the babies of Bethlehem. But this is not especially surprising as Bethlehem was only a tiny village and the slaughter of the infants would have been hushed up to prevent it from becoming a source of rebellion.

Why did Herod permit the Magi to go unescorted through his domain? The answer is that he knew their destination and he had a method of keeping abreast of any of their movements. A signal tower located atop the Herodium had an aerial



The Herodium as seen from Bethlehem

view of Bethlehem and was able to pass signals on to Herod in Jerusalem.

## AFTER HEROD

Herod died in the Spring of 4 B.C. He left a number of surviving children. Josephus tells us that Herod had ten wives. Five of them had children of historical significance. Three of Herod's sons were put to death by Herod before he died.

Wife of Herod	Children	Further Career
Doris	Antipater	Executed five days before Herod died
Mariamne, the granddaughter of Hyrcanus	Alexander	Both brothers were strangled at the orders of Herod
	Aristobulus	
Mariamne	Herod Philip	Married Herodias and moved to Rome. She later left him for Herod Antipas.
Malthace the Samaritan	Archelaus	Became Ethnarch of Judea
	Antipas	Tetrarch of Galilee; put John the Baptist to death; trial of Jesus
Cleopatra of Jerusalem	Herod Philip	Tetrarch of Trachonitis & Iturea; married Salome.

The New Testament tells us that Joseph took Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt until the death of Herod. After this, Archelaus was made Ethnarch of Judea. He would only last 10 years and then would be removed and replaced by a series of procurators.

Roman Procurators in Israel		
Name	Dates	Other Significant Data
Coponius	6-9 A.D.	Judas of Galilee led revolt against taxation (Acts 5:37).
Marcus Ambivius	9-12 A.D.	
Annius Rufus	12-15 A.D.	Caesar Augustus died during his term

### *The Life and Times of Jesus*

Valerius Gratus	15-26 A.D.	Deposed Annas from the high priesthood
Pontius Pilate	26-36 A.D.	Ordered the crucifixion of Jesus
Marcellus	36-41 A.D.	Caiaphas deposed from the high priesthood; returned the high priest garments which had been confiscated by Rome
Herod Agrippa given Judea and Samaria from 41 to 44 A.D.		
Cuspius Fadus	44-46 A.D.	Took back the garments of the high priest
Tiberius Julius Alexander	46-48 A.D.	
Ventidius Cumanus	48-52 A.D.	Riot in temple over a coarse Roman jest
Antonius Felix	52-60 A.D.	Brought about the murder of the high priest; heard the case of the apostle Paul, but left him in prison to please the Jews
Porcius Festus	60-62 A.D.	Heard the case of Paul and sent him on to Rome
Luceius Albinus	62-64 A.D.	James, the half-brother of Jesus, put to death while Albinus is out of the country
Gessius Florus	64-66 A.D.	Culminated in the revolt of the Jews

The word “procurator” signifies that the primary duty of this government post was the procurement of taxes for Rome. In some cases, these men might have held a different title (Pilate was technically a prefect), but their duties were largely the same, to keep the peace and collect taxes for Rome.

## **JESUS AND NAZARETH**

*But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.*

*And being warned by God in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee, 23 and came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene." (Matthew 2:22-23).*

Joseph brings his small family to the tiny village of Nazareth in Galilee and settles there. This would be the location of the boyhood of Jesus. He would live and work here until it was time for Him to begin His public ministry.

1. Nazareth.

Nazareth was such a small town that it was not even mentioned in the Old Testament, the Talmud, or by Josephus. It was located in the foothills just north of the Valley of Jezreel.

On the other hand, there was a major metropolis about four miles away from Nazareth. It was the city of Sepphoris. Though it is not mentioned in the Bible, Sepphoris has become a virtual treasure trove for archaeologists seeking to find what life was like in first century Galilee.

2. The Nazareth Inscription.

Discovered and brought to Germany in 1878, this inscription is written in Greek and seems to be dated a little prior to 50 A.D.

*Ordinance of Caesar: It is my pleasure that graves and tombs remain undisturbed in perpetuity for those who have made them for the cult of their ancestors, or children, or members of their house. However, if any man lay information that another has either demolished them, or has in any way extracted the buried, or has maliciously transferred them to other places in order to wrong them, or has displaced the sealing or other stones, against such a one I order that a trial be instituted, as in respect of the gods, so in regard to the cult of mortals. For it shall be much more obligatory to honor the buried. Let it be absolutely forbidden for anyone to disturb them. In the case of transgression, I desire that the offender be sentenced to capital punishment on charge of*

*violation of sepulcher.*

What was the cause of such an ordinance? The Jews of all people did not meddle with graves since this would be the cause of ceremonial uncleanness. It is evidently because Jews had charged Christians with having removed the body of Jesus from its tomb (Matthew 28:11-15).

## THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Luke's account gives us a very precise date for the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist and we are led to believe that the ministry of Jesus had its beginning shortly thereafter:

*Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas... (Luke 3:1-2).*

There are a number of chronological pointers, but the most exact is the first. Tiberius became the Emperor of Rome on August 19, 14 A.D. Fifteen years from this date would bring you to 28-29 A.D. depending upon whether you reckoned the first four months as the first year.

The ministry of Jesus can be outlined accordingly. Note that it is John's account that mentions a number of Passovers plus one unnamed feast that might also have been a Passover.

Early Judean Ministry	Galilean Ministry			Later Judean Ministry	Perean Ministry	Jerusalem Death, Burial & Resurrection
	Early	Middle	Later			
1st Year	2nd Year		3rd Year			
Passover in John 2:13	Passover in John 5:1?	Passover in John 6:4	Passover in John 11:55			
Obscurity	Popularity		Growing Opposition			

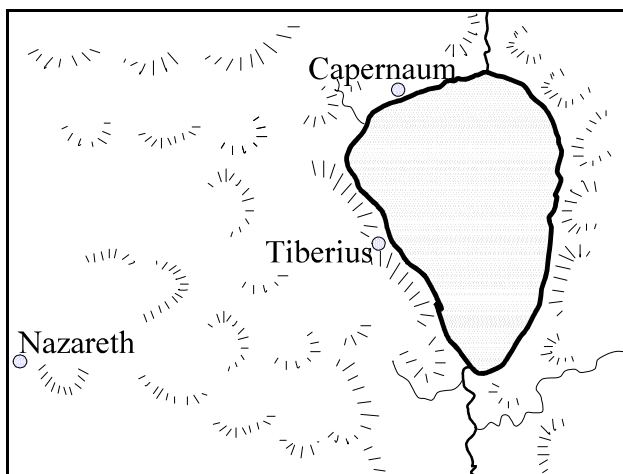
The duration of this time of ministry seems to be a little over 3 years, judging from the spacing of the various feasts that are mentioned.

## **GALILEE**

Most of the ministry of Jesus was centered in the area of Galilee. The name “Galilee” (literally, *HaGalilee*) means “the circle.” The name probably reflects the circular shape of the lake.

Galilee was under the oversight of the Tetrarch Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. Antipas served under the authority of Rome. There was a saying among the Jews that went, “If you want to be spiritual, go to Jerusalem; if you want to be rich, go to Galilee.” This is because Galilee enjoyed a booming economy. Fishermen plied its lake. Farms lay scattered across its rolling hills and upon the fields of Jezreel. It was to this area that Jesus came to begin his ministry.

Why did Jesus begin His public ministry in Galilee? Perhaps it was because Galilee tended to be more receptive to new ideas. It was something of a proverb that Galilee was the birthplace of all sorts of seditions and revolutionary ideas.



## **THE SEA OF GALILEE**

The Sea of Galilee has been given several different names throughout its history. It is alternately known as the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1; 21:1) and Lake Gennesaret (Luke 5:1). In Old Testament times it was known as the Sea of Chinnereth (Numbers 34:11; Joshua 13:27).

The waters of the Sea of Galilee lie 680 feet below sea level. The Sea measures some 13 miles from north to south and is surrounded by mountains. This ring of mountains is broken by the Jordan River in the south and in the

north by a narrow gorge to the north which winds its way 30 miles to the snow capped heights of Mount Hermon. This gorge acts as a funnel for the winds that blow off the surrounding mountains. When cool air currents from the mountains rushing down the gorge collide with the heated air over the lake, the result is sometimes a violent storm.

## CAPERNAUM

The original Semitic name of the settlement is Kefar Nahum, i.e. the village (kafar) of Nahum (Nahum means “consolation”). The composite name Kefar Nahum is always rendered in non-Semitic languages as a single name, and the guttural “h” has been dropped altogether.

Capernaum much more than Nazareth offered to Jesus a twofold advantage as far as his messianic activity was concerned.

1. Capernaum was a crossroad of primary importance, being along the Beth-shan/Damascus highway; whereas Nazareth was a mountainous and isolated hamlet.
2. Capernaum was sufficiently apart from the big centers and especially from Tiberias where Herod Antipas had set his capital. In that way Jesus was able to spread his messianic message to many persons without running too soon into trouble with the political and religious leaders.

In contrast to Nazareth, the population of Capernaum was highly stratified: fishermen, farmers, artisans, merchants and publicans lived in the same village, but apparently without any strident economical inequality. Even the relations between the inhabitants of Capernaum and the Romans were surprisingly cordial. It was a Roman centurion who built the synagogue for the Jewish community, while the elders of the village reciprocated in kindness and pleaded earnestly with Jesus asking him to heal the centurion’s servant (Lk 7:1-10). From the same community Jesus chose many of his apostles either among fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, John: Mt 4:12-22) or publicans (Matthew: Mk 2:13).

The archaeological site, called at present Kefar Nahum in Hebrew and Talhum in Arabic, is located on the northwest shore of lake Kinneret in Galilee some 600 feet below sea level, 8 miles from Tiberias.



When Robinson visited the site in 1838 he left the following description: *“The whole place is desolate and mournful. A few Arabs only of the Semekiyeh were here encamped in tents, and had built up a few hovels among the ruins which they used as magazines.”*

From 1968 to 1991 Franciscan archaeologist Fr. Virgilio C. Corbo worked almost without interruption in rediscovering ancient Capernaum. The excavations concentrated first on the two public buildings of the town, namely on the octagonal church and on the synagogue. His efforts were rewarded by the sensational discovery of the house of Peter and of the first century synagogue built by the Roman centurion.

The house of Peter, often mentioned by the Synoptic Gospels in relation to the activity of Jesus in Capernaum, and recorded later on by pilgrims, was rediscovered in 1968 under the foundations of the octagonal church some 30 meters south of the synagogue. The history of that house where Jesus lived, can be summarized as follows:

1. The house was built in the late Hellenistic Period.
2. In the late first century A.D. it was changed into a “domus-ecclesia;” a house for religious gatherings
3. In the fourth century A.D. the same “domus-ecclesia” was enlarged and was set apart from the rest of the town through an imposing enclosure wall.
4. In the second half of the fifth century A.D. an octagonal church was built upon the house of St. Peter and remained in use until the seventh century A.D.

## **CAESAREA PHILIPPI**

As you travel north from the Sea of Galilee, you will find the upper reaches of the Jordan River as it flows to the south. Moving upstream, you will find Lake Hula (which today has dried up). Moving even further northward, you would find yourself on the lower slopes of Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan River. Straddling these lower slopes was the Roman city of Caesarea Philippi.

The city was named after Julius Caesar. Indeed, there was even a temple in

honor of Caesar and the Romans who lived there celebrated him as divine. It was an international metropolis with Syrians, Jews, Greeks, and Romans. At least 14 temples to false gods were to be found in the city of Caesarea Philippi. The city was dedicated to the Greek deity Pan, the god of nature.

It was in this setting that a penniless, homeless Nazarene asked a question of His disciples.

13                    *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

14                    *And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."*

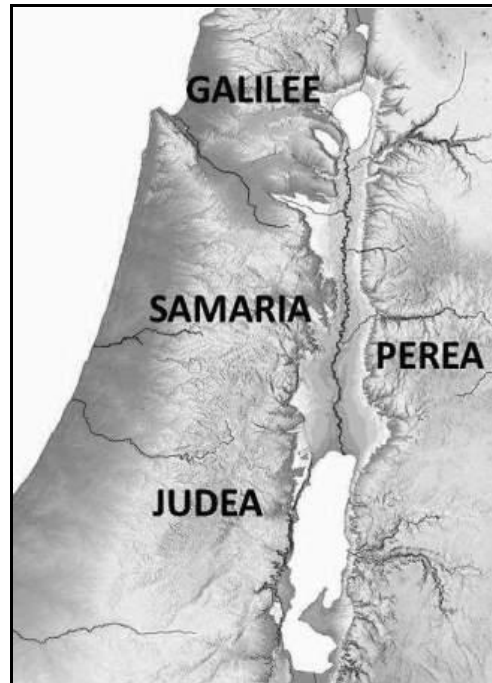
15                    *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

16                    *And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:13-16).*

## HEROD ANTIPAS

Antipas was given Galilee on the west and Perea on the east bank of the Jordan River. His title was that of a Tetrarch (literally, "ruler of a fourth part"). He built his palace at Sepphoris, only four miles to the north of Nazareth. He also built the city of Tiberias on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Herod Antipas was not actually a king. He ruled at the whim of Rome. Indeed, on one occasion he traveled to Rome and requested that Emperor Caligula make him a king, but he was refused.



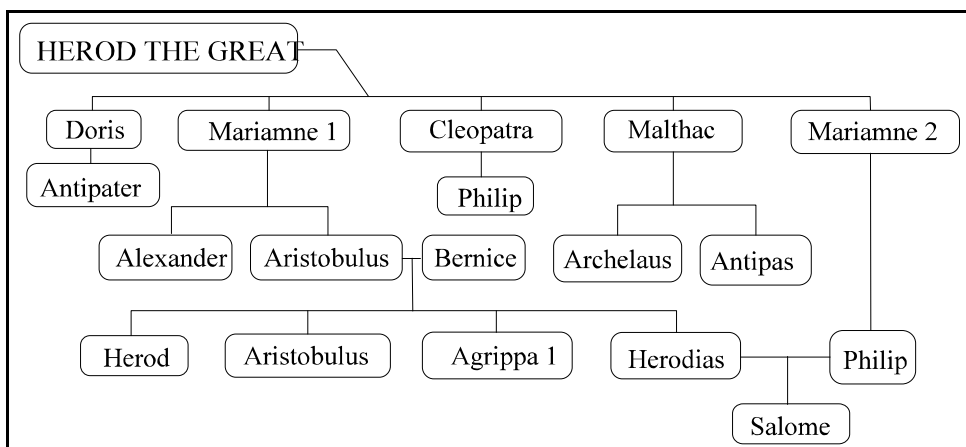
Although he was technically not a king, it was common for his subjects to refer to him as their king. After all, if it walked like a duck and it quacked like a duck, then it was only natural that they should call it a duck, even if Rome chose to call it a Tetrarch.

*For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her.*

*For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."*

*Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; 20 for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. (Mark 6:17-20).*

During a visit to Rome, Herod Antipas had stayed in the home of his half-brother, Herod Philip (not Philip the Tetrarch) and his wife and half-niece, Herodias. Herodias was married to her half-uncle, Philip. They had a daughter named Salome. However, Herodias was discontent to be the wife of a commoner and she was impressed by the dashing young Antipas. They entered into an adulterous affair and secretly plotted to divorce their own spouses so that they could marry one another.



This presented some problems because Antipas was married to the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia. King Aretas was not going to take kindly to the divorce of his daughter and they reasoned that it would be best if she met with some kind of “accident.”

When the princess learned of the plot, she ran home to daddy. This would ultimately lead to a war in which Antipas would suffer a crushing defeat at the hands of his ex-father-in-law.

Josephus relates that many of the Jewish people attributed the defeat of Antipas to his murder of John the Baptist.

*“Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod’s army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness toward one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism... Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God’s displeasure against him.” (Antiquities 16:5:2).*

The Bible tells the story of how this murder had come to pass. Herod Antipas threw a party during which he made a rash promise to his stepdaughter.

*A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; 22 and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.”*

*And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.” (Mark 6:21-23).*

Herod had a winter palace on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea located at the extreme southern point of his domain in Perea. It was known as Macherus.

It had been built in the days of the Hasmoneans and had then been enlarged by Herod the Great and surrounded with elegant defenses. The town stood on the shoulder of the hill over which stood a mighty fortress, surrounded by walls over 200 feet high. Within this fortress was a magnificent palace. From the heights of this fortress, one could look across the Dead Sea 3800 feet below to see the mountains of Judea in the distance. Josephus tells us that it was here that John the Baptist was brought and imprisoned.

*The daughter of Herodias* is not mentioned by name in the Bible, but Josephus tells us that her name was Salome (Antiquities 18:5:4). We do not know the nature of this dance, but it was sufficient to draw from Herod this amazing promise of up to half his kingdom.

We only understand the foolishness of this promise when we realize that it was a promise which Herod could not possibly keep because his kingdom was not his to give. He had begun to think of himself as an oriental king when he was only an appointed puppet acting at the behest of Rome.

Herod was to come to an ignominious end. He would suffer defeat at the hands of King Aretas of Arabia. Then at the urging of his ambitious wife, he and Herodias would travel to Rome to seek the kingship of all of Palestine. His request would be his undoing. As he stood before Emperor Caligula, he was accused of conspiring against Rome and banished with his wife to Gaul where he died as a penniless pauper.

## RELIGIOUS SECTS IN THE DAYS OF JESUS

### 1. The Pharisees.

The Pharisees were the conservative party in Israel. Their name comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to separate.” They held to a strict separation from all things foreign. In this way, they trace their roots back to the Hasidim, the “pious ones.” They held, not only to the written Law of Moses, but also to the oral traditions that had grown up around Judaism.

### 2. The Sadducees.

The Sadducees came mostly from the wealthy aristocracy. The high priest and all of the chief priests in the Sanhedrin were almost exclusively from the Sadducees. They can be best understood when contrasted with the Pharisees.

<b>Pharisees</b>	<b>Sadducees</b>
Name means “separated ones”	Name means “righteous ones”
Held to the authority of all of the Old Testament Scriptures as well as of the oral law	Viewed the Torah as having greater authority
Believed in miracles, angels & immortality	Rejected the miraculous, angels & immortality
Held to a future resurrection	Denied any resurrection

Popular in the synagogues	Ruled the Temple
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The Sadducees would move against the early Christians as they proclaimed that Jesus had risen from the dead. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection.

*But the doctrine of the Sadducees is that souls die with the bodies. Nor do they perform any observance other than what the Law enjoins them. They think it virtuous to dispute with the teachers of the wisdom they pursue. This doctrine is accepted but by a few, but those are of the highest standing. But they are able to accomplish almost nothing, for when they hold office they are unwillingly and by force obliged to submit to the teachings of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise tolerate them. (Antiquities 18.2.4:16-17).*

3. The Essenes.

The Essenes were a separatist sect who rejected all pleasure as being sinful. They lived a communal existence and often practiced celibacy, something very rare among the Jews who generally took the command to be fruitful and multiply very literally. Initiates to the group underwent a one-year probationary period before taking oaths of fidelity and piety toward God. Only after this were they permitted to partake of the communal meals with the rest of the group.

It is commonly thought that Qumran was an Essene community and that it was they who copied and hid the Dead Sea Scrolls in the caves in the surrounding area.

4. The Zealots.

These were more of a political than a religious party. They were the nationalists and they wanted to foment a rebellion against Rome. They refused to pay taxes and sometimes went so far as to murder government officials. Simon, one of the 12 disciples of Jesus, was a Zealot (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13).

## **JERUSALEM IN THE DAYS OF JESUS**

*“There were four hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem and each of them had its own school (bet sefer), and seminary (bet talmud) and Vespasian destroyed them all” (Jerusalem Talmud, Megillah 73d).*

The city of Jerusalem had grown extensively since the days of the kings of old. It was now a major metropolis with outlying suburbs. Herod the Great had brought many Hellenistic influences to the city. It now boasted a circus where chariot races could be held as well as a Greek theater.

The city was built upon two parallel ridges which were divided by a steep valley. The lower hill to the east was the site of the original city dating back to the days of the Jebusites. The Temple sat at the northern edge of this ridge

- The Upper City was located on the western ridge. Back in the days of King David, it had been called the Citadel. Herod’s palace was located here. This was the wealthier quarter. The home of the high priest was located here.
- The Lower City was the older portion of the city that started on Mount Ophel and spilled down into the Tyropoeon Valley

The newest part of the city was located to the north. This area was as of yet still unprotected by a wall; it would be enclosed by Agrippa I.

To the east of the city is the steep ravine known as the Kidron Valley. Opposite the city on the east side is the Mount of Olives, rising a hundred feet above the city. On the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives is the traditional site of the Garden of Gethsemane.

## **THE TEMPLE**

In 1969 archaeologists found an inscribed stone which had originally been a portion of the pinnacle of the temple at the southwestern wall of the Temple mount. It read, “To the place of trumpeting.” It was apparently to this location that a priest would come each morning and each evening to announce by trumpet call the morning and evening sacrifices.

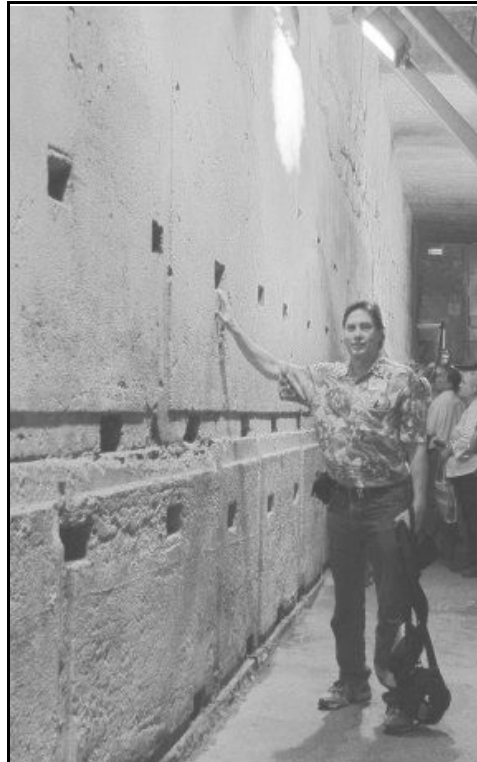
1. The Western Wall.

Following the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem after the Six Day War in 1967, long sections of the Western Wall of the Temple Mount were uncovered.

This Western Wall is 1590 feet long and exhibits the crafted Herodian stones that are characteristic of that era.

The southern end of this wall was exposed for most of its history and was traditionally the Jewish place of prayer. It was the portion of the wall north of this “Wailing Wall” that was now uncovered.

Moving north of the place of prayer, one enters through a long corridor containing both Roman and medieval construction. The Herodian stones are characteristically larger (see photo). Josephus speaks of a walkway that connected the Temple Mount to Herod’s Palace in the Upper City (Antiquities 15:11:5). This bridge is thought to have been a part of the aqueduct system that brought water from Solomon’s pools, far to the south.



Author under the Temple Mount showing the size of the stones of the Western Wall

## 2. The Temple Mount.

There has been considerable debate in recent years as to the exact location of the Temple upon the Temple Mount. The most popular view is that it was located on the site of the modern Dome of the Rock. Josephus points out that the temple stood on the highest part of the bedrock of what originally served as the precipice of the mountain and how, over time, the surrounding areas had been raised up by generations of construction. The bedrock for which the Dome of the Rock receives its name fits this description.



3. Entrances to the Temple Mount.

There were five primary means of egress onto the Temple Mount. Four of these were regularly used.



a. The Eastern Gate.

The road leading up to the eastern gate was joined to a great bridge that spanned the Kidron Valley.

b. The Hulda Gates.

Named for the prophetess Hulda who had advised Josiah, these large double gates ran up a long stairway from the south side of the Temple complex. This was the main entrance to the Temple Mount.

c. Robinson's Arch.

Not far from the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount, the remains of "Robinson's Arch" can be seen projecting from the wall. This arch once supported a monumental staircase which gave access to the Temple Mount from the main street below it.



Robinson's Arch with diagram showing rest of arch

d. Barclay's Gate.

Also known by its ancient name, Coponius' Gate, apparently named after the Roman proconsul who served in Palestine during the first century.<sup>1</sup> It is located on the western wall just south of Wilson's Arch. It is mostly covered today by modern construction, but portions of the lintel and one of the gateposts are still visible.

e. The Royal Bridge and Wilson's Arch.

The Temple Mount was separated from the western portion of the city by the deep Tyropoeon Valley. Today this valley has been filled in and is no longer visible.

The Royal Bridge was built on huge spanning arches and traversed the Tyropoeon Valley, joining the western portion of the city to the Temple. Each arch spanned 41 feet and stood on stones measuring 24 feet in length. The present arch dates to the Muslim period, but it is thought to have been reconstructed on the foundations of an original arch taking to the time of Herod.

f. Warren's Gate.

Located north of Wilson's Arch, this gate today is buried, but a small portion of the lintel has been uncovered. This lintel dates to the Muslim period, but the gateposts are believed to be from the Herodian era.

g. The Fortress Stairs.

A narrow stairway ran down from the Antonia Fortress to the Court of the Gentiles. It was from here that Paul evidently addressed his fellow Jews when he was being arrested in Acts 21:40.

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<sup>1</sup> Meir Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple: The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem*, translated by Ina Friedman, Harper & Row, New York, NY, 1985, Page 141. The author also suggests the possibility that Coponius may have been the name of a Jewish donor.

4. The Court of the Gentiles.



Surrounding the Court of the Gentiles were a series of “porches” or cloisters through which ran double rows of Corinthian pillars, each cut from marble and measuring 37 feet in height and covered by a flat roof. The entire court was paved with marble. The southern of these porches was known as “Solomon’s Porch” (Acts 3:11).

This court derived its name from the fact that Gentiles were permitted into this area provided they conducted themselves in a reverent manner.

5. The Dividing Wall.

A low wall ran completely around the Temple structure. It had periodic gates and an stone inscription located at each gate. Two separate copies have been found of this same inscription. It was evidently posted at regular intervals around the Temple.

Language	Greek
Size	33.5 cm long 22.5 cm high 14.5 cm thick 1st Copy - 7 lines of writing 2nd Copy - 6 lines of writing
Genre	Warning inscription against Gentiles entering the Temple
Discovery	1st Copy - 1871 2nd Copy - 1935

*No outsider shall enter the protective enclosure around the sanctuary. And whoever is caught will only have himself to blame for the ensuing death.*

It was because the apostle Paul was falsely suspected of breaking this rule that a mob came together leading to his arrest (Acts 21:27-30).

Beyond the Dividing Wall was a flight of 14 steps that led up to a terrace on which stood the inner wall of the Temple. This inner wall had a number of gates, but the main gate was located on the eastern side. This was the “Beautiful Gate” (Acts 3:2). There were 12 steps leading up to this gate. The doors of the gate were made of Corinthian brass and mounted on massive hinges. Entering through this gate brought one into the Court of the Women.



Court of the Women in the foreground with steps leading up to the Nicanor Gates.

## 6. The Court of the Women.

The Court of the Women was not exclusive to women. It was called this because this was as far within the Temple as women were permitted to enter. The court was surrounded by colonnades. Along the walls there were thirteen jars which served as receptacles for various offerings. Worshipers would come in and drop their offering into one of the jars. It was in such a manner that Jesus and His disciples would have watched the poor widow bringing her offering into the Temple (Mark 12:43).

Offerings which were mandated	1	The Half-shekel tribute	Offerings left over from sacrifices	8	Sin offering
	2			9	Trespass offering
	3	Turtledove offering	Voluntary Offerings	10	Offerings of birds
	4	Pigeon offering		11	Nazarite offerings
	5	Wood		12	Cleansed leper
	6	Incense		13	General voluntary offering
	7	Golden vessels			

On the west side of the Court of Women were 15 steps that led up to the Nicanor Gate, also made of Corinthian Brass. This gate led into the inner courtyard of the Temple.

## 7. The Inner Courts.

The inner courts were made up of the Court of the Men, the Court of the Levites, and the Court of the Priests. Within the Court of the Priests there were two objects which stood before the Temple.

### a. The Altar.

The altar was made of rough, unhewn stones. It stood 15 feet high and was surrounded by a raised platform so that the priests could reach its surface. In contrast to the Altar of Incense within the Temple, this altar was used for sacrificing animals.

### b. The Laver.

This was an immense brass bowl of water supported by the statues of twelve oxen. It was drained every evening and refilled each morning. It was also known as the “sea.” This is significant when we read in Revelation 4:5 of the Throne of God, the elders and *a sea of glass like crystal*.

Twelve more steps led up to the Temple itself. Two great columns flanked the doors leading into the Temple.

8. The Interior of the Temple.

The Sanctuary proper was divided into two parts. There was an inner part and an outer part. They were separated by a thick inner veil. The outer sanctuary was the scene of daily activity. Into this section would come a priest each morning and each evening. It held several articles of furniture.

a. The lampstands.

Whereas in the original tabernacle there had been only a single golden lampstand, since the days of Solomon, there were now seven such lampstands. Titus' Arch of Triumph in Rome pictures Jewish captives being forced to carry one of these golden lampstands as a part of the Roman spoils of war. These lampstands brought light to the Temple. But the lampstands were not the source of the light. The source of the light was the oil which was retained in the various bulbs and cups and flowers on the lampstands. These were oil lamps.



Arch of Titus in Roman Forum showing the lampstand from the Temple

The Jews had an annual celebration called Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights. It was a time of commemoration of the cleansing of the Temple in the days of the Maccabees. The story was told of how there had been only enough oil to last for a single day, but how it had miraculously lasted for an entire week until more could be brought.

b. The Table and the Sacred Bread.

The table of shewbread was a wooden table overlaid with gold. Onto this table, the priests would lay out twelve loaves

of bread.

c. The golden altar of incense.

The altar of incense was a cubit wide and a cubit long and two cubits in height. It was overlaid in gold.

*“And you shall put this altar in front of the veil that is near the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is over the ark of the testimony, where I will meet with you.*

*“And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps.*

*“And when Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense. There shall be perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.” (Exodus 30:6-8).*

Incense was offered upon this altar every morning and every evening. This incense created a sweet-smelling aroma. It would sweeten the entire Temple. The smoke of this incense represented the sweet prayers of God's people ascending to heaven.

d. The inner veil.

There was an outer veil was located at the door of the Tabernacle. It separated the outside from the inside. Beyond this veil and past the golden lampstand and the table of shewbread and the altar of incense was the second veil. It served to separate the Holy Place from the innermost sanctum - the Holy of Holies.

Embroidered on the veil were the images of cherubim. They served as guardians of the veil, keeping even the priests from entering in. They are reminiscent of the cherubim stationed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden. They were stationed with a flaming sword in order to keep out all who might enter.

When Luke 23:45 tells us that the veil was torn from top to bottom at the death of Jesus, which veil was being described?

Remember that there were two veils. The Scriptures do not specify which one was torn. What is interesting is the following passage from the Jewish writings:

*Forty years before the Temple was destroyed....the gates of the Hekel opened of their own accord, until Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai rebuked them (the priest) saying: "Hekel, Hekel, why alarmist thou us ? We know that thou art destined to be destroyed. For of thee hath prophesied Zechariah ben Iddo [Zech. 11:1]: Open thy doors, O Lebanon, and the fire shall eat thy cedars." (Yoma 39b).*

Josephus records a similar event as having taken place just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

*At the same feast (Passover) the eastern gate of the inner court at the 6th hour of the night (at midnight) opened of its own accord. This gate was of brass and very large and heavy, seeing that when it was closed each evening it took 20 men to shut it. It had bolts sunk to a great depth into a threshold made of a solid block of stone. The guards of the temple ran and reported the matter to the captain, and he came forward and with great difficulty managed to close it. This again to the uninitiated seemed like the best of signs, since they thought that God had opened to them the gate of blessings; but the wise understood that the security of the temple was leaving of its own accord and that the opening of the gate meant it was a gift to the enemy, interpreting the sign in their own minds as showing its impending desolation. (War 6:5:2).*

- e. The Holy of Holies.

When you want to emphasize something in Hebrew, you do it



by means of repetition. You can find a number of examples of this:

- “Truly, truly” (John 3:3).
- “Woe, woe” (Ezekiel 16:23).
- “The song of songs, which is Solomon’s” (SS 1:1).

This was a designation for the most holy place of all. It was the holiest of holies. It was the innermost sanctum of the Tabernacle. It’s dimensions were in the form of a perfect cube measuring 10 cubits by 10 cubits by 10 cubits. When the temple was constructed, these dimensions were repeated, but everything was twice as big.

In Solomon’s day, the Ark of the Covenant had sat within the Holy of Holies. But that was no longer the case. The Ark had been lost many hundreds of years earlier. There was now only the bedrock of the mountain where the Ark had once stood.

*Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, <sup>7</sup> but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. (Hebrews 9:6-7).*

Priests entered into the Temple every morning and every evening to offer the morning incense and the evening incense. These were acts of prayer and of worship. But these priests were not permitted to go any further than the inner veil. Only one priest was allowed to pass beyond the veil. He was the high priest. He was only permitted to do so once a year.

It would be on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement that the High Priest would pass through the veil and into the holy of holies. He would approach the place where Ark of the Covenant had once rested and he would sprinkle the blood upon the bedrock.

## CAIAPHAS

The Caiaphas family tomb was accidentally discovered by public workers constructing a road in a park just south of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1990. Archaeologists were called to the scene. When they examined the tomb they found 12 ossuaries (limestone bone boxes) containing the remains of 63 individuals. The most beautifully decorated of the ossuaries was inscribed with the name “Joseph son of (or, of the family of) Caiaphas.” That was the full name of the high priest who arrested Jesus, as documented by Josephus (*Antiquities* 18:2:2; 4:3). Inside were the remains of a 60-year old male, almost certainly those of the Caiaphas of the New Testament.

The inscription on his craved ossuary, fit for a high priest, was the name Yehosef bar Qafa (Joseph, son of Caiaphas). Coins found in the cave were bronze minted in 42 A.D. during the reign of Herod Agrippa I.

## PONTIUS PILATE

Outside of the New Testament, nearly all of our information about Pilate comes from either Josephus or Philo of Alexandria. Pilate was appointed to the position of Procurator by Emperor Tiberius. His area of jurisdiction was Judea and Samaria - that which had been formerly held by Archelaus prior to his being deposed. During his term of office, he had several serious conflicts with the Jews.

- Pilate created a stir among the Jews when he had the Roman military standards brought into Jerusalem. The Jews saw this as idolatry and rioted.
- Pilate appropriated the corban money from the Temple to finance the construction of an aqueduct. A number of Jews were killed in the ensuing riot (Luke 13:1-2).
- When a Samaritan claimed that there was a golden treasure which had been hidden by Moses on Mount Gerizim, a great crowd assembled. Pilate interpreted this as a rebellion and ordered his soldiers to attack. There were so many killed that a complaint was filed in Rome for Pilate's removal. He was ordered to return to Rome and was banished to Gaul where he is said to have eventually committed suicide.

Although Josephus makes considerable mention of Pontius Pilate as the procurator of Israel, there has been discovered only a single ancient inscription bearing his name. This inscription was discovered in Caesarea in 1961 where it had been utilized in the construction of a third century staircase.

Language	Latin
Medium	Limestone
Size	82 centimeters high 65 centimeters wide 4 lines of writing
Genre	Building dedication by Pontius Pilate
Place of Discovery	Caesarea, 1961

Most of the actual inscription is missing. All that is left is the following lines:

..... S TIBERIEVM  
..... NTIVS PILATVS  
..... ECTVS IVDA E

From this portion of the text, archaeologists have suggested the following translation:

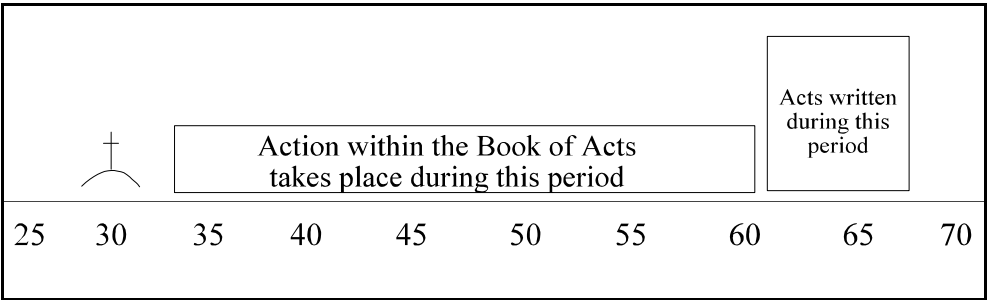
*To the honorable gods (this) Tiberium  
Pontius Pilate,  
Prefect of Judea,  
had dedicated*

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The Gospels are a tough act to follow. But that is exactly what the book of Acts does. The book of Acts is the bridge that spans the gap between the four Gospels and the Epistles.

The Gospels	Acts BRIDGES the Gap	The Epistles
End in Jerusalem with no church		Directed to churches throughout the Roman world
The gospel is given mainly to the Jews		Churches filled with Gentile believers
Ends in Jerusalem		Ends in Rome

The abrupt ending of the book of Acts indicates that it was written immediately after the events described in the book and prior to the death of Paul or the destruction of Jerusalem. There is no mention of Nero’s persecutions which began A.D. 64/65. Indeed, there is no mention of any persecution at the hands of Rome. Neither is there any mention of the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66 which eventually resulted in the fall of Jerusalem.



We conclude that Acts was written immediately after the events described in the book. It was written by Luke who had been an eye-witness of many of the events described in the book. The following dates are helpful for dating the events found in the book of Acts:

- A.D. 45 - Herod Agrippa dies suddenly (Acts 12:20-23).
- A.D. 49 - Emperor Claudius issues an edict banning all Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2).
- A.D. 51 - Gallio appointed as proconsul of Achaia for a one-year term (Acts 18:12-17).
- A.D. 59 - Porcius Festus takes the office of Procurator of Judea (Acts 24:27). Paul has already been imprisoned in Caesarea for two years.

## THE PENTECOST EVENT

The theme of the book of Acts was summed up in Acts 1:8 - it is the account of the witness of the Apostles.

Chapter 1 is prepatory to the witness of the apostles.  
Chapter 2 begins that work of being a witness.

<b>Acts 1:1-11</b>	<b>Acts 1:12-14</b>	<b>Acts 1:15-26</b>	<b>Acts 2:1-42</b>
The Church's Work Foretold	The Church's Workers Selected		The Church's Birth
Jesus Identifies the Task	The Church Prepares for the Task	The Apostles Choose a Worker	The Spirit Comes
Promising	Praying	Replacing	Proclaiming
40 days	Period of 10 days		One day

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. (Acts 2:1).*

When we say the word "Pentecost," we think of charismatics and speaking in tongues and the birth of the church. But the Jews living in the first century had a different idea when they heard this word. Pentecost was not a new concept to them. It was something from antiquity, going back over a thousand years.

Pentecost was one of the festivals which was established by the Lord in Leviticus 23. It took place 50 days after the Passover. For this reason, it was named after the Greek word for **fifty**. In Hebrew it was known as the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Sevens. It took place after a week of weeks - after seven weeks.

During this feast, Jews would come from all over the world to celebrate the promise of the harvest. It was a celebration of freedom and a celebration of the Law. The Jews would come in their caravans, carrying baskets filled with the firstfruits of their crops as an offering to the Lord.

The Jews had come to associate the Feast of Pentecost with the giving of the Law. The rabbis taught that the Law was given to Moses 50 days after the Passover. There were three Springtime Feasts observed by the Jews:

<b>Passover</b>	<b>Firstfruits</b>	<b>Pentecost</b>
14th of Nisan	First day of the week following the Passover	50 days after Passover
Passover lamb slain & eaten in a meal of remembrance	Sheaves of grain waved before the house of the Lord	Two loaves of bread prepared from the grain
Commemorated deliverance from Egypt	Celebrated the promise of the harvest	Commemorated the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai

*And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

*And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. (Acts 2:2-3).*

It does not say that the wind began to blow. It says that there was a sound which sounded like the wind. It was the sound of this wind that filled the entire house.

In verse 15 we will read that this took place at the third hour. This was the hour of the morning sacrifices. It was a time of prayer when, as the incense from the Temple arose into the sky, the prayers of God's people would ascend to heaven.

They saw what appeared to be tongues of fire. These tongues distributed themselves over each of the believers. What was the significance of these tongues of fire? It was a new event. There had never been an instance of

tongues of fire in the Old Testament. Or had there? When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they were led in their travels by a cloud of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night. When they were not traveling, this smoke and fire would position itself over the Tabernacle. This was the place where God manifested His presence. It was the Tent of Meeting. It served as the dwelling place of God. The smoke and the fire were a sign that God was there.

Now it is happening again. But this time there is a difference. This time the manifestation of the flaming presence of God is not positioned over a tent. This time it is over people. Why? Because they are the new tabernacle and the temple of God.

*And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. (Acts 2:4).*

What does it mean *to speak with other tongues*? It simply means to speak in a different language. These disciples were Jews who had grown up in Galilee. They would have been tri-lingual.

- a. Hebrew was their native language and the language of both the synagogue and the Temple..
- b. Aramaic was the trade language of that part of the world.
- c. Greek had become the common language of all men in the known world since the days of Alexander the Great.

At least to some degree, these men could speak these three languages. They probably did so with a Galilean accent. But now something spectacular began to happen. They began to speak in all sorts of other languages. These were languages with which they were not familiar.

The diversity of tongues had first taken place at the Tower of Babel. It had been the result of sin and judgment. It was a curse. Now something has taken place that overturns sin and judgment. And the curse of languages is reversed by the gift of tongues. Where there was confusion of languages, now there will be order. And where men have lived in darkness, they shall see the light of the gospel.

We often come to this passage and see only the issue of tongues. But if we do that, we will miss what is happening here. Tongues was the outward sign.

But to what did this outward sign point? It pointed to the Spirit.

Peter stands and speaks. It had been Peter who had spoken up in chapter 1 regarding the necessity of appointing a replacement for Judas Iscariot. Once again, he is acting as the leader of the apostles, speaking as their spokesman.

This is the first Post-Resurrection Sermon. These men had preached before. This is not the first sermon that Peter had ever preached. He had been a part of an Israelite Mission Team. He had gone out with many other disciples in a ministry of preaching and teaching and healing and casting out demons.

But something new had happened. Jesus had instituted a New Covenant - one involving His own body and blood. No longer would the presence of God as signified by a cloud or a pillar of fire come into a tabernacle or a temple in Jerusalem. From now on, the spirit of God would come and reside in His living temple - the church.

The Pentecost Experience was a renewal of the covenant. That is a part of what Pentecost commemorated, the first giving of the Law and the covenant which accompanied that Law. Remember Sinai? There was fire and noise and a message from God. Now it is happening again.

<b>The Giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19).</b>	<b>The Filling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2).</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Sons of Israel came to the foot of Mount Sinai (19:16).</li><li>○ A very loud trumpet sound (19:16).</li><li>○ Smoke of a furnace (19:18).</li><li>○ They are given the Law through Moses and Aaron (19:24).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ They were all gathered together in one place</li><li>○ A noise like a violent rushing wind</li><li>○ Tongues of fire</li><li>○ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit</li></ul>

40                      *And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"*

41                      *So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:40-41).*

The church underwent a new birth on this day. They went from 120 meeting



in an upper room to 3,000 who were spread throughout Jerusalem. This growth would continue to explode outward until it met persecution from the hands of the Jewish rulers.

## **GROWTH AND A GROWING OPPOSITION**

Throughout the first 7 chapters of Acts, we continue to see the unprecedented growth of the church. They had no building of their own. Instead they met from house to house and in the Temple. The Temple had a very large outer court known as the Court of the Gentiles. It was given this designation because Gentiles were permitted into this section but could come no further. The Court of the Gentiles was large enough to hold many thousands of people.

*At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. (Acts 5:12).*

Solomon's portico had not been built by Solomon, but was only named after him. It was to the Temple Mount what the Washington Monument is to the Capitol. Located in the outer court - the Court of the Gentiles - it consisted of a series of great colonnades with massive pillars which surrounded the Temple structure.

This became one of the meeting places for the New Testament Church. They were exclusively Jewish in nature and continued to be a part of the Temple sacrificial system. Acts 3 tells of a healing that took place while Peter and John were coming to the Temple at the appointed hour of prayer.

Every morning and every evening, there were sacrifices offered in the temple. A sacrifice would be offered, an animal slain, its blood applied to the altar before the Temple, and then a priest would enter the Temple in order to offer incense upon the altar. This incense would fill the temple with a pleasing aroma and would represent the sweet smell of the prayers of God's people ascending to heaven.

It was in such a setting that Peter healed a lame man. This immediately caused a stir. What is more, Peter had healed him in the name of Jesus. When questioned about it, Peter delivered a sermon. It is essentially the same sermon which he had preached at Pentecost.

<b>A Profile of Two Sermons</b>	
<b>Acts 2</b>	<b>Acts 3</b>
Men of Judea (2:14) Men of Israel (2:22)	Men of Israel (3:12)
“Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God with miracles and wonders and signs” (2:22)	“Why do you gaze as us, as if by own power we made him walk... the God of our fathers has glorified His servant Jesus” (3:12-13).
You nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death (2:23)	You delivered up and disowned in the presence of Pilate... put to death the Prince of Life (3:13-15)
God raised Him (2:24,32)	God raise Him (3:15)
We are witnesses (2:32)	We are witnesses (3:15)
(Several prophecies quoted in verses 25-28 and 34-35)	God announced by all the prophets (3:18)
Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (2:38)	Repent and return that your sins may be wiped away (3:19)
The promises are for you and for your children and for all who are far off (2:39)	The covenant God made with your fathers... In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed (3:25)

These are the only two sermons which we have of Peter's. They are essentially the same sermon. Peter had one basic message. It was a message about the coming and death and resurrection of Jesus and a warning of future judgment to follow.

- 1 As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, 2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*
- 3 And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.*
- 4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about*

*five thousand. (Acts 4:1-4).*

The opposition to Peter's preaching came from three groups, all of which were associated with the Temple hierarchy.

1. The Priests.

There were 24 courses of priests which rotated the duties within the temple so that each course served two weeks each year with all of the courses being at the Temple for the major feast days.

2. The Captain of the Temple Guard.

It was the "officers of the Temple" who had arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:52). These were officials who were charged with keeping the peace in the Temple precincts.

3. The Sadducees.

The Sadducees were the liberal party within the nation of Israel. Their ranks came mostly from the wealthy aristocracy. The high priest and all of the chief priests in the Sanhedrin were almost exclusively from the Sadducees. They can be best understood when contrasted with the Pharisees.

<b>Pharisees</b>	<b>Sadducees</b>
Name means "separated ones"	Name means "righteous ones"
Held to the authority of all of the Old Testament Scriptures	Viewed the Torah as having greater authority
Believed in miracles, angels & immortality	Rejected the miraculous, angels & immortality
Held to a future resurrection	Denied any resurrection
Popular in the synagogues	Ruled the Temple

The Sadducees were bothered by the fact that Peter was proclaiming that Jesus had risen from the dead. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection. If it was true that Jesus had risen from the dead, then their entire doctrinal system would be in error.

5                    *On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.*

7                    *When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" (Acts 4:5-7).*

Peter and John must have experienced a sense of déjà vu.

Just a few months earlier they had been in this same court.

The same priests had been present. The same

jury had been seated. Even Peter and John had been present. Only then it had been Jesus on trial.

The Sanhedrin normally met in the Chamber of Hewn Stone located alongside the Court of the Men within the Temple area.

Jesus is no longer physically present. In His place stand Peter and John. They are his representatives. And yet, the question which is asked by the leaders of the court show that it is still Jesus who is on trial.

Annas had been appointed to the position of high priest in 6 A.D. by Quirinius, the Roman governor of Syria. Although the high priesthood of Israel was designed to be a lifelong position, the Romans were fearful that the person holding this station would become too powerful and so they deposed Annas when they feared that he had become too powerful.

Most of the priests were now Sadducees and all the chief priests since John Hyrcanus had deserted the Pharisees (Josephus, Antiquities 17:10:6; 18:1:4; 20:9:1).

Annas' influence was such that he continued to be spoken of as the high priest, even though he had not officially held that office since 15 A.D.

Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas. He held the office of high priest from 18 to 36 A.D. He had presided over the trial of Jesus and now he is present for the trial of the followers of Jesus. Indeed, it had been his servant whose ear Peter had cut off in the Garden of Gethsemane. I can't help but wonder if that servant was present on this day. Did he touch his ear in remembrance?

13                    *Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

*And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. (Acts 4:13-14).*

The Jewish rulers recognize from their simple speech that Peter and John are *uneducated and untrained men*. This does not mean that they were ignorant. They obviously were not. Neither does it mean that they were lacking in a basic education. For the past hundred years every freeborn Jewish man living in Palestine had been taught to read and to write. But Peter and John had not attended seminary. There was no string of degrees behind their names. They held no titles or honorifics. They were not known as Reverend or Holiness or Father or Pope. And yet, they possess an uncommon sense of authority.

It soon becomes obvious that they had *been with Jesus*. Picture their reaction. "Oh, no! Now there are two of them!" To make matters worse, there are ten more in the Upper Room. In the end, the apostles were warned against further preaching and released. Instead of quenching the fires of the fledgling church, this served only increase the zeal of the early Christians.

Acts 3-6 relate a series of problems which struck at the church from both within and without.

Chapter	3:1 - 4:22	5:1-16	5:17-42	6:1-7
Distress in the Church	External Problem	Internal Problem	External Problem	Internal Problem
	Peter & John • Arrested • Tried • Released	Sin within the Church	Apostles • Jailed • Tried • Released	Schism & Complaint
Growth in the Church	Number of believers rises to 5,000	Fear of the Lord	Disciples increase in numbers	Disciples increase & Priests converted

Of particular interest to us is the mention of Gamaliel in Acts 5. The apostles had again been arrested because of their persistent preaching. They were again brought before the Sanhedrin and placed on trial. When ordered to cease and desist, they replied that they must obey God rather than men. As the court began its deliberations, one of the members of the Sanhedrin stood and spoke in the defense of the apostles.

*But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. (Acts 5:34).*

We know Gamaliel from other Jewish writings. He was the head of a school of teachers - one of his student was a young man named Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:3). Tradition has it that he was the grandson of Hillel. He would later go on to become the president of the Sanhedrin. He is often quoted in the Mishnah, that body of oral tradition of wisdom which has been passed down by the Jews. His forte was in the practical and his advice always shows a strong degree of common sense.

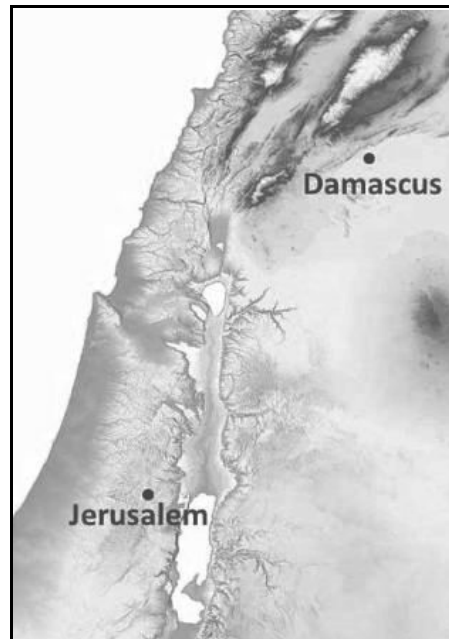
In this case, Gamaliel calls for restraint on the part of the court. He urges them to take a “wait and see” approach to Christianity.

## **PAUL’S CONVERSION AND DAMASCUS**

Evidently not content with his teacher’s advice, young Saul of Tarsus became one of the chief Jewish persecutors of early Christianity. He went on a manhunt throughout Jerusalem and Judea searching for Christians. When he had run out of Christians here, he gained permission to travel to the main governmental center in Damascus to pursue Christians there.

### **1. Damascus.**

Damascus is located in a high plain 2200 feet above sea level. It is surrounded on three sides by mountains. The lowlands toward the east give way to marshy lakes and low hills after which comes the desert. Although the rainfall is only 10 inches a year, rivers flow down out of the mountains and allow farmers to irrigate their crops, turning Damascus into an oasis in the surrounding desert.



Damascus was an old city, going back as early as 4000 B.C. It has gone by a variety of names including *Sham* - some have suggested that this is derived from Shem, one of the sons of Noah. The Ebla Tablets make reference to the city of *Dimaski*. It had served as the capital of the Aramaean Kingdom during the Old Testament times and for a time served as the seat of the Roman proconsul.

Damascus was technically a part of the Decapolis, one of the ten “free cities” to the east of the Sea of Galilee. It served as something of a boarder outpost in that there were few Roman holdings to the east. It stood as one of the boarder cities of the Roman Empire. Because of this, there were other kingdoms which were able to exert a strong influence in Damascus. Among these was the Nabatean Kingdom of Aretes (2 Corinthians 11:32).

## 2. Saul’s Conversion.

On the road to Damascus, Saul was struck to the ground by a bright light and received instructions from the Lord to come to the city. He was blinded for three days and then healed by a Christian named Ananias who was sent to heal him and to lead him to Christ.

Saul turned from persecuting Christians to proclaiming the name of Christ. This soon brought about open hostility against him and he was forced to flee the city.

*In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, <sup>33</sup> and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands. (2 Corinthians 11:32-33).*

Aretas seems to be a dynastic name since there were several kings of the Nabateans who bore this name. Their capital was the city of Petra and they had been ruling in Arabia for 200 years.

The Romans had been in control of Damascus, but that seems to have changed. There are no Roman coins found in Damascus between the years of 34-62 A.D.

Josephus tells us that was broke out between Aretas and Herod Antipas after Antipas plotted to murder his wife so that he could legitimize his relationship with Herodias.

1. Herod Antipas has an affair with Herodias and plots to do away with his wife, the daughter of Aretas.
2. The daughter of Aretas learns of the plot and flees to Arabia where she informs her father of the treachery.
3. Aretas eventually goes to war against Antipas and defeats him in battle (36 A.D.).
4. Aretas goes on to defeat two legions under Vitellius (the governor of Syria from 35-37 A.D.).
5. Tiberius dies in 37 A.D. and Vitellius calls for a cease-fire until he can receive new orders from the new emperor, Caligula.
6. Antipas goes to Rome with Herodias and is stripped of his office and banished to Gaul (39 A.D.).

### 3. Saul Versus Paul.

Throughout his early career, we read of Saul. Then in Acts 13:9 we read about *Saul, who was also known as Paul*. From this time onward, only the name “Paul” is used. What brought about this change?

It has been customary to think that Paul changed his name from its original “Saul” to “Paul” so that he could better identify with the Gentiles (Saul is a Hebrew name, while Paul is a Latin name). However, I do not believe that this is completely the case. In the days in which Paul lived, all Roman citizens had three names.

- a. Praenomen - an individual name given at birth.
- b. Nomen - a tribal name. In Rome there were about 1000 tribes which could trace their ancestry back to a common origin.
- c. Cognomen. At first, the cognomen was given as a family nickname, usually referring to some outstanding feature in the individual. Here are a few examples...

Crassus (Fat)



Longus (Tall)  
Rufus (red)  
Felix (Happy)  
Paulus (Little)

All Roman citizens possessed three names. Here are a few well-known examples...

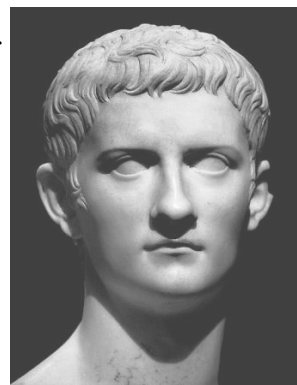
- Gaius Julius Caesar
- Publius Cornelius Scipio
- Lucius Sergius Paulus

As you can see in the above example, Paulus was a cognomen. It was always used as a cognomen. As such, it was a family name. Although Paul was a Jew, he had also been born as a citizen of Roman (Acts 22:27-28). At some time in the past, one of his ancestors has been “adopted” into one of the families of Rome and given a Roman name. Thus, when Paul uses this name for himself, he is not making it up. He is merely using one of his names which would serve to better identify himself with the Gentiles. It is rightfully his own name.

## HEROD AGRIPPA

Agrippa was the son of Aristobulus, one of the two sons of Herod by Mariamne who was put to death by Herod.

1. As a young man, Agrippa lived in Rome where he came to know a young nephew of the emperor named Caligula. One day while riding with Caligula, Antipas expressed the opinion that he secretly wished Tiberius would die and that Caligula could become emperor in his place. Word got back to Tiberius, and Agrippa was thrown in prison.



Caligula

The story is told that while he was in prison, Agrippa was leaning against a tree. A German prisoner happened to look over and see an owl sitting in the tree against which Agrippa was leaning. He told Agrippa that it was an omen that he would soon be released, but

that the next time he saw such an owl it would mean that he would soon die.

2. Tiberius died six months later and Caligula became emperor. Agrippa was released from prison and his iron chains were removed and Agrippa was awarded a gold chain of equal weight. Caligula also gave him the former tetrarchy of his uncle, Herod Philip. Agrippa hung the golden chain in the Temple as a memorial.
3. Agrippa's uncle, Herod Antipas, was jealous of his nephew. At the prodding of his wife Herodias, Antipas traveled to Rome with accusations against Agrippa. Meanwhile Agrippa sent word to Rome that Antipas had conducted secret negotiations with the Parthians and that he had stored away enough armor to outfit 70,000 men, in case a Roman-Parthian war involved Judea. When Antipas came before the emperor, he was questioned as to whether this was the case and he was forced to admit that it was. Caligula removed him from office, banishing him to Gaul for the rest of his life; the tetrarchy of Antipas was handed over to Agrippa.
4. Soon after this, Caligula decreed that every man should worship him as a god. Petronius, the prefect of Syria, was ordered to place a statue of the emperor in the Temple in Jerusalem. An embassy of Jews, led by the author Philo, tried to talk Caligula out of it, but he would not listen.

Petronius was met by a crowd of 10,000 Jews who said that they would die before allowing such a sacrilege and they pleaded for not to do this thing. Petronius was impressed with their loyalty to their faith and agreed to wait while he sent a letter to Rome explaining the Jewish point of view. Agrippa happened to be in Rome at the time and he also went to Caligula to plead for the Jews. Caligula rescinded the order, but because Petronius had delayed in carrying out the emperor's previous orders, he was ordered to commit suicide. Fortunately for Petronius, he did not get the order until after Caligula was assassinated, so it no longer mattered.

5. When Caligula was assassinated, it was Agrippa who suggested to the Praetorian Guard that Claudius would make a good candidate for emperor. Claudius responded by enlarging Agrippa's domain to include all of Judea and Samaria in addition to his holdings in Galilee and the lands to the east of Galilee.

6. Persecution against the Church.

*Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them.*

*And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.*

*And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (Acts 12:1-3a).*

Agrippa was a follower of the Jewish ceremonial law and was popular with the people. He sought to increase his popularity by persecuting the early church, putting James to death and arresting Peter. Peter was miraculously released and Herod responded by having the prison guards put to death.

7. The Death of Agrippa.

*Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by Herod's country.*

*And on an appointed day Herod, having put on royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them.*

*And the people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"*

*And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. (Acts 12:20-23).*

In 44 A.D. Agrippa gave a festival at Caesarea; games were held and prayers were said for the safety and health of Emperor Claudius. The second day began when Agrippa entered the theater wearing "a garment made wholly of silver and of a texture truly wonderful." When the sun shone on this outfit it made him look radiant. The people proclaimed him a god, and he did nothing to stop their flattery.

At that moment, Agrippa looked up, saw an owl perched on a rope above his head, and remembered the second part of the German prisoner's prediction. He immediately began suffering severe pains, and died five days later.

## THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

*...and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. (Acts 11:27).*

There were a number of cities throughout the ancient world named “Antioch.” They were all named for Antiochus, one of the descendants of Seleucus, the general of Alexander who founded the Seleucid Dynasty. This particular Antioch was located in Syria, 15 miles in from the Mediterranean on the Orontes River. Its sister city of Seleucus was actually located on the coast. Antioch stood astride the main caravan routes through the area and had become the center of government for all of Syria.

Antioch was an international city. Begun as a Greek city, it had been influenced by the Parthians, by the Romans and by the Jews. Herod the Great had assisted in the construction of two magnificent boulevards made of marble. Tiberius had added a line of colonnades to these main streets.

There was a synagogue at Antioch which had been dedicated to the Jewish martyrs of the Maccabean Wars and there was a strong Jewish influence in the city. There were many among the Gentile inhabitants who had become “god-fearers” — people who believed in the God of the Old Testament Scriptures but stopped short of circumcision and fully proselytizing to Judaism. It was from many of these God-fearing Greeks that the early Christians came.

One of the original deacons of the Jerusalem church had been Nicolaus, a proselyte from Antioch (Acts 6:5).
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## PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

*Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

*And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*

*Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13:1-3).*

The church at Antioch was a diverse group. They were Jewish and Gentile, scholar, noble and tradesman. This became the sending group of the first organized mission team.

1. Cyprus.

*So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. (Acts 13:4).*

The large island of Cyprus has two ranges of mountains. One follows the northern coastline; the other is to be found at the southwest corner of the island.

The fact that Barnabas was from Cyprus (Acts 4:36) may have been the reason that Cyprus was the first stop on the missionary journey.

The ancient designation for the island was Kittim (Genesis 10:4; Numbers 24:24; Daniel 11:30). Our English word “copper” seems to be derived from the land in which this metal was once mined. Culture on the island had a history in antiquity. The Phoenicians had a colony there and archaeology reflects a strong Mycenaean influence in the 2nd millennia.

In Paul’s day, Cyprus was a part of the Roman Empire. The island was governed by its own proconsul, Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7). Luke tells us that this proconsul *believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord* (Acts 13:12). Sir William Ramsey found an inscription in 1912 in Antioch reading: “*To Lucius Sergius Paullus, the younger, one of the four commissioners in charge of the Roman streets...*” Ramsay theorized that this might be a relative of the Sergius Paulus of whom Luke speaks.

2. Perga in Pamphylia.

*Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John left them and returned to Jerusalem. (Acts 13:13).*

The entire southern coast of Asia Minor is hemmed by steep mountains that offer a forbidding purchase. There are only two places where these mountains give way to coastal plains. The first place is in eastern Cilicia and the other is here in Pamphylia.

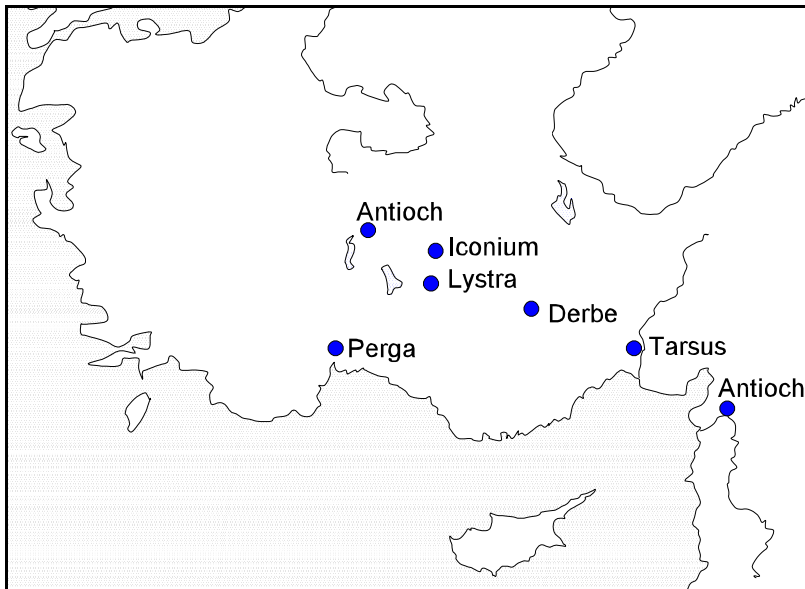
Perga was located eight miles in from the Mediterranean Coast. The reason the city was not built on the coast was because of the history of pirates who had frequented this part of the world prior to the coming of Rome. The city itself was built around a large rocky acropolis which rises 160 feet over the surrounding area.

Archaeological excavations have uncovered a stadium which was able to seat up to 12,000 people. The marketplace was ringed by Corinthian columns.

We are not told why it was the John left the mission team to return to Jerusalem. The fact that Paul did not consider it to be a sufficiently good reason is seen in that he felt that John was disqualified for further mission work when it came time to go out on a second missionary journey (Acts 15:38). Some have felt that it was because of the hostile regions to the north which were notorious for its bandits. Another possibility might have been health reasons.

3. Pisidian Antioch.

*But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. (Acts 13:14).*



Strictly speaking, Antioch was not in Pisidia. But it was commonly called Pisidian Antioch to distinguish it both from Antioch in Syria

as well as another Antioch in Phrygia.

There is a river valley which runs from down from the central highlands of Asia Minor to the coastal plains of Pamphylia. As you follow the path of the Cestrus River to the central highlands, you find a region of great lakes. It is near one of these lakes that the city of Antioch in Pisidia lies astride the main east-west highway through Asia Minor.

As was the case of many of the cities throughout Asia Minor, Antioch had a mixed population of Phrygians, Greeks, Jews and Latins, the latter who had settled here after having served in the Roman military.

Paul and Barnabas preached in the synagogue on two consecutive Sabbaths. When many of the Jews rejected the gospel, Paul and Barnabas took their message to the Gentiles of the city. This caused a persecution at the hands of the Jews and the two missionaries were banished from the city.

4. Iconium.

The next stopover took place at Iconium. Located 80 miles from Antioch, Iconium was an ancient Phrygian town that had seen influences of the Greeks and, to a lesser degree, Romans as well as the Jews. It was surrounded by fertile farmlands and forests.

Paul and Barnabas saw converts both from the Jews as well as from the Gentiles. Again persecution arose so that the two missionaries were forced to move on.

5. Lystra.

Lystra was 24 miles to the south of Iconium. The town was built on a small hill that rises 100 feet above the surrounding plain and near to two small rivers which water the area. In contrast to Antioch and Iconium which were on the major trade route, Lystra was off the beaten path. It lay eight miles to the south of the main road.

When Paul and Barnabas healed a lame man, the Gentile crowd took them to be an incarnation of Zeus and Hermes, two of the gods of the Greek pantheon. There was an old Phrygian legend that the same two gods had once visited an aged couple who, not recognizing them as gods, had invited them to dinner and had shown them hospitality. In

return, they had been delivered from a flood which swept over the area (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8:626-724). Apparently the people of the area equated the coming of Paul and Barnabas with that myth.

This period of initial popularity did not last. Paul and Barnabas disclaimed any such deified identity and it was not long before a Jewish delegation from Iconium arrived to brand the two missionaries as troublemakers. This time Paul was stoned and dragged from the city and left for dead.

6. Derbe.

All of the cities which Paul visited during this trip into the interior of Asia Minor were Roman cities. Derbe was the last of these. To the east of Derbe were the Cilician Mountains. This made Derbe a frontier town and off the beaten track.

Paul and Barnabas then retraced their steps, visiting each of these four cities of Asia Minor before sailing home to Syria to finally return to the church at Antioch.

## **CHRISTIANITY COMES TO EUROPE**

Two missionary teams set out from Antioch, one made up of Barnabas and John Mark, the other made up of Paul and Silas. The book of Acts records the travels of this second team. This time they took the land route through Cilicia, moving through the Tarsus Gates and to come to the region of Derbe and Lystra where they added Timothy to their team.

1. Travels through Asia Minor.

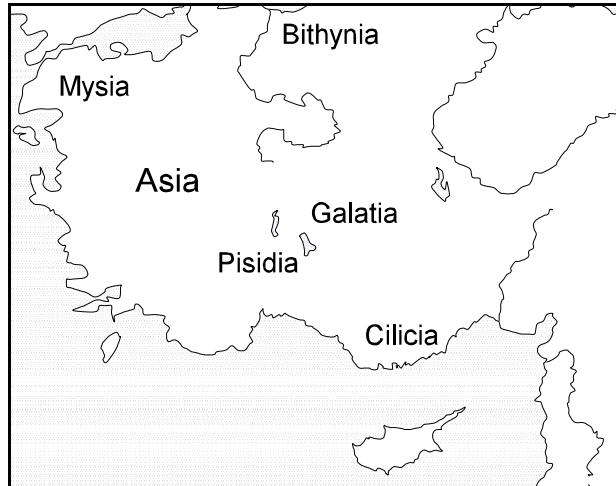
*And they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; <sup>7</sup> and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; <sup>8</sup> and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. (Acts 16:6-8).*

We are given a very brief account of the travels of this mission team through Asia Minor. For the most part, only the regions are



mentioned and we can only guess at which individual cities were visited.

- Phrygia, Galatia, Asia and Mysia are all regional areas. They are given in the order through which Paul and company would have visited as they moved northwest through Asia Minor.



- Their plan was to turn to the northeast and enter Bithynia, but they were prevented from doing so by the leading of the Spirit.
- Instead they found themselves at Troas. This was a port on the western coast at the mouth of the Dardanelles and ten miles from the ancient city of Troy. It was a Greek city and had been built in 300 B.C. Its importance is seen in the fact that Julius Caesar had once considered making it his eastern capital.

It was at Troas that Paul had a vision which directed his team to move across the Dardanelles and into Europe.

## 2. Philippi.

*Therefore putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; <sup>12</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. (Acts 16:11-12).*

Named for Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, Philippi was located on a plain between the Strymon and Nestos Rivers. The city itself was situated on the banks of the swiftly flowing Gangites. The Egnatian Way ran through Philippi and reached its eastern terminus at the Port of Neapolis, ten miles away. Philippi enjoyed a booming economy with its position on the major trade route as well as from the gold mines in the mountains to the north.

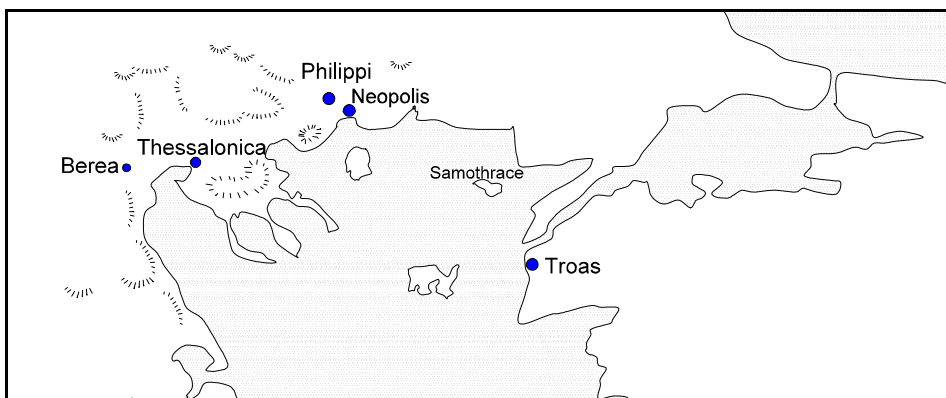
Archaeologists have unearthed the forum of the city, on the center of which was a large rostrum. There were two large temples and a Roman theater built into the side of the acropolis.

Paul's ministry in this city began with a women's prayer group that commonly met outside the city gates by the bank of the river. It was here that he met Lydia, a business merchant who converted to Christianity and who opened her home to the missionaries.

When Paul healed a demon-possessed girl, he and Silas were dragged before the magistrates of the city and beaten and thrown into prison. An earthquake during the night brought about a respite and the jailer's conversion. The next day they were released after Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship.

### 3. Thessalonica.

*Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews (Acts 17:1).*



As you traveled westward on the Egnatian Way, you came to

Thessalonica, the Roman capital of Macedonia. It was an old city, having been founded by Cassander in 315 B.C. and named for his wife, the daughter of Philip of Macedon and half-sister of Alexander. It was a port city and had served in its day as the naval base for Macedonia.

During the Roman Civil Wars, Thessalonica had sided with Antony and Octavius against Cassius and Brutus. Because of this, the city had been granted a degree of independence and was ruled by a board of five or six “politarchs” - they are mentioned as the rulers of the city in Acts 17:6-8.

Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica and, as was their custom, Paul entered the synagogue and began proclaiming Jesus as the promised Messiah. A number of people believed, including Greeks and some of the “leading women.”

The Jews responded to these conversions by instigating a mob which dragged their host, Jason, to the politarchs of the city. The case was dismissed and Paul and Silas left town for Berea.

4. Berea.

*And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea (Acts 17:10a).*

Berea was both politically and strategically insignificant. It was several miles off the Egnatian Way, located in the foothills of Macedonia.

Cicero describes how the Roman governor Piso was so unpopular that he was forced to leave Thessalonica and withdraw to this same town of Berea (*Against Piso* 36).

They found a temporary respite in Berea along with a much more open-minded attitude toward the gospel. But eventually, trouble from Thessalonica necessitated Paul leaving and traveling south to come at last to Athens.

5. Athens.

Athens was a thoroughly pagan city. The crown of the city was its Parthenon, dedicated to the city’s namesake, the goddess Athena. As usual, Paul began ministering to those within the city’s synagogue. But soon he found an audience among the Greeks.

*So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.*

*And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. And some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities," – because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. (Acts 17:17-18).*

There are two philosophical groups mentioned here who had dealings with Paul in Athens.

Epicureans	Epicurus founded a school in Athens in 300 B.C. His philosophy was that of 1 Corinthians 15:32 - "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." They denied a future judgment or even that God has a hand in any present actions. There is no afterlife and when you are dead, you are dead so enjoy the present.	Emphasized pleasure
Stoics	Zeno (342-270 B.C.) founded this philosophy. All reality is that which is corporeal - that which is sensory. To learn of such reality required a high morality.	Emphasized virtue

*And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? 20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; we want to know therefore what these things mean."*

*Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new. (Acts 17:19-21).*

The term "Areopagus" is taken from *Ares*, the Greek god of war

(corresponding to the Roman “Mars”) and *pagos*, the word for “hill.” The Areopagus was a large outcrop of limestone rising 380 feet above the city. It is connected to the Acropolis by a low, narrow ridge and overlooks the agora of the city. The Areopagus was the courthouse of Athens.



The Acropolis of Athens as seen from the Areopagus

It was to this location that Paul was brought to share his teaching concerning Jesus. His sermon was to a completely Gentile audience and he begins by pointing out a Gentile phenomenon — they are so religious that they have erected an altar to “the unknown god.” He then proclaims to them the God about which they have no knowledge.

6. Corinth.

*After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. (Acts 18:1).*

The city of Corinth lay astride a narrow isthmus which connected mainland Greece to the Peloponnesian Peninsula. Today there is a canal which has been cut through the isthmus to allow ships to pass, and the digging of such a canal had been attempted, but the technology of the day found it too costly of a task. Instead, there was a port located at each side of the isthmus so that cargo could be off loaded at one port and then carried the four intervening miles to the other port. This allowed ships to avoid the long and dangerous passage around Cape Malea at the southern end of the Peloponnesian Peninsula.

Just south of the isthmus was a high plateau known as the Acrocorinth, an acropolis rising to a height of 1800 feet. This was the original site of the city, though Corinth in Paul's day was sprawled out on the plain beneath the plateau. The isthmus put Corinth on the map as the central trading city for all of Greece.



The Temple of Apollo in Corinth with the Acrocorinth in the distance

The Romans had destroyed the city in 146 B.C. and it lay abandoned for a hundred years until Julius Caesar ordered its rebuilding in 46 B.C. Under Roman rule, Corinth had now become the capital city for all of Achaia. The Isthmus Games were re-instituted and the Temple of Aphrodite, located at the top of the acropolis, became renown for its temple prostitutes. Notorious for its immorality, the term *corinthianzomai* ("to act like a Corinthian") came to refer to an act of fornication.

Archaeological excavations since 1995 have revealed buildings with marble floors and inlaid frescos, fountains and Corinthian columns. The picture is one of extravagant luxury.

7. The Decree of Claudius.

*And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, <sup>3</sup> and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tentmakers. (Acts 18:2-3).*

Claudius had become emperor of Rome in 41 A.D. following the assassination of his nephew, Caligula. The Roman historian

Suetonius records the events which led up to Claudius expelling the Jews from Rome.

*Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from that city. (Suetonius 5).*

Suetonius does not go on to further elaborate as to the identity of Chrestus. Many scholars believe that this is a reference to Christ. If this is the case, then the issue over which the Jews were evicted from Rome was the Jewish persecution of Christians.

8. Lucius Junius Gallio.

While Paul was in Corinth, the Jews brought Paul to trial before the Roman proconsul.

*But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, <sup>13</sup> saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."*

*But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; <sup>15</sup> but if these are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters."*

*And he drove them away from the judgment seat. (Acts 18:12-16).*

The Jews attempted to put Paul on trial, but Gallio refused to hear the case, being only concerned with infractions of Roman law. This would suggest that Christianity was deemed to be legal in the eyes of the state.

The various pieces of the Gallio Inscription was discovered in Delphi. It was not until 1905 that a doctoral student in Paris was sorting through these and other inscriptions. He happened to notice that four separate fragments, if joined together, formed the nucleus of an imperial letter. Written by the Emperor Claudius, the inscription affirms that Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia.

Language	Greek
Medium	Limestone
Length	11 lines of writing
Genre	Imperial Decree
Author	Tiberius Claudius Caesar
Date	52 A.D.
Place of Discovery	Delphi, Greece
Date of Discovery	9 fragments found between 1885-1910

*Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus G[ermanicus, Highest Priest, invested with tribunician auth]ority [for the twelfth time, acclaimed Imperator for t]he twenty-sixth time, F[ather of the Fa]therland, Consul for the fifth time, Censor, sends greetings to the city of the Delphians.] For a long time I have been well disposed toward the city of Delph[i, but also solicitous for its [pro]sperity, and I have always protec[ted th]e cul[t of t]he [Pythian Apol[lo .... But] now [since] it is said to be desti[tu]te of [citi]zens, as [L. Ju]nius Gallio, my fr[iend] an[d procon]sul [recently reported to me; and being desirous that Delphi] should continue to retain [inta]ct its for[mer rank, I] ord[er you to in]vite [well-born people also from ot]her cities [to Delphi as new inhabitants and to] all[ow] them [and their children to have all the] privi[leges of Del]phi as being citi[zens on equal and like (basis)]. For i[f] so[me . . .] were to trans[fer as citi]zens [to these regions, ...]*

This inscription helps us to date the proconsulship of Gallio. It is written after the 26th acclamation of Claudius as emperor, making it 52 A.D.

Following Gallio's term in Achaia, he traveled to Egypt where the dryer climate helped him to heal from a lung hemorrhage. Returning to Rome, he served as consul during Nero's reign. When he was implicated in a plot to overthrow Nero, he was put to death (Dio Cassius, History 62:25).



9. Ephesus.

*And Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Piscilla and Aquila. In Cechrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.*

*And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there. No he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. (Acts 18:18-19).*

This is Paul's first visit to Ephesus. He would spend much more time here during his Third Missionary Journey. The city of Ephesus was located at the mouth of the Cayster River on the southwest coast of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). There were three major river valleys leading from the west coast of Asia Minor into the high country. Major cities grew up at the entrance to each of these valleys.

Hermus River	Smyrna
Cayster River	Ephesus
Maeander River	Miletus

She had been a historic trading city in the past, though recent silt deposits in her harbor were bringing present economic pressures to bear. The harbor would eventually become completely clogged and unusable and the city would ultimately be abandoned.

In Paul's day, Ephesus was the seat of the local Roman proconsul for the province of Asia. It was also the center of a pagan cult which was associated with a meteorite thought to have fallen down from the god Zeus (Acts 19). The most significant feature of the city was its temple to the goddess Artemis (Diana of Roman mythology), the fertility huntress-goddess. This temple was said to be four times the size of the Parthenon at Athens.

The religion of Ephesus reflected both east and west in that it was a mixture of Greek paganism and oriental mysticism.

Paul had first come to this city with Priscilla and Aquila during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19). After preaching in the Jewish synagogue, he had been invited to remain, but he had declined

the offer, continuing instead to Caesarea and then to Antioch. Priscilla and Aquila did remain in Ephesus where they met and disciplined a young preacher named Apollos.

Paul returned to Ephesus during his third missionary journey (Acts 18:1) and stayed for a period of three years, teaching daily Bible classes in the school of Tyrannus *so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 18:10)*. Paul's ministry was so successful that the silversmith trade which manufactured pagan idols fell sharply. The local idolater's labor union staged a picket line and even went so far as to incite a mob to demonstrate against the Christians.

Paul returned to Miletus near Ephesus a final time on the last leg of his third missionary journey. He called for the elders of the church at Ephesus and they traveled to Miletus to meet with him and be exhorted and encouraged by him (Acts 20:17-38).

# THE WAR OF THE JEWS

*For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. (Matthew 24:21).*

*For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, <sup>44</sup> and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation. (Luke 19:43-44).*

The ministry of Jesus was very specific in its exclusion of the head officials of Israel. During His three years of preaching, teaching and healing, He specifically avoided contact with Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, with Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judea, and with Caiaphas, the High Priest at Jerusalem.

Although He was no stranger to the city of Jerusalem, it was a stated fact that He never spent the night within the city. When He did visit the Temple, He made it His practice to spend His evenings in one of the small villages outside the city.

On the last week of His ministry, He came for the last time to Jerusalem. It was the season of the Passover. As He appeared openly in the Temple, the multitudes saw Him challenge the religious leaders. Finally He was betrayed by one of His own disciples and arrested. He was brought before Caiaphas, the High Priest. Several charges were brought against Him, but none could be substantiated. Finally Caiaphas cut to the heart of the matter by asking Jesus if He were truly the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus answered in the affirmative. The trial ended at this point as Caiaphas judged Him guilty of blasphemy.

It must be remembered that this was the only charge for which Jesus was ever found guilty. Since the Jews did not possess the legal right to enforce capital punishment, they took Jesus to Pilate in the Antonia Fortress. Pilate found Him innocent and tried to pass the buck by sending Jesus to Herod Antipas who happened to be in town for the Passover. Antipas also found Him innocent and refused to judge the case. When Jesus was brought back to

Pilate, the procurator protested the innocence of the accused. In desperation, Pilate offered to release Jesus on the basis of a popular custom of clemency, due to the Passover. The crowd called for a convicted murderer named Barabbas instead.

*And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves."*

*And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."*

*Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified. (Matthew 27:24-26).*

The crowd called for a curse to be brought upon themselves and their children. It would be in this same courtyard that the Romans would break through in 70 A.D. and slaughter the unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem.

## **JERUSALEM AND THE EARLY CHURCH**

Although Jesus was crucified and buried, He refused to stay dead. Even a Roman guard could not keep Him in the grave. He arose and made numerous appearances before finally being caught up bodily into heaven.

### **1. The Pentecost Incident.**

The disciples of Jesus remained in Jerusalem following His ascension, waiting for an event which He had promised. They waited for ten days, and then, on the day of the Feast of Pentecost, something spectacular happened.

*And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4).*

Jews were gathered together from all over the world to celebrate this Feast. Suddenly, in the midst of the crowded city, something took place that can only be explained in terms of the supernatural.

The followers of Jesus began to speak in other languages, relating the news the Jesus has risen from the dead. When the crowd gathered around to see what all of the commotion was about, Peter stood up and delivered a passionate sermon. As a result, 3000 people were baptized.

2. Persecutions.

The initial persecutions of the early Jerusalem church were conducted exclusively by the Jewish religious leaders. These involved beatings and imprisonment. They escalated to the point where a mob took Stephen and stoned him to death. Instead of destroying the church, these persecutions had the result of scattering the Christians to other lands. Within a few years, churches began to grow up in foreign cities.

## **THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION**

Conditions in Judea were made rise for a revolution by the continued mismanagement of the Roman procurators.

1. Early Procurators.

Following the deposing of Archelaus from the position of Ethnarch (A.D. 6), the province of Judea was placed under a series of Roman procurators.

Pontius Pilate (26-36 A.D.) has the distinction of crucifying Jesus. He made several other mistakes in ruling the province, bringing graven images of eagles into Jerusalem and then confiscating Temple funds for civil projects.

In 39 A.D. the Emperor Caligula demanded that a statue of himself be set up for worship in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jews pled their case to the Legate in Syria and the action was postponed. Before it could be carried out by force of arms, Caligula was assassinated and the order was rescinded.

2. Herod Agrippa I (41-44 A.D.).

All of Palestine was united for a brief period under the rule of Herod Agrippa 1st in A.D. 41. This time was a brief period of peace for the Jews.

3. Ventilius Cumanus.

Following the death of Agrippa, Judea was placed back under the authority of a Roman governor.

a. The Passover Incident.

Josephus describes one of the events which took place under the procuratorship of Cumanus. It took place on the Passover.

*For when the multitude were come together to Jerusalem, to the feast of unleavened bread, and a Roman cohort stood over the cloisters of the temple (for they were always armed and kept guard at the festivals, to prevent any innovation which the multitude thus gathered together might make), one of the soldiers pulled back his garment and cowering down after an indecent manner, turned his buttocks to the Jews and spoke words as you might expect upon such a posture. At this the whole multitude had indignation and made a clamor to Cumanus, that he would punish the soldier; while the rasher part of the youth, and such as were naturally the most tumultuous, fell to fighting and caught up stones and threw them at the soldiers. (Wars of the Jews 2:12:1)*

Cumanus tried to smooth things over, but the crowd would not be quieted. He called for more reinforcements and a panic ensued. Josephus estimates that 20,000 people were killed in the riot.

b. The Samaritan Conflict.

Further unrest was unleashed when a Jewish pilgrim traveling

from Galilee to Jerusalem was murdered while passing through Samaria.

A Jewish mob, upon hearing the news, set out from Jerusalem to take vengeance upon the Samaritans.

Cumanus was recalled to Rome to answer for his inability to keep the peace. Cumanus was deposed and banished.

4. Antonius Felix (52-60 A.D.).

Felix had been the governor of Samaria and had been just as remiss as Cumanus in keeping the peace. However, Felix had some strong political connections in Rome so that Cumanus was given the blame while Felix was given the position of procurator of Judea, Samaria and Galilee.

It was while Felix was procurator that the Apostle Paul came to the Temple in Jerusalem. Antagonistic Jews began a riot and the Roman garrison in the Antonia Fortress intervened, arresting Paul. Finding that he could not receive a fair trial in Jerusalem, Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship and was therefore transported to Caesarea to appear before Felix.

Felix heard the case, but refused to make a final decision. Paul was kept under house arrest for a period of two years. During this time, Felix had regular audiences with him.

5. Porcius Festus (60-62 A.D.).

When Festus came to power, there was already a complete breakdown of law and order in Palestine. Realizing the nature of the situation, he resolved to do nothing that would add to it. At the same time, he realized that he had little familiarity with Jewish laws and customs.

Accordingly, he brought in Agrippa 2nd to hear the case of Paul and agreed with the result that Paul was innocent of any wrongdoing. However, since Paul had already appealed to Caesar, he was sent to Rome. Festus did not rule for long, dying early in his tenure of office.

6. Albinus (62-65 A.D.).

It was remarked once that Roman governors generally spent their first

year in office collecting taxes to pay the bribes which had served to acquire the governorship, the second year collecting taxes to pay the bribes to the judges who would try them for mismanagement, and the remainder of their years collecting taxes from which to make them wealthy for life. Albinus was an excellent example of this.

*He did not only, in his political capacity, steal and plunder everyone's substance, nor did he only burden the whole nation with taxes, but he permitted the relations of such as were in prison for robbery... to redeem them for money. (Wars of the Jews 2:14:1)*

7. Gessius Florus (65-66 A.D.).

Florus was even worse than Albinus. He made it known that he did not care for the Jews. Thousands were put to death in senseless slaughter. Even Roman citizens were crucified.

Bernice, the sister of Agrippa II tried to intercede, but her requests were ignored and she was forced to flee for her own life. As Jerusalem balanced on the brink of revolt, Agrippa II himself came to the city to urge the Jews to be patient. The crowds pelted him with stones.

## THE REVOLT

There had been a growing antisemitism in Palestine for many years now, especially in those cities which were predominantly Greek. This flared into an eruption when a pagan sacrifice was made at the entrance of the synagogue in Caesarea.

1. The Temple Sacrifice.

For many years there had been a regular sacrifice offered in the Temple on behalf of the Roman Emperor. Eleazer, the Temple captain, ordered that these sacrifices be stopped.

2. Florus at the Temple.

Florus, the Roman procurator, responded by marching to Jerusalem with the soldiers under his command and raiding the Temple



Treasury. When the Jews protested, he set his troops on the people, allowing them to murder, rape, and plunder at will. About 3600 Jews were killed.

3. Jerusalem Liberated.

The spark of revolt was now fanned into an open flame. The Romans within the city of Jerusalem were slaughtered. In the riot that followed, the High Priest was killed and his house burned along with the official archives in which all public records were kept.

4. Capture of Masada.

Menahem, son of Judas the Galilean, attacked and captured the fortress of Masada with its armory. This palace fortress had been constructed by Herod the Great.

## THE ROMAN DEFEAT

Josephus speaks of *an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how "about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth."* *The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination* (Wars of the Jews 6:5:4).

1. The Attack of the 12th Legion.

Cestius Gallus, the Roman governor of Syria marched against Israel with the 12th Legion. He fought his way into Jerusalem, but was stopped before the walls of the Temple.

For a week he made repeated attacks until the defenders were on the point of surrender. At the last moment and for no apparent reason, he pulled back and retreated from the city. As he began to withdraw, the Jews counterattacked, inflicting enormous losses. The 12th Legion lost its eagle and its siege equipment.

2. The Results of the Jewish Victory.

This loss turned the revolt into a full-scale war for independence. The Jews were ecstatic. They set up their own government in

Jerusalem, organized the country into seven military districts, and minted their own silver coins.

Only one group saw these events through different eyes. The Jewish Christians in Judea remembered the warning of Jesus.

*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city, 22 because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-22).*

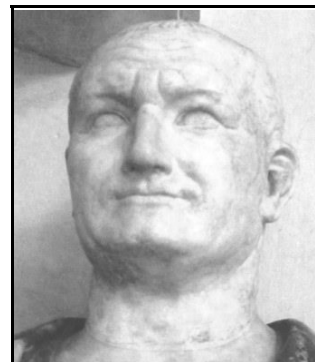
The Christians remembered these words and they began to pack up and move out of Judea. Eusebius relates a tradition how that *the members of the Jerusalem church, by means of an oracle given by revelation to acceptable persons there, were ordered to leave the city before the war began and settle in a town in Peraea called Pella* (1988:111).

## VESPASIAN'S CAMPAIGN

Learning about the defeat of the 12th Legion, Nero commissioned his top general with the task of subduing the rebels. His name was Titus Flavius Vespasianus.

### 1. Rendezvous at Ptolemais.

Vespasian landed in Antioch and took command of the 10th and the rebuilt 12th Legions. Marching south along the coast, he set up his headquarters in Ptolemais on the southern edge of Phoenicia in 67 A.D. Vespasian's son, Titus, marched up from Egypt with the 15th Legion.



Vespasian

Linking up with his father, the Romans now moved inland into the region of Galilee. Battles were fought on both land and on the lake of Galilee.

*...one might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped. And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight there was on the following days over that country; for as for the shores, they were full of shipwrecks and of dead bodies all swelled; and as the dead bodies were inflamed by the sun, and putrified, they corrupted the air... (Wars of the Jews 3:10:9).*

2. Josephus.

The Jewish defenders in Galilee were led by a young priest named Josephus. He had no military experience and his forces were no match for the Romans. They retreated to the fortress of Jotapata where they held out for 47 days.

Josephus and a small band broke out of the fort and hid themselves for several days in a well before being captured.

When Josephus was brought before Vespasian, he managed to flatter him into keeping him instead of sending him on to Nero in Rome.

Josephus went to be become a personal friend and supporter of Vespasian and Titus, eventually writing a history of this war. To the Jews, Josephus was perceived as a traitor to his people.

3. Conquest of Samaria.

The Romans attacked the Samaritans at Mount Gerizim and dispersed them. Then the city of Joppa was attacked in a two-pronged assault by land and by sea. The Jewish navy was captured, giving Vespasian complete command of the sea.

Meanwhile, the Jews had fallen to fighting among themselves as various factions tried to gain control.

4. Conquest of Judea.

Beginning in the spring of 68 A.D. Vespasian began to whittle away at the province of Judea, first cutting off Perea and then advancing down the lowlands to Emmaus.

Later in the year, Vespasian marched down the Jordan River Valley,

capturing Jericho and Qumran, the center for the Essenes.

Realizing that the Romans were coming, the Essenes took their copies of the Scriptures, sealed them in jars and pots, and hid them in the caves on the northwest side of the Dead Sea. These “Dead Sea Scrolls” were not discovered until 1948.

By the summer of 69 A.D. the Jews held only Jerusalem, Herodium, Masada and Macherus.

5. Revolt in Rome.

In 68 A.D. a revolt broke out against Emperor Nero in Gaul and Spain. Fearing the worst, Nero committed suicide. The year of 69 A.D. has come to be known as the “Year of the Four Emperors” because four different men were proclaimed Emperor of the Roman Empire. The last of those men was Vespasian.

Leaving his son, Titus, to complete the conquest of the Jews, Vespasian returned to Rome to assume the mantle of Emperor.

## THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM

Titus brought another Legion up from Egypt, giving him a total strength of four Legions to attack the city of Jerusalem.

1. There were three primary Jewish factions within the city of Jerusalem.

John of Gischala	He had been a general in the Jewish army. He hated Josephus and had predicted that he would betray the Jews to the Romans. He had become the leader of the Zealots. He held the central part of the city.
Simon Bar Gioras	He headed the remnants of the army of Josephus. They numbered several thousand, but had degenerated into a band of looters. He held the outer perimeter of the walls.

Eleazer, son of Simon	He began as an ally of John's, but broke away from him and headed a group that was more religious in nature, desiring to establish Judaism. He held the Temple complex.
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These groups had begun to fight among themselves. During one of these fights, a torch was thrown into a supply depot and a great deal of the food reserves were destroyed.

2. Titus Arrives at Jerusalem.

In January of 70 A.D. Titus advanced with his forces to a point several miles to the north of Jerusalem.

Leaving his army there, he took 600 horsemen to reconnoiter. As he approached Jerusalem, he was attacked by a band of Jews which scattered his cavalry unit. Titus barely escaped with his life.

The next day, Titus advanced his camp to the hill of Scopus from which he could view the entire city.

3. The Defense of Jerusalem.

With the Roman array outside the city, the factions in Jerusalem put aside their differences and formed an alliance. Their combined force numbered less than 25,000 men. Against them were four full Legions plus their auxiliaries, numbering a total of 80,000 men.

4. The Jews Attack.

The Jews launched an attack from the Woman's Gate on the north wall of the New Quarter. They rushed out against the 10th Legion and drove them from their camp. The Romans had been working on fortifications and had laid aside their arms.

5. Attack Against the New Quarter.

After bitter fighting during which the Jews repeatedly rushed out and set fire to the siege engines, the Romans managed to break through the northern wall and enter the New Quarter of Jerusalem. This breakthrough was made on May 25, 70 A.D.

6. Attack Against the Second Quarter.

The Jews had retreated to the second wall. This time, it took the Romans only five days to knock out a narrow breach in the wall. They poured through the breach and found themselves in that area of the marketplace which housed the wool shops, the blacksmith shops and the cloth markets. This section was honeycombed with narrow alleys leading from the wall at different angles.

The Jewish defenders counterattacked inside the wall. The Romans became disoriented in the winding maze and were forced to retreat to the safety of the second wall.

This position held for three days. On the fourth, Titus overran the Jews in a massive attack. Once in possession of the wall, Titus proceeded to tear it down.

7. Propaganda Tactics.

Titus now suspended the siege operations for a while to see if the famine within the city and the demoralization of the Jewish rebels might lead to a surrender.

To add to this demoralization, he paraded his entire army before the northern wall of the Temple area. This parade lasted for four days.

8. Earthworks.

When the rebels refused to surrender, Titus began building earthworks and siege engines for the assault on the Antonia Fortress. These were completed on the 16th of June.

While the siege engines were being brought up into position, the Jews dug tunnels under the ground, out underneath the walls of the city and right up to the Roman earthworks. As they were digging, they supported these tunnels with wooden beams. When they were done, they pulled back and set fire to the supporting wooden beams which caused them to collapse. The Roman earthworks toppled over with a thundering crash as the ground gave way beneath them in a smoking pit.

The Romans brought up more siege engines and the Jews rushed out in a lightning attack, setting fire to them and destroying them. For a

time the Romans were forced to pull back.

9. A Wall Around the City.

Titus now had a wall constructed around the entire city of Jerusalem so that no one could go in and no one could go out. This wall was reputed to be as high as the defensive walls of the city. All hope for escape for the Jews was cut off. This action was a direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus.

*For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side. (Luke 19:43).*

Famine now began to rage through the city. Starving people turned to cannibalism, even killing and eating their own children. Those who were captured trying to escape from the city were crucified.

*So the soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses for the bodies. (Wars of the Jews 5:11:1).*

The wall around Jerusalem, the city which had crucified her Messiah, was now ringed with its crucified inhabitants.

10. Assault on the Antonia. Fortress.

Next Titus began construction of more earthworks opposite the Antonia Fortress. Building materials for this construction came from as far as ten miles away. Not a tree was left standing around Jerusalem. The siege machines were brought up, but they only managed to dislodge four stones.

That night, the portion of the wall where the rams had been pounding, further weakened by the cave-in of the Jewish tunnel, suddenly collapsed. The Roman found a second wall which the Jews had built behind it.

Four nights later, the Romans mounted a surprise attack. The Jews

abandoned the Antonia Fortress and fled to the Temple.



Model of the Temple Mount with the Fortress Antonia in the upper left

#### 11. Fight for the Temple.

The Romans attacked down into the Temple compound, but had limited access and were forced to retreat. Titus spent seven days dismantling the Antonia Fortress, using the materials to build a roadway up to the Temple. Now his entire force was brought up into the Court of the Gentiles. This was the last stand for the Jews. They fought bitterly, keeping the Romans at bay for a time by sheer determination.

On August 27, Titus issued orders to set fire to the Gate Beautiful. This was done and the fire raged all day.

On August 30, the Romans finally gained entrance into the Temple, setting it on fire and slaughtering thousands. Women and children had hidden themselves in the treasury chambers and these were also set on fire. The Temple was burned to the ground. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus, not one stone was left upon another.

*Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and the temple... the wall was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundations, that there was left nothing to make those that came there believe it had ever been inhabited. (Wars of the Jews 7:1:1).*

The temple was destroyed so completely that later archaeologists would argue as to exactly where it was originally located. Not a single stone was left standing.



12. The Fall of the Remainder of the City.

The Romans now swept down into the Lower City, but it took another month for them to take the Upper City and Herod's Palace.

Titus ordered that the city be leveled and that all of the surviving inhabitants to be taken captive. Some of these were sent to the salt mines while others were held in reserve to be paraded in the Triumph of Titus.

*Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants. Accordingly, the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world; for, to speak only of what was publicly known, the Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made a search for under ground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with. (War of the Jews 6:9:4).*

The Romans began a search through the sewers for the hidden rebels. John gave himself up and was imprisoned. Simon was caught while digging his own tunnel under the walls. He was also thrown into chains.

13. The Escape of the Christians.

Though there is no mention of this in Josephus, a later church historian tells of how the Christians had already made their escape from Jerusalem: *"But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come there from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men"* (Eusebius, Church History 3:5:3).

## MASADA

With Jerusalem destroyed, the only place of resistance in Palestine was the isolated fortress of Masada, located on the western shore of the Dead Sea.

The fortress had been built by John Hyrcanus and then refurbished by Herod the Great. It had enough food and water to last for ten years. Located atop a flat mesa surrounded by 1200 foot sheer cliffs, it was considered to be impregnable.



Mountain fortress of Masada with the Dead Sea in the distance

### 1. The Defenders.

The fortress had been captured by a group of Zealots at the beginning of the Jewish revolt. It was held by a group of 960 men, women and children. They were led by Eleazer, a descendant of Judas the Galilean.

### 2. The Siege.

The 10th Roman Legion was sent under governor Flavius Silva to take the fortress in 72 A.D. They encamped around it and surrounded

it with a wall.

The lot of the Romans was difficult. Both food and water had to be transported from long distances to support the Legion.

3. The Ramp.



Model of the Masada Fortress with the Roman ramp on the right

Unable to scale the steep cliffs, Silva built a giant ramp up to the plateau. His siege engines were pushed up this ramp and, in the spring of 73 A.D. they managed to break through the wall of the fortress, only to find that the Jews had built another wall behind the first wall.

This second wall was inset so that the siege engines could not reach it. However, it had been constructed of combustible materials and the Romans set it on fire.

4. Suicide.

Seeing their last defense go up in flames, Eleazer called his people together and suggested that they commit mass suicide rather than fall into the hands of the Romans. The entire group agreed except for two women and five children who hid themselves among the buildings of the fortress.

The next morning when the Romans advanced, they found nothing but silence to greet them. Walking through the fortress, they came

upon the entire group, lying together by families with their throats cut.

*Nor could they do other than wonder at the courage of their resolution, and at the immovable contempt of death which so great a number of them had shown, when they went through with such an action as that was. (Wars of the Jews 7:9:2).*

# THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

*I do honestly believe that no country has ever been greater or purer than ours or richer in good citizens and noble deeds; none has been free for so many generations from the vices of avarice and luxury; nowhere have thrift and plain living been for so long held in such esteem. Indeed, poverty, with us, went hand in hand with contentment (Livy 18).*

The world that was Rome spanned a thousand years and serves as the central lake into which all the streams of ancient history flowed and from which all the streams of modern history now flow. Rome is the culmination of all the advancements and the learning of the ancient world. She reflects its culture, its architecture, and its religion. Rome is also the basis for our modern history. Our present culture, architecture, philosophies, and even our politics find their origins in Rome.

The geography of the Italian peninsula played a significant part in the formation of Rome. That peninsula is shaped like a giant boot that is kicking the triangular island of Sicily. Surrounded by water on three sides, the Alps in the north served to cut off the peninsula from the outside world. However, the nautical distances of the other land masses in the Mediterranean are not that great. From the heel of Italy to the Greek mainland is only fifty miles and the western tip of Sicily is only a hundred miles from Africa. This placed the Italian peninsula in a uniquely central position in the Mediterranean, just as the city of Rome would be centrally located in the peninsula of Italy.

The eastern coast of Italy is mountainous with only a few natural harbors and this tended to turn the population to the western coast with its rich, fertile plains. Most of the principle settlements were therefore located on that west coast.

The Romans were an amalgamation of many different races and cultures, similar to the citizens of the United States of America.

- The Villanovans settled primarily in the Po Valley where they were known for raising horses.
- The Etruscans settled in the lands between the Arno and the Tiber Rivers, building a confederation of twelve cities. According to

Herodotus, they were descended from the Lydians of Anatolia who had migrated to Italy in antiquity. They were far more culturally advanced than the other tribes already in Italy and they brought its first real contact with the eastern Mediterranean. Their ruins have produced artifacts from Egypt and Phoenicia. They used the same kind of burial grounds that can be found in Anatolia and they passed this practice to the Latins and it continued to be practiced throughout the history of Rome.

- The Sabines lived in the mountains on the eastern side of Italy and gave rise to a tribe known as the Samnites.
- The Latins had a legend that said they were descended from Trojans who fled to Italy after the fall of Troy in 1200 B.C.
- Greek colonies were originally established on the coasts of southern Italy and Sicily. These grew to be very wealthy and later played a part in the expansion of Rome.



The city of Rome was located on the Tiber River near to where it is joined by the Aniene River. An island in the Tiber gave a strategic ford across the waterway and made this location something of a crossroads. The city was a mere 16 miles from the sea and thus Rome was linked to the rest of the world

both by land and by sea, making it a center of trade and commerce. The city eventually sprawled across seven hills, but, as the saying goes, Rome was not built in a day.

## THE ETRUSCANS

Very little has been known of the Etruscans until recent times. Their language was not of the Indo-European branch and is only now beginning to be deciphered, thanks largely to the discovery of the Pyrgi Tablets in Italy in 1964 that contained a bi-lingual inscription in Phoenician and Etruscan.

Herodotus tells the story of how they migrated from Lydia at a time when that country was going through a great famine.

*The king determined to divide the nation in half, and to make the two portions draw lots, the one to stay, the other to leave the land. He would continue to reign over those whose lot it should be to remain behind; the emigrants should have his son Tyrrhenus for their leader. The lot was cast, and they who had to emigrate went down to Smyrna, and built themselves ships, in which, after they had put on board all needful stores, they sailed away in search of new homes and better sustenance. After sailing past many countries, they came to Umbria, where they built cities for themselves, and fixed their residence. Their former name of Lydians they laid aside, and called themselves after the name of the king's son, who led the colony, Tyrrhenians. (Herodotus, Histories 1:94).*

DNA testing of Etruscan remains have demonstrated some validity to the report of Herodotus that the Etruscans came from Anatolia.

The Etruscan culture was advanced beyond that of the surrounding tribes and the Etruscans held dominance over the area for several hundred years, solidifying their economic position by entering into a trade agreement with the Phoenician colony of Carthage in North Africa.

One of the devices introduced into Italy by the Etruscans was the six-spoked iron chariot. This, along with other technological innovations, gave the Etruscans a military advantage over their neighbors.

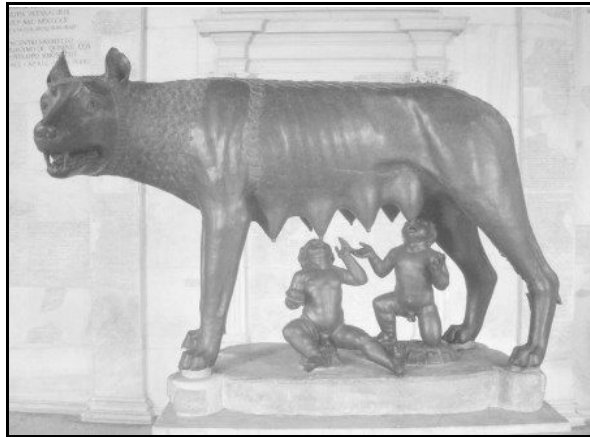
The excavated sarcophagus lids of Etruscan nobility suggest that they were

a monogamous people who valued the marriage relationship and who held their wives in high esteem. This was in contrast to most ancient cultures that viewed the place of women only a little higher than livestock.

## ROMAN FOUNDATION LEGENDS

The Romans traced their ancestry back to the legend of Aeneas, one of the characters out of Homer's *Iliad*, a Trojan survivor who escaped the fall of the city carrying his aged father on his back and holding the hand of his young son. After many wanderings around the Mediterranean world, their ship is said to have landed in Italy where they met King Latinus, who gave his name to the Latins. These two groups joined forces to become the Latin people.

The semi-legendary founders of the city of Rome were Romulus and Remus. Supposedly born after the god Mars raped a vestal virgin of noble blood, the twin boys were placed by the banks of the Tiber River. They were suckled by a mother wolf and then found by a kindly farmer who raised them as his own. When they were grown to adulthood, they



Romulus and Remus

found their grandfather, the king of Numitor. But rather than inherit a kingdom from him, they set out to build their own city on the banks of the very river where they had been exposed as infants.

As the brothers were twins, they argued over which would be the king of this new city. Unable to reconcile, they each began to build walls for a city of their own on the neighboring hills of the Palatine and the Aventine. When Remus mocked the wall of his brother by jumping over it, Romulus killed him in a fit of rage, adding the threat, "So perish whoever else shall overleap my battlements" (Livy 24). Romans looked to 753 B.C. as the year of the founding of Rome. This reckoning of time would continue up until the Christianization of Rome and the establishment of a new calendar starting with the birth of Christ.



## **THE KINGS OF ROME**

From the founding of the city of Rome under Romulus to the birth of the Roman Republic, Rome had seven kings. This period of history comes to us partly as history and partly as myth.

1.      **Romulus, the Warrior-King: Ruled 753 - 715 BC.**

As the first king of Rome, Romulus is said to have invited all to come and build a new life within his city. The city became a haven for anyone who was seeking asylum, whether because he was fleeing oppression or even if he was an escaped criminal. According to the legend, this resulted in an imbalanced population as most men who came to the city did not bring wives with them. Romulus devised a plan whereby some seven hundred women of the Sabines were kidnaped and forcibly taken as wives for his people. This led to war with the Sabines, though it took some time before the two armies actually clashed. By that time, the forced marriages had led to the birth of children. As the armies were about to engage in battle, the Sabine women brought their children onto the battlefield and begged their fathers and brothers and husbands to call a halt to the hostilities. Their plea was heard and a treaty was drawn up in which the Sabines and the Romans joined forces with their kings reigning jointly over the land. When the Sabine king subsequently died, Romulus and his descendants continued to rule the united peoples.

2.      **Numa Pompilius: Ruled 715-673 B.C.**

He was a Sabine and introduced Rome to its religious rites, its priesthood, its vestal virgins, and the temple of Janus. His reign was a period of peace.

3.      **Tullius Hostilius: Ruled 672 - 641 B.C.**

He was the opposite of his predecessor in that he was a man of war. Livy says, "In his view, Rome had been allowed to lapse into senility, and his one object was to find cause for renewed military adventure" (History 1:18). Legend has it that Tullius Hostilius neglected the gods and so brought about a plague on the city of Rome. He was subsequently struck down by a bolt of lightning.

4.      **Ancus Marcius: Ruled 640-616 B.C.**

He was the grandson of Numa Pompilius and he balanced the roles of administrator and military leader. He conquered several of the Latin tribes. He also built the first bridge across the Tiber River. He also built the port city of Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber that would serve as the port of Rome.

5. Tarquinius Priscus (Tarquinius I): Ruled 616-579 B.C.

Tarquin was an Etruscan and he continued the tradition of conquest and construction. He founded the Circus Maximus and the Roman games. Upon his return in victory, he gave himself the honor of a triumph, a victory parade. This was to become a tradition in Rome.

6. Servius Tullius: Ruled 578-534 B.C.

He established a constitution that made wealth the deciding factor upon a person's placement in society. The people were divided into various social classes.

- The Patricians were the wealthy landowners. They dominated the Roman politics and their representative body was known as the Senate.
- The Plebeians were the poorer class who owned little or no land. The majority of the people fell into this class and it included the merchants and professional men. They were the working class.

Servius Tullius had a great wall built around the city of Rome that encompassed all seven hills on which the city rested. He was assassinated by his daughter Tullia and her husband Tarquin.

7. Tarquinius Superbus (Tarquin the Proud): Ruled 534-510 B.C.

Tarquin was known as an Etruscan tyrant. He had gained the throne through murder and he held to it by means of violence. The seeds of revolt were sown at a drinking party where a number of Roman princes began to discuss whose wife was the most virtuous. The discussion grew more heated until it was decided that they should all return to their homes unannounced to see what their wives were doing in their absence. Livy continues the story:

They reached the city as dusk was falling; and there

the wives of the royal princes were found enjoying themselves with a group of young friends at a dinner-party, in the greatest luxury. The riders went on to Collatia, where they found Lucretia very differently employed: it was already late at night, but there, in the hall of her house, surrounded by her busy maid-servants, she was still hard at work by lamplight upon her spinning. Which wife had won the contest in womanly virtue was no longer in doubt (1965:82).

This event had put the beautiful and dutiful Lucretia into a place of honor and now Sextus Tarquinius, the son of King Tarquin, hatched a plot to seduce her. He came to her house when her husband was not home and entered her bedchamber where she was sleeping.

Sextus urged his love, begged her to submit, pleaded, threatened, used every weapon that might conquer a woman's heart. But all in vain; not even the fear of death could bend her will. 'If death will not move you,' Sextus cried, 'dishonor shall. I will kill you first, then cut the throat of a slave and lay his naked body by your side. Will they not believe that you have been caught in adultery with a servant – and paid the price?' (1965:82-83).

Lucretia finally yielded and Sextus had his way before abandoning her. She sent word to her father and husband and when they came to her, each bringing their closest friends. Before them all, she related the entire story. They tried to comfort her and to assure her that there was no fault in her, but rather than serve as a precedent for future women to live unchaste lives, she drove a knife into her heart and died.

One of those friends who was present was Brutus. He was filled with righteous indignation and he led the people in a revolt against Tarquin. No longer would they be subject to the petty whims of a king. From now on, the power of rulership would lie in the hands of a republic, a government in which the citizens would elect their officials who would then pass and execute laws and in which no man would inherit the right to hold a political office.

Tarquin escaped from Rome and sought the aid of another Etruscan king by the name of Lars Porsenna who came with his armies and besieged Rome.

Legend has it that the armies of Lars Porsenna were held at bay on the Tiber Bridge by the Roman soldier Horatius who asked that the bridge be destroyed behind him. Horatius at the bridge became something of a byword among the Romans, picturing their determination and self-sacrifice.

## **THE BIRTH OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC**

A republic is a form of government in which leaders are elected by the people. These leaders pass and execute laws binding to all. Under a republic, no man inherits the right to hold political office. The Roman republic had three bodies:

1. The Centuriate Assembly.

This consisted of all citizens who performed their military duties. They were empowered with the choosing of two consuls.

2. Two Consuls.

Instead of a president, they selected two consuls, each who served a one-year term. They shared the power of a monarch and controlled the military. Each consul had the power of veto over the other in time of peace

3. The Senate.

This was made up of all former consuls and anyone appointed to the senate by a consul. The senate directed foreign affairs, controlled the tax system, and accepted or rejected any bill passed by the assembly.

A series of laws were codified and established, written on twelve tablets of copper. These were known as the Twelve Tables and they were set up in a public place where anyone could come and read them.

- Death sentences could only be issued by the law courts.
- There was a maximum rate of interest.
- One who could not pay his debts could be sold into slavery by his creditors.
- If a thief was a freeman he was flogged and had to repay what was stolen. If he was a slave he was flogged and then put to death.
- No burials or cremations were allowed within the city walls.

- Marriage between patricians and plebeians was forbidden.
- The death penalty was evoked for the theft of crops, for slander, and for giving false witness.
- A father had an obligation to kill his deformed child.
- If a father sold his son into slavery on three different occasions, the son would from that time onward be free from his father.

As time went on, there emerged two social classes among the Romans. First were the patricians. They were wealthy landowners who dominated Roman politics. The Senate was made up exclusively of the Patricians. The second group were the Plebeians. They were generally the poorer class who owned little or no land. The majority of people fell into this class and it included the merchants and the professional men, though some were men of financial means.

After a long struggle, the Plebeians were permitted to meet in their own assembly and to elect officials known as “tribunes.” Tribunes could veto any decision made by the Senate that affected the Plebeians. The Plebeians gradually gained other rights such as intermarriage with patricians and the right to hold the office of consul.

## **THE SPREAD OF ROMAN POWER**

It was during these domestic struggles that Rome began to extend both her power and her influence. The immediate reason for Roman expansion was a desire to neutralize her immediate neighbors and thereby nullify the perceived threat. Such neighbors were eventually brought into the republic, but each acquisition brought new neighbors who were seen to constitute a new threat and demand another such neutralization.

The Romans finally succeeded in joining the neighboring Latin tribes into a league for mutual military defense. Rome was the leader of this league and so continued to grow in strength. By 400 B.C., Rome was the leading city of central Italy.

This expansionist policy eventually brought Rome into contact with the Gauls. During the fifth century, a group of Celtic-speaking Gauls pushed out the Etruscan settlers from northern Italy and settled there. This area around the Po River became known as Cisalpine Gaul, literally, “Gaul on this side of the Alps.”

These Gauls brought with them several innovative weapons, including mounted cavalry with iron horseshoes and large broadswords. In 386 B.C. they moved south against the city of Rome. The Romans were routed and Rome was sacked and burned. The Romans never forgot this terrible event and they vowed that it would never happen again. It would not for 800 years.

When the Gauls sacked Rome, the Romans stayed and continued to contest the ownership of the city. Livy tells the story of how, in a night attack by the Gauls, the Romans were alerted by the cackling of Juno's sacred geese that awoke the Romans to their danger.

As the Romans extended their boundaries southward, they clashed with the Greek colonies in southern Italy. Rome soon found herself at war with the Greeks. The Greeks possessed a first class military, compliments of the days of Alexander the Great, with heavy phalanxes and war elephants from India.

In the first battle, King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Romans. The casualties were reported with Rome losing 7000 men to Pyrrhus's 4000 men. In a second battle, the losses were about the same and again Pyrrhus won. He was known to say, "Another such victory and I am lost."

It is from this event that we have our term "Pyrrhic victory" to describe a victory that is too costly. After a third battle, the Romans defeated Pyrrhus and he sailed back to Greece, leaving the Romans as the masters of Italy.



Pyrrhus of Epirus

There are two reasons the Romans were able to achieve their conquests. The first was because of their innate discipline. This combined with the Romans a high standard of training and organization within their army. It is said that a Roman mother sending her son off to war would exhort him to come back with his shield or on it.

This underscores an important feature in the Roman psyche. The Romans were not bigger or stronger than their neighbors. Indeed, they were considered to be relatively short when compared to some of their enemies. What set them apart was an unwillingness to quit. This resolute endurance would serve them for a thousand years.

A second reason for Roman success was that the Romans normally treated their conquered peoples fairly well. They were often allowed a certain amount of self government and sometimes even partial citizenship.

## THE PUNIC WARS

Rome's expansion inevitably brought it into direct conflict with the Phoenician colony of Carthage, located in North Africa. The name Carthage means "New City" in the Phoenician language. The Phoenicians had long since been conquered and that made Carthage an independent state. The Carthaginians, like their ancestors, the Phoenicians, were a great sea people and boasted the most powerful navy in the world. They had colonies in Sicily, Corsica, and Spain.

### 1. The First Punic War (364-241 B.C.).

The first war was fought over possession of Sicily, the stepping stone between Italy and Africa. The Romans did not have a fleet and were very poor sailors when compared to the Carthaginians. Since this war was fought primarily on the sea, the Romans were at a distinct disadvantage.

At the outbreak of the war, the Romans built a fleet of ships and launched it. Most of the ships in the fleet sank in a storm without ever meeting the enemy. While the Romans were excellent soldiers, they knew little about sailing and their ships had a high casualty rate in rough weather.

After losing several fleets in such a manner, the Romans found a Carthaginian warship that had been beached in a storm. With the help of Greek architects, they made a hundred replicas. The Romans still could not match the Carthaginian sailing ability, so they developed their own brand of naval warfare. Their favorite tactic was to get within range of an enemy vessel and drop a bridge across to the enemy decks with a large hook that would secure the bridge in place. Then they would sweep their infantry across onto the enemy decks and fight as if they were on land. Using such tactics, the Carthaginians were beaten and driven out of Sicily.

### 2. The Second Punic War (218-202 B.C.).

This war was fought largely on land. One of the key figures of the conflict was a young Carthaginian general named Hannibal. He stated out from a Carthaginian settlement in Spain with an army of 100,000 men and 80 war elephants. He marched north over the Pyrenees and then east across France, crossing the Alps to come into

Italy from the north. He arrived in Italy with 28,000 men and 22 elephants, having lost 75 % of his force on the march.

Hannibal won two successive victories over the Romans and when news of these spectacular victories was spread, the Gauls aligned themselves with him to augment his forces.

Hannibal moved south to threaten Rome and he was met by the Roman general Quintus Fabius Maximus who had been given the title of dictator during this military crisis. Maximus knew better than to engage Hannibal in open battle and, instead, conducted a guerrilla campaign in which he harassed the Carthaginian troops. He became known to the Romans as "The Delayer" and they resolved to take more direct action.

Two newer consuls were given authority over the Roman army and they met Hannibal in the Battle of Cannae in southern Italy. Hannibal presented what looked to be a weak center in his battle lines and the Romans marched forward, pushing back that center. It was a trap and Hannibal's strong cavalry swept around both Roman flanks to come in behind the Romans and trap them. The Roman army of 80,000 men was completely destroyed. It was the worst defeat ever experienced in the history of Rome.

As a result of this defeat, certain cities from the Roman possessions threw in their allegiance to Hannibal. Sicily came over to his side and King Philip V of Macedon declared war on the Romans. The defeat showed that Maximus had been correct in his strategy. The Romans went back to the use of guerrilla tactics, allowing Hannibal to march up and down the Italian peninsula at will.

Finally, Rome sent a fleet across the Mediterranean to attack Carthage directly. Hannibal was recalled to defend Carthage and there he was defeated by the Roman general Scipio at the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C.

In their later years, Scipio and Hannibal had the opportunity to meet. Scipio asked Hannibal who he thought had been the world's greatest general. Hannibal replied that it was Alexander. He then asked who would have been the second greatest and Hannibal nominated Pyrrhus. Scipio asked who would have been the third greatest and Hannibal chose himself. Scipio asked, "What would you have said if you had defeated me?" Hannibal replied, "I would have put myself as first." Livy comments how Scipio took this as a great compliment because "Hannibal had set him apart from the ordinary run of military captains as an incomparable commander"

In the peace treaty, Rome took possession of Spain and oversaw a



general disarmament of the Carthaginian military. Between the Second and Third Punic Wars, the Romans conquered Macedonia and Anatolia, effectively neutralizing Antiochus III of Syria and his son Antiochus Epiphanes.

3. The Third Punic War (149-146 B.C.).

This third war was the shortest, lasting only three years. At the end of the Second Punic War, Carthage had agreed to disarm her military. She was allowed to keep ten warships and a small army, but this force was not permitted to fight without the express permission of the Roman Senate.

The Roman senator Cato would end every speech, no matter what the topic, with the statement, "And Carthage should be destroyed."

When the Numidians of central Africa began to conduct raids upon Carthage, numerous delegations were sent to Rome, asking for permission for the army to defend itself against these attacks. The Roman Senate procrastinated without giving any definite answer.

Finally, Carthage attacked the Numidians and defeated them. Immediately, a Roman army was sent to punish Carthage for her disobedience. In order to satisfy the demands of Rome, Carthage court-martialed all of her commanders and executed them, disarming her military.

Not satisfied, Rome resolved to destroy Carthage. The Carthaginians held out for three years before the Romans finally broke through the city's defenses. Carthage was burned, her lands were sown with salt so that nothing would grow there, and those inhabitants who were not slaughtered were hauled away as slaves.

## THE ROMAN CIVIL WARS

The Punic Wars left conditions in Italy unsettled. Although Rome's military victories had made her rich, they had also caused a deep rift in her social and political life. Wealthy Romans had become wealthier while the ordinary farmer found it harder and harder to make a living. The

The price of slaves during this period reached an all-time low since so many of Rome's enemies had been enslaved.

result was that the people were split into two clashing groups that replaced the old Plebian and Patrician classes.

- The Optimates were made up of Patricians and the wealthy Plebians. They tended to be conservative in their outlook, desiring to maintain the status quo. This is understandable. Those who have all the wealth are not naturally motivated to seek change.
- The Populares were the common people who wanted to see the social order changed, hoping that it might lead to better things for themselves. Their number included some rich men with liberal sentiments and it also included many farmers who had served as soldiers in the Punic Wars. During the wars, they had been unable to work their lands or pay taxes because they had been away fighting. When they returned, it was to find that their farms had been sold because of non-payment.

In such a political climate, certain men would rise to prominence who would make a stand for the Populares.

1. Tiberius Gracchus.

Tiberius Gracchus, along with his brother, Gaius, was the grandson of Scipio Africanus, the Roman general who had defeated Hannibal at the end of the Second Punic War. Tiberius was elected tribune in 134 B.C. He saw the distribution of captured territories was going primarily to the large landowners while the poorer classes were receiving nothing. One of his first acts in office was to try to limit the size of these newly acquired farms and estates so that no one person could take over great amounts of land. It was not actually a new law, but an enforcement of an old law that had come to be bypassed and ignored.

The Senate convinced a fellow tribune to veto this plan and a political battle ensued. When Tiberius tried to run for a second term as tribune, something that was not allowed under the Roman constitution, Tiberius was accused of trying to make himself into a king. A riot ensued and Tiberius was killed. In order to placate the people, the Senate subsequently passed a number of the legislative reforms that Tiberius had championed.

2. Gaius Gracchus (154-121 B.C.).

The younger brother of Tiberius became tribune in 124 B.C. and made the following proposals:

- Roman citizenship should be granted to other Italian cities.
- The state would sell grain to the poor at greatly reduced prices.
- Foreign colonies would be used as places of settlement for unemployed Romans.
- The size of new farm estates would be limited. In this area, Gaius suggested even more drastic measures than his brother had done.

The Senate declared Gaius a public enemy and ordered his arrest. To avoid the disgrace of a public execution, he had himself killed by his own servant. His body and the bodies of three thousand of his supporters were thrown into the Tiber while their properties were confiscated by their enemies.

3. Gaius Marius (157-86 B.C.).

Marius was an Equestrian who supported the Populares. He was elected as consul in 108 B.C. and he held that position six times over the next seven years in spite of the fact that he was a “new man” (*novus homo*), one who was new to politics. Indeed, there had been an old law that had prohibited second consulships altogether.

He launched a campaign against Jugurtha, an African chieftain who had seized control of Numidia. Jugurtha was defeated, captured, and sent back to Rome where he died in prison. Next, Marius fended off a threatened invasion of Gauls from the north of Italy.

During the course of these operations, Marius brought a number of changes to the Roman military. Up to this time, Roman soldiers had been drawn from the ranks of Roman citizens who were called by the state to serve in a particular campaign for a one year term. When their year of service ended, they went home. This had met with some disastrous results in the past when the year ended and the war was still going. At times, the entire army had packed up and gone home, leaving their officers to be defeated.

Marius now made provision for terms of service to be extended. He also permitted landless peoples to enlist and he furnished them with weapons. In this way, the army became an organization of

professionals who made a career of military service. Their general became more important to them than the government officials.

4. Marcus Livius Drusus.

Drusus was elected as tribune in 91 B.C. He was a spokesman for the Populares, yet managed to get considerable senatorial assistance as he his negotiations offered to strengthen the power of the Senate.

He fell into disfavor with the Senate when he proposed to extend citizenship to all of the cities of the Italian peninsula. This proposal was opposed by nearly all Roman citizens.

Drusus was assassinated that same year and his death sparked the beginning of the Social War (91-88 B.C.). This war involved the cities of the Italian Alliance attempting to secede from Rome. The war ended only when Rome agreed to grant citizenship to all Italians who had not revolted.

5. Lucius Cornelius Sulla (138-78 B.C.).

Sulla was an aristocrat who supported the Optimates. As a young man, he had served under Marius in the Jugurthine War and had been personally responsible for the capture of Jugurtha. He was elected consul in 88 B.C. at the age of 50.

In later life, Sulla was given the agnomen Felix ("the Lucky") for his good fortune in military campaigns.
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Sulla tried to curb civil disorder by giving more power to the Senate. He was vigorously opposed in this by Marius. Soon after he had taken command, Sulla went to Naples to prepare an expedition against Mithridates, the King of Pontus who had taken over Anatolia and had murdered 80,000 Roman colonists in a single day. While Sulla was still in Naples, Marius tried to undermine his authority by transferring an army command from Sulla to himself.

Sulla responded by leading his army back to Rome. Marius fled to Africa and Sulla entered Rome without resistance, condemning all of his enemies to death and further strengthening the Senate. He then set out for Anatolia.

Mithridates of Pontus was descended from a line of kings that traced their lineage back to the Royal Persian House of Alexander's day.

Located on the southern shore of the Black Sea, the people of Pontus had used their pine forests to build a strong navy. These ships had carved out a small empire encompassing all the lands around the Black Sea. With Rome embroiled in civil war, Mithridates had taken the opportunity to push the Romans completely out of Asia.

Over the next three years, Sulla defeated Mithridates and severely punished all his allies, including Athens. Roman power in the east was restored. Mithridates was left in control of Pontus after he had signed a treaty of friendship with Rome. Two more wars with Mithridates would be fought before Asia became a Roman possession, but for the time being, Sulla's attention was directed back to Rome where Marius had returned, seizing control of the government and murdering many of Sulla's friends and supporters before dying in Rome.

Sulla returned to Rome in 83 B.C. and fought a pitched battle at the gates of Rome against the supporters of Marius. When Sulla emerged victorious, he declared all the former followers of Marius to be enemies of the state and had them executed. He took ten thousand slaves, gave them their freedom and made them Roman citizens, and then hired them as his personal band of agents. They were known as the Cornelli and acted as his mob to keep him in power.

For the remainder of his life, Sulla was an absolute dictator. He initiated the following laws:

- He gave the Senate more power and curtailed the power of the tribunes.
- He limited the judiciary to members of the Senate.
- He increased the size of the Senate.
- He made it a mortal offense for a commander to lead his troops outside his assigned province or to make war without the approval of the Senate.
- He made it illegal for a consul to hold office for more than one year at a time.

Sulla voluntarily retired from office in 79 B.C. and died the following year. He had begun a new period in Roman history. From now on, it would be military strength and not the representative government that would decide who was going to rule Rome and the Empire.

# THE ROMAN EMPIRE

*Behold them, conquerors of the world, all clad in Roman gowns!* (Livy, quoted by Suetonius 77).

The history of Rome can be divided into two distinct periods. First is the period of the Roman Republic. It lasts from the founding of the city of Rome in 753 B.C. to the advent of Octavius Augustus. During most of this period, Rome was ruled by an elected body of leaders. The transition from republic to empire was not easily distinguished. The Roman emperors continued to practice the outward forms of the old republic, but the true power now resided in the hands of a single man, an emperor.

The second period is that of the Roman Empire. It is said to have begun with Octavius Augustus and lasted until 476 A.D. when Romulus Augustus was removed from his position of emperor by a Gothic king. Although the city of Rome would continue to be a major influence after this for many hundreds of years, it would no longer be the seat of an empire.

## THE SITUATION AT THE DEATH OF SULLA

Sulla died in 78 B.C. The civil strife had been going on for about fifty years. This had been a time of rebellions, assassinations, and power struggles between individuals and between social classes.

Sulla had left the Senate in complete control over Rome. The power of the tribunes had been cut down so that the common people had practically no voice at all in government affairs. Officials were thoroughly corrupt, stealing money from the treasury to build up their own personal fortunes.

It was often said that one would receive the office of governor over a province and use the money that was stolen during the first year in office to pay back all the bribes that had been necessary to obtain the office in the first place. Then the governor would save the money he stole in his second year in office to pay the bribes to those who would judge him once he was removed from office. For the rest of his term, he would steal enough money to serve as his retirement for the rest of his life.

The population in Rome was divided among the very rich, numbering a few thousand, and the very poor, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Many survived through a system of patronage in which they would offer their services to a wealthy patron in exchange for food and sustenance.

Meanwhile, the changes in the military which Marius had instituted had taken hold. Non-property owners were now allowed to join the army and many of the poor in Rome went into the military. As a result, these professional soldiers would be more loyal to their generals than to the government.

There were three men in the Empire who would eventually change the course of history. These men were seeking power at the time of the death of Sulla and they would join to form an unofficial triumvirate.

1. Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus.

He is known to us as Pompey the Great. Pompey began as one of Sulla's generals. He had a special gift when it came to naval warfare. He was 28 years old at the death of Sulla.

2. Marcus Licinius Crassus.

Crassus also had been one of Sulla's generals. Sulla had given him large grants of confiscated property for assisting in the overthrow of the Marian party. Crassus temporarily retired from the military and went into business. One of his businesses was a fire department. Fire was always a problem in Rome and Crassus' fire fighters would only protect those buildings that had signed over a major share of the contents. The buildings not under his protection had a tendency to catch fire, so a great many in Rome found themselves paying the exorbitant fire protection rates. He would become one of the richest men in the Roman world. At the death of Sulla, Crassus was 34 years old.

3. Gaius Julius Caesar.

Caesar was the nephew of Marius and therefore an enemy of Sulla, but he had been overlooked in the purges because of his youth. He was 22 years old at the death of Sulla.

Of the three, Caesar was the youngest and the least known. Yet he would eventually be the one to gain fame, power, and the rulership of the empire.

## POMPEY THE GREAT

Pompey was born in 106 B.C., the son of a well-known Roman general. His own military career began when he was still in his teens and by the time he was 23, he was a general under the command of Sulla.

Immediately after the death of Sulla, rebellion broke out under the leadership of Aemilius Lepidus who was consul at that time. Pompey defeated Lepidus in a battle at the Milvian Bridge just north of Rome.

Next, Pompey was sent by the Senate to Spain to put down another revolt, this time led by guerrilla leader Sertorius. Pompey returned in triumph in 71 B.C., just in time to take credit for a new victory.



Pompey the Great

### 1. The Spartacus Revolt.

In 73 B.C., while Pompey was still in Spain, a Thracian gladiator named Spartacus broke out of a Roman training camp at Capua, home to one of the largest gladiatorial schools in Italy. His initial revolt consisted of about 72 other gladiators, but runaway slaves quickly flocked to his side and he force quickly multiplied to an army of 100,000 men.

Several Roman armies were sent against him and he defeated each one. Finally, in 71 B.C., the command of the Roman forces was given to Crassus who was victorious against Spartacus. Six thousand slaves were crucified, their crosses lining the Apian Way.

Pompey returned from Spain soon after Crassus had achieved his initial victories over Spartacus. Pompey assisted in finishing off the last of the rebels. In doing so, much of the glory and fame that would have gone to Crassus was now shared with Pompey.

### 2. Consul.

In 70 B.C., both Pompey and Crassus sought the consulship and both



were opposed by the Senate. By joining forces, they managed to secure their joint election that same year. During their term, they accomplished the following:

- They released the tribunes from the restrictions Sulla had placed upon them.
- They expelled 64 senators that Sulla had placed into office.
- They gave the Populares more power.

3. Military Dictator.

Rome's supply of grain from Egypt was being threatened by the growing boldness of pirates. To deal with this threat, Pompey was given the office of Imperium in 67 B.C. This made him a temporary military dictator over a force of 120,000 infantry and 800 ships. His commission was to last for a three year period. Within three months, he had accomplished the task.

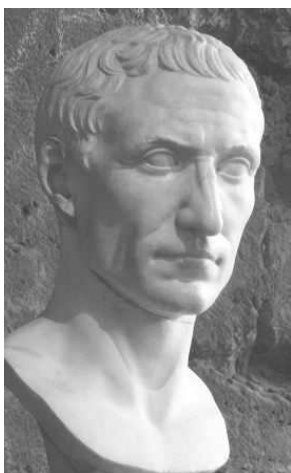
After capturing the pirate base on Crete, Pompey moved through Anatolia to defeat Mithridates, the king of Pontus who had taken over most of Anatolia and Syria in an attempt to revive the Seleucid Empire. Mithridates fled to Crimea where he committed suicide.

While Pompey was in Damascus, reorganizing that country into a Roman province which would become known as Syria, he received messages from two Hasmonean brothers who were fighting a civil war over possession of Jerusalem. Pompey marched down and captured Jerusalem in 63 B.C., annexing the land of Judah and renaming it Judea.

4. Return to Rome.

Pompey returned to Rome to find it once again in the midst of civil disorder. A rebellion had been put down, but the city was a powder keg, waiting for a spark to touch it off. Pompey disbanded his army outside the city and entered Rome in a magnificent triumphal procession.

The Senate refused to approve the agreement he had made with the eastern monarchs and also refused to make the land grants he had promised to his veterans. Rebuffed by the Senate, Pompey entered into a secret alliance with Crassus and Julius Caesar. This alliance would come to be known as the First Triumvirate.



Julius Caesar

## **JULIUS CAESAR**

Gaius Julius Caesar was born on July 12, 100 B.C., the only son of an old and noble family. He grew up during the Sulla years of civil war and strife and, because of his family connection to Marius, he was under threat of death. To make matters worse, he was married to Cornelia, the daughter of Cornelius Cinna who had been the right hand man of Marius.

When Sulla ordered Caesar to divorce Cornelia, Caesar refused and was forced to flee for his life. Caesar's family in Rome interceded with Sulla for his life. Sulla is recorded as commenting that "there are many Mariuses in this fellow Caesar" (Suetonius 14), but the amnesty was granted.

In 81 B.C. at the age of nineteen, Caesar was sent to Anatolia to fight with the armies that were making war against King Mithridates of Pontus. Caesar was awarded the civic crown, the highest decoration of the Roman army. After the death of Sulla, Caesar returned to Rome.

After a year in Rome, Caesar decided to study rhetoric at the school of Apollonius Molo on the island of Rhodes. On his way there, he was captured by pirates who held in for a ransom of twenty talents. He told them they had set the ransom far too low and offered them fifty, but he also promised to return and punish them for their insult to his honor. As soon as he was free, he made good on his promise, crucifying the ringleaders and selling the rest into slavery. Back in Rhodes, he learned that Mithridates was attacking the coast of southern Anatolia. He raised his own fighting force and drove the forces of Mithridates from the area until the regular Roman troops could arrive.

Caesar returned to Rome in the spring of 73 B.C., the same year that Spartacus led the slaves in revolt. While Pompey and Crassus were winning military honors, Caesar was rising in the political world. After the death of Cornelia, Caesar married Pompeia, the granddaughter of Sulla, but divorced her several years later due to a sexual scandal. He went on to hold the offices of quaestor, praetor, and finally that of propraetor in Spain.

Suetonius tells us that, upon seeing a statue of Alexander the Great, Caesar complained that "at an age when Alexander had already conquered the whole world, he himself had done nothing in the least epoch-making" (1980:16).

1. The First Triumvirate.

On his return to Rome in 60 B.C., Caesar tried to stand for the consulship but was opposed by the Senate. He joined forces in a secret pact with Pompey and Crassus and, with their help, became consul in 59 B.C. During his year as consul, he accomplished several things:

- He secured land for Pompey's war veterans by going over the Senate's head to the People's Assembly.
- He approved Pompey's reorganization of the east.
- He passed laws which would punish Roman officials who used their position to exploit and rob subjugated peoples.
- He decreed that all decisions made by the Senate had to be made public for every Roman citizen to see.
- He secured the governorship of Gaul for himself for the next five years after his consulship.

2. The Gallic Wars.

The Gauls had been traditional enemies of Rome for hundreds of years. In 386 B.C. they had swept down into Italy with their thundering cavalry and their great broadswords, routing the Roman army and sacking the city of Rome. They had invaded again in 101 B.C. and had been barely stopped in northern Italy by Marius.

When Caesar was made the governor of Gaul, this referred to what was known as Cisalpine Gaul, "Gaul on this side of the Alps." By the end of his term of office, it would include all of present day France. His governorship was originally to be for five years, but in 55 B.C. it was extended for another five years.

During these years, Caesar smashed the Gallic tribes in France into submission. Twice he sailed his armies across the English channel into Britain. He also built a bridge across the Rhine River and marched his armies into Germany where no Roman commander had ever gone. In 52 B.C. a great insurrection broke out under the Gallic chieftain Vercingetorix. Though vastly outnumbered, Caesar crushed the rebellion.

3. Actions of the First Triumvirate.

Pompey and Crassus were not idle while Caesar was effecting his

conquests of Gaul. Pompey was awarded a five year commission in 57 B.C. that gave him proconsular control over Rome's food supply in an attempt to avoid famine.

To cement the First Triumvirate, Caesar had arranged for his daughter, Julia, to divorce her husband so that she could marry Pompey. When she died in childbirth in 54 B.C., it left a strain on the relationship between Caesar and Pompey.

The following year, Crassus went east to fight against the Parthians. He was defeated at Haran by hordes of Parthian horse archers and captured. When he offered a great sum of gold for his release, the Parthians took molten gold and poured it down his throat, killing him.

By 52 B.C. Rome was once again on the brink of civil war. Pompey was elected at the sole consul, the equivalent of a dictator. Although another consul was eventually elected, the significance of the event was noted.

## **THE CIVIL WAR**

While Caesar had been adding to his military fame with victories in Gaul, Pompey had been carefully consolidating his political power in Rome. On November 19, 50 B.C., the Senate voted martial law, entrusting the republic to Pompey, and commanded Caesar to disband his army and return to Rome to face trial.

On the night of January 10, 49 B.C., Caesar led a single legion across the Rubicon River, the boundary between Gaul and Italy. In doing so, he was breaking Rome's law of treason that forbade a governor to lead his army out of his own province. Caesar quipped, "The die is cast." It meant civil war.

As Caesar advanced to Rome, Pompey fled to Greece along with most of the Senate and the entire Roman fleet, leaving Italy for Caesar. Having no ships with which to pursue Pompey, Caesar turned first to the west. He marched the overland route to Spain where he forced the surrender of Pompey's generals in forty days. Consolidating his holdings in Spain, Caesar returned to Italy to prepare for war against Pompey.

In the winter of 49 B.C. Caesar carried the war into Greece where each side tried to blockade the other. This went on for several months. The two forces

finally met on August 9, 48 B.C. at Pharsalus. Caesar had 22,000 men; Pompey had 40,000. By attacking Pompey's superior cavalry with infantry armed with long spears, Caesar's army broke through and his Pompey's rear. Pompey escaped and fled to Egypt.

With a small force, Caesar followed Pompey by ship to Egypt. When he arrived in Alexandria, he found that Pompey had been murdered by the Egyptians who were seeing to curry favor with Caesar.

Now Caesar found himself in trouble. In his haste to capture Pompey, he had come to Egypt with a very small force. Egypt was in the midst of a civil war between the young Ptolemy XIII and his half-sister Cleopatra. The story is told how she had herself wrapped in a carpet and smuggled into the palace where Caesar was staying. She pled her case, using all her seductive charms. Ptolemy's forces learned of this and besieged Caesar within the palace.

When the Egyptians attempted to capture the harbor of Alexandria, Caesar set fire to all the ships. This fire spread to the warehouse district where a great many scrolls from the Library of Alexandria were stored. Thousands of priceless works were destroyed in this fire.

Help came from an unexpected source. Josephus tells us that Antipater, the father of Herod the Great, sent a force of three thousand Jewish soldiers to Caesar's aid and that this gave Caesar some breathing room until further reinforcements arrived from Mithridates of Pergamum (Antiquities 14:8:1). Ptolemy was defeated and killed and the twenty two year old Cleopatra was confirmed as the queen of Egypt.

Caesar gathered his forces and proceeded to Syria and then to Pontus where he defeated Pharnaces at the Battle of Zela in a quick confrontation. His message to the Senate was equally short:

Veni, Vide, Vici!  
I came, I saw, I conquered!

In the next two years, Caesar stamped out the last of Pompey's forces led by his two surviving sons. He returned to Rome in 45 B.C.

## **JULIUS CAESAR AS EMPEROR**

At the age of 55, Julius Caesar was the master of the Roman Empire and the

ruler of most of the known world. He had already demonstrated that he was a military genius. Now he manifested an equal ability in his administration of the Empire.

*Nobody can deny that during the Civil War, and after, he behaved with wonderful restraint and clemency. Whereas Pompey declared that all who were not actively with the government were against it and would be treated as public enemies, Caesar announced that all who were not actively against him were with him (Suetonius 1:75).*

Caesar also pardoned many of his old enemies and even reinstated them in government. He gave rights of self government to towns in Italy and extended citizenship privileges to many people in the provinces. All physicians and professors residing in Rome were granted full citizenship.

Caesar reorganized the calendar, borrowing from the Egyptian calendar of 365 days and then adding an extra day every four years to make a leap year. The current calendar had long grown out of date, so he made the year 46 B.C. to have an extra two months to bring it into a proper schedule.

He set up colonies that could serve as farming settlements for the unemployed. In addition to colonies in Italy, he rebuilt the cities of Corinth and Carthage, making them the capital cities of Greece and Africa.

Despite Caesar's acts of clemency and his excellent administration, there were Roman who hated him for acting as a dictator. A conspiracy formed that was led by Cassius and Marcus Brutus, two noblemen who had served under Pompey in the war who had subsequently been restored to public office by Caesar. They gathered sixty fellow conspirators. Meanwhile, Caesar took no thought of his personal safety and even disbanded his personal bodyguard of Spaniards.

On March 15, 44 B.C. the conspirators attacked Caesar as he was entering a meeting of the Senate. As he was on his way to the meeting, someone had handed him a note, warning of the impending assassination, but he added it to the stack of notes that he was carrying without reading it.

*...one of the Casca brothers with a sweep of his dagger stabbed him just below the throat. Caesar grabbed Casa's arm and ran it through with his stylus; he was leaping away when another dagger blow stopped him (Suetonius 1:82).*

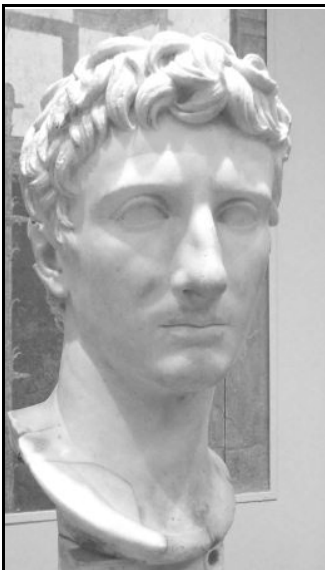
Caesar managed to defend himself against his attackers until he saw Brutus among them. He had always felt a special tenderness for Brutus and it was even rumored that Brutus was his illegitimate son as a result of an adulterous affair.

*Some say that when he saw Marcus Brutus about to deliver the second blow, he reproached him in Greek with: "You too, my child?" (Suetonius 1:82).*

## OCTAVIUS AND ANTONY

Caesar's death left a power vacuum in Rome. Caesar had been one of the ruling consuls, his former general, Marcus Antonius, was the other. He was a large man and people often commented that he looked like an ancient Hercules. He had started his military career in Syria and had seen action in the east before joining Caesar during the Gallic Wars. He had served as Caesar's second in command against Pompey.

When Caesar's will was opened and read, it was discovered that he had adopted his grandnephew Octavius to be his son and heir. Octavius was eighteen years old at the time of Caesar's death. He is described as a skinny, pale young man. He was also rather short and regularly wore special shoes that make him taller than he really was.



Octavius Augustus

Octavius was studying in Greece when he heard the news of Caesar's death. He returned to Rome immediately, only to find that Antony had confiscated all of Caesar's money and land. Antony refused to turn the inheritance over to Octavius, so Octavius turned to the Senate who considered him to be an easily manipulated youth that could be instrumental in dealing with Antony. Accordingly, Octavius led an army against Antony, but before the battle was engaged, Octavius managed to bribe two of the legions of Antony into deserting him. When a battle did take place, Antony was defeated, but the two consuls who had accompanied Octavius were killed. Octavius returned to Rome as the victor, occupied the city with his army, and had himself elected consul.

1. The Second Triumvirate.

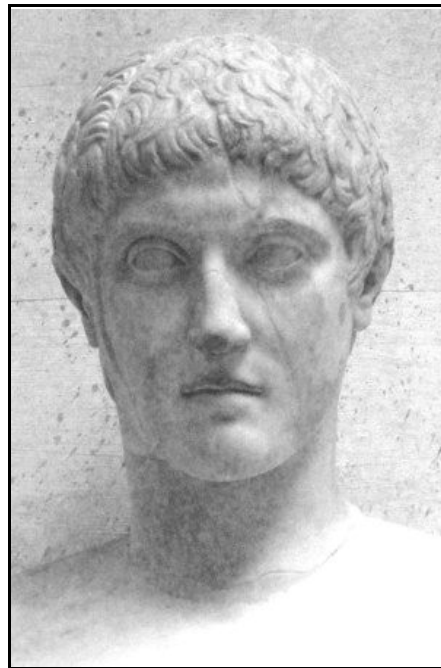
Realizing that he could not rule for long in the face of the Senate's strong opposition, Octavius formed an alliance with Antony and another of Caesar's former generals named Lepidus. These three men divided the empire among themselves.

Octavius	Antony	Lepidus
Italy, Gaul, and Spain	Greece, Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt	North Africa

The First Triumvirate had been a secret agreement; this one was clear to all and was sealed by Antony's marriage to Octavia the Younger, sister to Octavius.

The first order of business for the Triumvirate was the capture and execution of the murderers of Caesar. The members of the Triumvirate began with their own personal enemies in Rome. More than three hundred senators and two thousand nobles were executed. Others fled to Greece where they rallied around the armies of Brutus and Cassius.

Antony and Octavius crossed the Adriatic and won two successive battles at Philippi against Brutus and Cassius, both who committed suicide. While Antony remained in the east, Octavius returned to



Mark Antony

Rome where he began to strengthen his hold on the western provinces. In 36 B.C. he top general and former schoolmate, Agrippa, defeated Sextus, a surviving son of Pompey, in a naval battle off the coast of Sicily. That same year, Octavius took over the twenty two legions of Lepidus, forcing that member of the Triumvirate into partial retirement.



2. Antony and Cleopatra.

Antony began an adulterous affair with Cleopatra that culminated in his divorcing Octavia and marrying Egyptian queen. This reopened the hostilities between Antony and Octavius.

In 32 B.C. Octavius demanded that the Senate open and examine Antony's will. It bequeathed all of Rome's eastern territories to Cleopatra's children by Antony. The Senate promptly annulled Antony's powers and declared war on Cleopatra/

3. The Battle of Actium (31 B.C.).

The campaign against Cleopatra started with Agrippa sailing from Italy to Greece and capturing strong points on the mainland. Antony and Cleopatra sailed to Greece, but found their fleet trapped by the fleet of Octavius (captained by Agrippa) in the Gulf of Actium. When Antony and Cleopatra tried to break through the lines, the forces clashed in one of the most famous naval battles in history. The Egyptian ships retreated early in the battle, leaving Antony's ships to be chewed up by Octavius. Antony and Cleopatra escaped and fled to Egypt where they committed suicide, leaving Octavius as the sole ruler of the Mediterranean world.

## **OCTAVIUS AUGUSTUS AS EMPEROR**

Octavius now began to demonstrate an exceptional genius for administration. By continuing the work begun by Julius Caesar, he developed a system of organization that would carry the Roman Empire for the next 500 years.

1. Relationship with the Senate.

Octavius allowed the Senate and other bodies to continue to function, but he greatly reduced their power while maintaining the appearance of the old republic. In their place, he organized a cabinet that saw his various programs were carried out.

2. Taxation.

Octavius regulated taxation and reformed the provincial government. One of these reforms involved the establishment of a regular census

to be taken every fifteen years. It would be this type of program that would result in Joseph and Mary traveling from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Jesus would be born.

3. Roman Citizenship Curbed.

Octavius reversed Caesar's previous policy of granting citizenship to outsiders, feeling it should be confined only to a select few. Because of this, citizenship became highly prized throughout the empire. When the Apostle Paul indicated that he had been born as a Roman citizen, this was a special status.

Octavius also made it more difficult for slaves to gain their freedom. It was decreed that no slave who had been placed in irons or who had suffered torture could ever become a citizen.

4. Military Reform.

Octavius established an effective military system for protecting the frontiers. Garrisons were placed along the borders to keep out barbarian invaders. At his death, he advised his successors that they should keep the Rhine and Danube Rivers as their northern boundaries and not seek to press beyond these.

5. Building Programs.

Octavius supervised the construction of many public buildings such as temples and theaters. Before he died, he was known to say, "I found Rome brick, and left her marble" (Suetonius 2:28).

A system of major roads were built and kept clear of bandits, thereby making them safe for travel. The seas were kept clear of pirates, encouraging trade. As a result of these accomplishments, the empire prospered and the period of his reign was known as the golden age of Rome.

6. The Wives of Octavius.

Divorce and remarriage had become commonplace in Rome during this era. This was reflected in the life of Octavius.

- Claudia.

Octavius was first married to the step-daughter of Antony. This marriage ended in divorce even before it was consummated.

- Scribonia.

She had already gone through two husbands, both of whom had been consuls. She and Octavius had a daughter together named Julia. They divorced when Octavius grew tired of her complaints.

- Livia Drusilla.

Octavius took Livia away from her husband, even though she was pregnant at the time. Tiberius, her son by this previous marriage, was eventually adopted by Octavius and made his heir.

## 7. Augustus.

Octavius was awarded the title of Augustus by the Senate and he subsequently took this as his name. The month of August was renamed to honor him; it had formerly been called Sextilis, meaning “sixth.”

Octavius died on August 19, 14 A.D. Tacitus tells a story of how his daughter, Julia, murdered him by feeding him poisoned figs. Tiberius was named his heir and became the new emperor.

## **TIBERIUS**

Tiberius had been required by Octavius to divorce his wife and marry Julia, the twice-widowed daughter of Octavius. The marriage did not last and Julia was banished for adultery in 2 B.C. In spite of this, Octavius had adopted Tiberius as his son and heir. Tiberius had shown himself to be an effective military commander in campaigns on the Rhine and Danube frontiers. He occupied one of the seats of consul at the time of the death of Octavius.

He was nearly 55 years old when he became emperor. Although he was a fair administrator, he soon gained a reputation for being suspicious and brutal, quickly disposing of anyone whom he suspected of treachery.

*Not a day passed without an execution, not even days that were sacred and holy, for he put some to death even on New Year's Day. Many were accused and condemned with their children and even by their children (Suetonius).*

On the other hand, Tiberius allowed freedom of speech, even when it was at his expense. He was known to say that liberty to speak one's mind is the test of a free country.



Tiberius

Expansion of the Empire came to a halt under his reign. He concentrated instead upon consolidation.

#### 1. Jesus and Early Christianity.

It was during the reign of Tiberius that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified in Jerusalem by order of the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate. The primary duty of Roman governors was to keep the peace and oversee the collection of taxes. When some of these governors recommended an increase in taxes, Tiberius noted that “a good shepherd shears his flock; he does not flay them” (Suetonius 3:32).

It was also during his reign that the early church first started. Although Christians received much persecution at the hands of the Jews, the Romans tended to ignore Christianity at this early date.

#### 2. Anti-Semitism.

Tiberius sought to remove all non-Roman religions from Italy. To this end, all Jewish citizens of Rome were forbidden to have any distinctly Jewish clothing or other religious objects.

*Jews of military age were removed to unhealthy regions, on the pretext of drafting them into the army; the others of the same race or similar beliefs were expelled from the city and threatened with slavery if they defied the order (Suetonius 3:36).*

#### 3. Retirement.

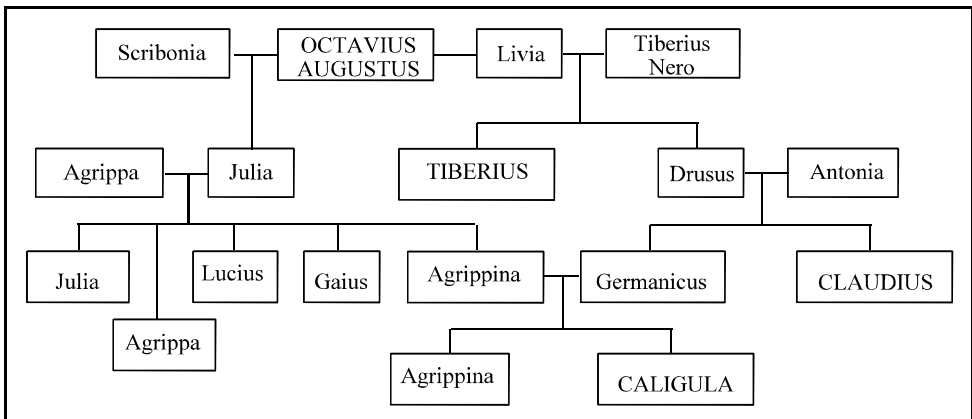
In 26 A.D. Tiberius retired and moved to the Island of Capri. He was

68 years old. He ruled from here through the commander of his imperial bodyguard, Sejanus. Suetonius lists the various sexual depravities in which he now indulged and the entire Empire began to enter a period of decline as the Parthians overran Armenia and the German tribes invaded Gaul.

Sejanus was ambitious and began to remove all the heirs of Tiberius so as to clear the way for himself. Before he could complete his designs, he was assassinated. Tiberius died soon after this and his grandson was chosen to succeed him.

## CALIGULA

Gaius Caesar Germanicus, known to us as Caligula, was the son of Germanicus, a famous Roman general and nephew to Tiberius. Though he was born in Italy, he grew up in Germany in his father's army camp. He was given the nickname "Caligula" by the soldiers when they saw him wearing small soldier's boots (*kaligae*) when he was a child. He was a tall, thin, balding man, given to bouts of epilepsy and fits of cruelty.



When his father died, Caligula went to Capri where he won the friendship of Tiberius. He also became friends with a young Idumean named Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great. Agrippa got into trouble one day when he commented on the desirability of having Caligula as emperor in place of Tiberius. When Tiberius heard of this, he threw Agrippa into chains.

At the death of Tiberius, which Caligula was suspected of hastening, Caligula was declared the new emperor. One of his first acts was to release Agrippa from prison and give him the title of King of Ituria and Trachonitis, the lands

to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

Caligula was hailed as a popular hero as he pardoned many political prisoners. He banished informers, reduced taxes, and sponsored public games. After a few months, his health failed and he became very sick. He emerged from his illness as a neurotic sadist who often repeated the line, “Let them hate me, so long as they fear me” (Suetonius 4:30).

- He engaged in every possible sexual vice.
- He had a shrine built to himself, complete with priests and a life-sized golden image of himself and he demanded that he be addressed as a god.
- He made plans to have his horse elected to the position of consul.
- He led his legions to the Atlantic coast, as if for an invasion of Britain, and then commanded his men to pick up seashells as trophies of victory from the ocean. Then he turned and led them away.
- When his extravagance had exhausted the treasury, he forced rich noblemen to give all their money to the state, on pain of death.
- He gave order for a statue of himself to be set up in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem. The legate of Syria stalled and postponed this action, realizing that it would lead to revolt in Palestine. Caligula rescinded the order, but demanded that legate be executed for his delay. Before this could be carried out, Caligula was murdered.

In 41 A.D. after a reign of only four years, a group of officers from the Praetorian Guard murdered Caligula and secretly buried his body, leaving Rome without an emperor. He had been only 29 years old and had not named a successor. In the confusion, someone suggested Caligula’s aging uncle Claudius. The call went up through the Praetorian for Claudius, but he could not be found. Finally some soldiers discovered him hiding behind a curtain. The Praetorian Guard promptly declared him emperor.

## CLAUDIUS

Claudius was 50 years old when he became emperor and was to reign for thirteen years (41-54 A.D.). He was a paralytic and, because of his ungainly appearance, many people thought he was a moron. His grandfather, Augustus, had admitted that Claudius was bright, but had still been ashamed to have the boy sit with him in public. Suetonius says that:

*...he had several disagreeable traits. These included an*

*uncontrolled laugh, a horrible habit, under the stress of anger, of slobbering at the mouth and running at the nose, a stammer, and a persistent nervous tic of the head, which was apparent at all times but especially when he exerted himself to the slightest extent (Suetonius 5:30).*

Caligula had kept Claudius around for the sole purpose of insulting him and making him the palace fool. However, beneath the ridiculous appearance was a man of learning who turned out to be a steady, sensible ruler. He did not look for honors and even refused to take the title of Emperor.

1.      Extension of Roman Citizenship.

Claudius gave Roman citizenship to various provincials who were in positions of high authority. Up to now, Roman citizenship had been rarely granted to provincials. This means the Apostle Paul had a rare privilege in his day when he was a Roman citizen from birth. In 48 A.D. Claudius went even further by admitting Gallic chieftains to membership in the Senate.

At the same time, it now became illegal for foreigners to adopt the names of Roman families. Paulus was such a name and Paul is an example of one who had a Roman name.

2.      Campaign in Britain.

Claudius made a brief military campaign into Britain, subduing the southern portion of the island without a single major battle. The Roman presence in Britain would continue for the next four hundred years.

3.      Dealings with the Jews.

Claudius was favorable to the Jews during the first part of his reign. He passed edicts that granted them religious toleration and exemption from military service. This policy changed when conflicts arose in Rome and Claudius ordered that all Jews be banished from Rome. Suetonius says:

*Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from the city (Suetonius 5:25).*

It seems likely that this “Chrestus” around whom this conflict was centered was a reference to Jesus Christ.

4. Marital Problems.

In 48 A.D. Claudius ordered the execution of his wife, Messalina, for conspiring against him. She had a reputation for her adulterous relationships and scandals. She had gone so far as to sign a formal marriage contract with her own brother.

Claudius had no better luck with his next wife. He married his niece, Agrippina, even though this was considered to be incest. She already had a son named Nero by a previous marriage. She persuaded Claudius to adopt Nero in favor of his previous son Britannicus. In 54 A.D. she poisoned Claudius, making way for the seventeen year old Nero to take power.

## **NERO CLAUDIUS CAESAR**



Nero was to reign as emperor for fourteen years (54-68 A.D.). In his early years, he was dominated by his mother and his wife, Octavia, the daughter of Claudius. He had been in office only a year when he poisoned his stepbrother, Britannicus. Several years later, he decided that his mother should also die, so he also tried to poison her. She had apparently suspected something, for she had built up an immunity to the poison after seeing what had happened to Britannicus. When the poison did not work, Nero arranged for the ceiling over Agrippa's bed to collapse, but it missed her. Next, he sent her on an ocean cruise in a ship that had been designed to fall

apart at sea. Agrippina swam to shore. Finally, Nero accused her of plotting against the empire and had her executed.

1. Divorce and Remarriage.

In 62 A.D. Nero divorced his wife, Octavia, and then had her executed on a charge of adultery. He married Poppea twelve days



later, but subsequently murdered her by kicking her to death when she was pregnant.

*Having tried to turn the boy Sporus into a girl by castration, he went through a wedding ceremony with him – dowry, bridal veil and all – took him to his palace with a great crowd in attendance, and treated him as a wife (Suetonius 6:28).*

2. Patron of the Arts and Games.

Nero had a great admiration of the Greeks. He thought that he was an accomplished artist, so he painted, wrote poetry, and sang at public concerts which high-ranking nobles were required to attend. In the eyes of the Romans, it was a scandal for a nobleman to be seen on a stage or to participate in public games. Such conduct was considered to be worthy only of a lowly slave.

Despite public opinion, Nero competed in the Olympic Games in 67 A.D. For obvious reasons that had nothing to do with his own talent, he won every event in which he participated. When he fell out of his chariot, the other chariot racers prudently stopped until he had remounted.

3. The Burning of Rome.

In 64 A.D. a great fire broke out in the poorer section of Rome, destroying half the city. A rumor began to spread that Nero had mounted his private stage overlooking the flames and sung of the destruction of Troy. People began to suspect Nero of having started the fire. To turn these suspicions away from himself, Nero accused the Christians of having set the fire.

4. Christian Persecutions.

Up to now, Christian persecution had been largely confined to that which they received at the hands of the Jews. Nero changed that and it seems that he delighted in the various forms of persecution and torture.

- Many were crucified, including the Apostle Peter.
- Some were sewn up in animal skins and then large dogs were set upon them and they were torn to pieces.

- Women were tied to mad bulls and dragged to their deaths.
- In the evenings, Christians were tied to stakes, soaked in oil, and burned alive to light Nero's garden parties.

Nero's excesses created wide discontent and finally rebellion broke out in Gaul, Spain, and Judea. Nero fled from the city of Rome and committed suicide in 68 A.D.

## **THE YEAR OF THE FOUR EMPERORS**

The death of Nero touched off a period of anarchy. As Tacitus notes, "the secret of empire was out. Emperors could be made elsewhere than in Rome" (1:5).

### **1. Galba.**

Galba was an elderly Spanish aristocrat when Nero committed suicide. He was the commander of the Spanish army and he rebelled against Nero's rule. Upon hearing of Nero's death, Galba quickly moved his forces to Rome where he became emperor with the support of the Praetorian Guard. This support did not last long because Galba was deemed to be too stingy with the pay received by the Praetorians and they murdered him and proclaimed Otho to be emperor.

### **2. Otho.**

Otho had been the former husband of Nero's wife, Popaea, but when Nero had married her, Otho had been effectively banished by being given the governorship of the province of Lusitania, comprising modern day Portugal. He initially joined Galba in his revolt, but turned against him when he learned that Galba had picked another man to succeed him.

Meanwhile, another claimant to the office of emperor arose in the person of Vitellius who held the legions of the Rhine. Otho marched north to meet him and their armies clashed in Northern Italy. Facing defeat, Otho committed suicide.

### **3. Vitellius.**

Vitellius had been made governor of Lower Germany by Galba. He

had already held three consulships and was no stranger to politics. Following the death of Otho, he ruled from April to December of 69 A.D., having had himself appointed as consul for life. Suetonius speaks of how Vitellius sacrificed to the ghost of Nero (9:11). Following in the spirit of Nero, he quickly became renowned for his murderous cruelty, killing or torturing friend or foe on the slightest pretext.

4.     Vespasian.

The armies of the eastern provinces nominated their own choice for emperor to be Vespasian who was putting down a revolt in Palestine. When Vitellius realized that his support was quickly failing, he sought to surrender the title of emperor in favor of Vespasian and go into hiding. He was captured and killed, leaving Vespasian the undisputed emperor.

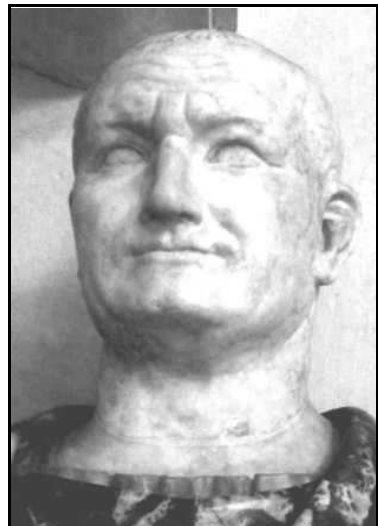
## THE FLAVIAN DYNASTY

None of the Flavian family had ever before held high office. Instead, they were a family of military officers. Yet Vespasian and his two sons were to rule the empire for the next 27 years (69 to 96 A.D.). This would be a time of national recovery.

An ancient superstition was current in the East, that out of Judea at this time would come the rulers of the world (Suetonius 10:4).

1.     Vespasian.

Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus was about sixty years old when he became the emperor of the Roman Empire and would rule for the next ten years. At the time of Nero's death, Vespasian was in Palestine putting down the Jewish revolt. When he was acclaimed as emperor, he left his oldest son, Titus, in charge of the Roman legions in Palestine and returned to Rome.



Vespasian

As emperor, Vespasian found himself faced with numerous problems. The entire empire was in a state of

chaos following the civil wars/ Rebellions were still in progress in Gaul, Germany, and Judea. Finances were in disarray and his political situation was not yet firmly established. All three rebellions were suppressed that year; only the stronghold of Masada in southern Judea held out until 73 A.D.

Vespasian reorganized the Roman military system by recruiting men of different nationalities to serve in all the legions rather than placing them only on the frontier from which they came. In this way, their loyalty would now be to Rome and not to the border region against who they might have to fight. He also established extensive fortifications on the frontiers, extended conquests in Britain, and came to terms with the Parthians in the east.

Vespasian took very careful control over the ruined economy through a variety of cost-saving measures. He kept sufficient control over the bureaucracy to prevent embezzlement and, since he had such a firm control over the military, he did not have to bribe them to retain their loyalty.

Vespasian taxed everything. One of his taxes was placed upon the Jews for their part in rebelling against Rome.

*When the marine fire brigade, the detachment of which had to be constantly on the move between Ostia or Puteoli and Rome, applied for a special shoe allowance, Vespasian not only turned down the application, but instructed them in the future to march barefoot (10:8).*

Vespasian built many public buildings, the most famous of which is the great Colosseum in Rome. It was left to his son, Titus, to finish the Colosseum.

In contrast to his immediate imperial predecessors, Vespasian died peacefully on 23 June, A.D. 79, after contracting a brief illness. The occasion is said to have inspired his deathbed quip: "Oh my, I must be turning into a god!"

2. Titus.

Titus had been a general cut from the same mold as his father. He had been left to complete the conquest of Judea when his father was

made emperor. While Titus was capturing Judea, he met Queen Berenice, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Berenice and her brother, Agrippa II had met with the Apostle Paul and heard his testimony (Acts 25:23; 26:30). Although she was eleven years older than Titus, they became lovers and eventually reunited back in Rome where they lived together until public opinion forced him to send her away.

Following the good example of his father, Titus showed great moderation in the treatment of political enemies. His administration was an extension of his father's. Three catastrophes took place during his reign.

- In August 79 A.D. Mount Vesuvius erupted, burying the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- A plague swept through Campania, just north of Vesuvius.
- Another fire burned in Rome for three days, destroying thousands of homes and many public structures.

Titus fell ill and died in 81 A.D. remarking that “only a single sin lay on his conscience” (Suetonius 11:10), but he went to his grave without declaring what the sin was. His younger brother, Domitian, now came to power.

### 3. Domitian.

Domitian had lived all his life in the shadow of his older brother and he had hated him for it. Evidence seems to indicate he had plotted against Titus on more than one occasion.

Domitian was a high handed dictator who quickly incurred the hatred of the Senate by his autocratic manner. The repressive measures taken against his opponents quickly turned into a reign of terror as they were sought out and slaughtered. At the same time he passed a number of laws aimed at moral reform.

*He expelled one ex-quaestor from the Senate for being over-fond of acting and dancing; forbade women of notoriously bad character the right to use litters or to benefit from inheritances and legacies; struck a knight from the jury-roll because he had divorced his wife on a charge of adultery and then taken her back*

*again (Suetonius 12:8).*

Unchastity among the vestal virgins was made a death penalty. These moral reforms do not mean that Domitian was personally moral. To the contrary, he seduced his own niece and then, when she became pregnant, forced her to have an abortion during which she died.

Eusebius tells us that Vespasian had tried to hunt down any surviving descendants of King David lest a future Jewish revolt be started in their name

(Eusebius 3:12). When Domitian became emperor, he issued the same order and arrested the grandchildren of Judas, the half brother of Jesus. They were brought for questioning but were then subsequently released (Eusebius 3:19).



Part of a statue of Domitian in Ephesus

The tax which Vespasian had imposed upon the Jews was expanded to include all who practiced the Jewish religion, whether or not they were Jewish themselves. Suetonius gives this personal recollection:

*As a boy, I remember once attending a crowded court where the imperial agent had a ninety year old man inspected to establish whether or not he had been circumcised (12:12).*

Domitian demanded that he be worshiped as a god. While Jews were excluded from this order, Christians were not. When they refused, they were charged with treason and many were executed. Eusebius speaks of the persecution that was instigated by him:

*He was, in fact, the second to organize persecution against us, though his father, Vespasian had had no mischievous designs against us (3:17).*

Finally, his wife, Domitia, believing that her life was in danger, conspired with two members of the Praetorian Guard and some other nobles. Domitian was assassinated in 96 A.D.

## **THE ANTONINE EMPERORS**

The period following the death of Domitian is known as the Era of the Five Good Emperors. It would be during this period that the geographic boundaries of the Roman Empire would reach their largest extent.

1. Nerva (96-98 A.D.).

After the death of Domitian, the Senate designated one of its own choice to be emperor, a respectable old lawyer named Cocceius Nerva. While his reign was short, he left as his legacy a rational approach to the problem of imperial succession by adopting a qualified candidate and training him for the job of running the empire. This procedure would be followed for the next seventy years, resulting in a long period of stability.

2. Trajan (98-117 A.D.).

Ulpius Trajan had been the commander of the Roman legions in Spain. Although his ancestors were Italian immigrants, he had been born in Spain. He was the first emperor to have come from outside of Italy.

Trajan avoided honors and treated the Senate with respect, mixing with individual senators as their social equal. At the same time, he did not hesitate to intervene in senatorial matters when necessary.

Trajan pushed the boundaries of the Empire to their largest extent, leading expeditions into Germany, Armenia, and Mesopotamia.

We have a series of letters written back and forth between Trajan and Pliny, the governor of Bithynia in Anatolia. One of the topic regards the imperial order of persecution against Christians who were to be executed if they did not renounce their faith.

3. Hadrian (17-138 A.D.).

Hadrian felt that the Empire was overextended and he gave up Trajan's foothold in Armenia and Mesopotamia. In England, he had a wall constructed that divided the island into a north and south section, indicating that Rome would be content with holding to the southern portion of the island.

He promised the Jews that they could rebuild their temple, but he changed his mind and in 131 A.D. he unveiled plans to rebuild the ruined city of Jerusalem into a Roman city named Aelia Capitolina. The Jews responded with a bloody revolt that caused widespread devastation. They were led in their rebellion by a military leader known as Simon Bar-Kochba ("son of the star"). He was accompanied by an accomplished scholar named Rabbi Akiba. This team of a conquering messiah and a holy scholar became a catalyst to unite the Jews in revolt.

The revolt took Hadrian by surprise. He thought of the Jews as a defeated people who had lost their will to fight. He was mistaken. It took three long years of fighting before the Romans succeeded in putting an end to the revolt. Bar-Kochba was killed in battle while Rabbi Akiba was captured and tortured to death. Those Jews who escaped fled to Parthia where they were given refuge.

Hadrian had a statue of Zeus placed on the temple mount and all Jews were subsequently forbidden to approach the site of Jerusalem. Judea was renamed Syria Palestine and Jerusalem was made over into a Roman city and renamed Aelia Capitolina.

4. Antonius Pius (138-161 A.D.).

Unlike Hadrian, Antonius spent nearly all of his time in Italy. His reign was characterized by peace and economic prosperity. At Hadrian's request, Antonius adopted both Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus as his heirs. When Antonius died in 161 A.D., these two reigned jointly until the death of Verus in 169 A.D.

5. Marcus Aurelius (161-180 A.D.).

As soon as Antonius Pius died, the Parthians moved against Armenia which was a Roman buffer state. The legion that moved against them was massacred. More legions were sent to the area and they fought



their way to Mesopotamia, driving the Parthians back into their homeland.

When the Roman army returned, they brought both the spoils of war as well as a plague that ravaged the empire over the next twenty years. It has come to be known as the Antonine Plague and would bring about the death of both Verus and eventually Marcus Aurelius. The Antonine Plague, as it has come to be called, is commonly thought to have been smallpox.

It may have been the result of this plague and the desire for a scapegoat that caused an intensification of persecution against Christianity. It was decreed that the property of a convicted Christian should go to his accuser. Suddenly it became profitable to hunt down Christians. Justin Martyr was killed during this period.

6. Commodus (180-192 A.D.).

Marcus Aurelius abandoned the adoptive system of succession and arranged for his son to be his heir, having him first serve as consul and then as co-emperor. Commodus was vain, frivolous, and unstable.

- He ordered that the city of Rome be renamed “Commodiana” and the day of the week on which it was enacted be called by the same name.
- He centered his primary interests in chariot racing and gladiatorial combat.
- He filled almost all of the major public offices with his relatives and friends, whether they were capable or not.
- After a fire damaged a sizeable section of Rome, he declared that he was henceforth the “new Romulus” who would rebuild the city.

The Colossus statue of Nero standing by the Colosseum and giving it the name by which it is still known today had its head removed and replaced with the head of Commodus.

Cassius Dio, himself a senator at the time, tells how Commodus demanded that the senators shout out to him, “Thou art lord, and thou art foremost, of all most fortunate: thou dost conquer, thou shalt conquer; from everlasting, Amazonian, thou dost conquer!” (73:20). After twelve years of mismanagement, he was assassinated.

## THE SEVERAN EMPERORS

The assassination of Commodus led to a period of anarchy during which the Praetorian Guard proceeded to auction off the imperial office to the highest bidder. Two such emperors came and went before the commanding general of the Danube marched upon Rome and took the throne for himself. His name was Septimus.

1.     Septimus Severus (193-211 A.D.).

Severus struggled to hold together an empire that was splitting at the seams. He worked at making the Roman army more professional, though this also meant it was less Roman. Officers as well as soldiers were often barbarian recruits from the frontiers. This gradual change resulted in a lessening of discipline for which the Romans had been known. In order to keep their loyalty, Severus had to grant lavish privileges to his men. As the cost to support the military rose, taxes also rose.

One ancient source reports that Severus issued a decree forbidding conversion to Judaism or Christianity. If this is accurate, then it assumes that Christianity had attained something of a legal status, even as attempts were made to limit its further growth.

2.     Caracalla (211-217 A.D.).

When Severus died on a campaign in Britain, his son Caracalla was with him and was immediately proclaimed emperor by his troops. However, he had a brother who was a rival to the imperial purple. The brothers talked about coming to a meeting of the minds, but it was only a ruse and Caracalla had his brother assassinated.

To keep the troops loyal to him, he raised the army's pay substantially, doubling taxes in the process. He granted citizenship to all freeborn men with the result that he was able to increase his tax rolls and revenues. Citizenship had now become a burden rather than a privilege.

Caracalla was assassinated by a member of his own Praetorian Guard who attempted to take the throne for himself. In the fighting that followed, a cousin to Caracalla emerged victorious. His name was Elagabalus.

3. Elagabalus (218-222 A.D.).

Elagabalus was only fourteen years old when those supporting him won their victory. He became known for his debased sexual proclivities, shocking even the most flagrantly hedonists of his day. The Praetorian Guard finally tired of him and but him to death, along with a number of his male lovers. His cousin young ,Severus Alexander, was made emperor.

4. Severus Alexander (222-235 A.D.).

Severus Alexander was only thirteen years old when he became emperor. He served as a puppet to the direction of his mother while the Praetorian was content to have him as emperor as long as they were not hindered from exercising their own will. His troops finally killed him when he tried to bribe invading barbarians whom they preferred to fight.

## **THE CIVIL WARS**

A period of Roman civil wars was to last from 235 to 284 B.C. It would bring the empire to the edge of collapse. This internal strife began with the murder of Severus Alexander. The army proclaimed as emperor a Greek shepherd named Maximus who had enlisted in the army. He had never even been to Rome. He lasted four years before being replaced and this sent the pace for the next fifty years. The average reign of an emperor during this period was about three years, all meeting with violent deaths. Most were made and unmade at the whim of the Roman soldiers who appointed and assassinated emperors for their own profit.

During these years, barbarians moved in from all of the border frontiers. In the east, the Persian Sassanids overthrew the Parthian Empire and invaded Anatolia, Palestine, and Egypt. The Goths moved into the Balkan Mountains of northern Greece. The Franks and Brugundians moved across the Rhine River into Gaul and Spain. In Africa, Berber tribes raided Roman cities and towns.

Political instability was mirrored in the economy as the government began to issue copper coins which had only an outer layer of silver. Inflation soared as merchants in Egypt refused to accept Roman money.

## **DIOCLETIAN**

The Roman Empire was on the verge of collapse when Diocletian came to the throne in 284 A.D. He was a soldier who had risen through the ranks to general. He abandoned all pretense of constitutional rule. Declaring himself divine, he demanded that all who came before him prostrate themselves in worship.

To prevent what had become a regular practice of military coups, he broke up the commands of the legions into smaller units so that no one general would have a great amount of power. The overall size of the military was expanded and the frontier was fortified.

Realizing that the size of the empire made nearly impossible for any one man to administer effectively, Diocletian divided the empire into two separate administrative parts going east and west. He continued to rule in the east while he picked an old friend, an officer name Maximus, who ruled from Italy in the west. To ensure an orderly succession, he and Maximus each chose an junior partner who was given the title of Caesar and who would serve as heirs to the empire.



In order to stabilize the faltering economy, Diocletian issued an edict fixing the prices on all goods. Real gold and silver were issued in place of the devalued coins. A system of taxation was developed that called for a percentage of wealth rather than a fixed amount so that the wealthy paid more taxes than the poor.

Christians had been forbidden from holding any sort of public office or from serving in the military, but in 303 A.D. Diocletian was urged by his sub-Caesar Galerius to begin a more intense persecution. He complied, ordering that all churches be destroyed, all copies of Scripture be burned, and that Christians be forbidden to assemble. Christian leaders were imprisoned and forced by torture to sacrifice to the gods.

In 305 A.D. Diocletian retired from office so that he could spend his days raising cabbages. At his insistence, Maximus also retired, and the two heirs took their places, although Maximus tried to return to power a few years later. Diocletian died peacefully, one of the few emperors to have died a natural death.

It took less than a year for the arrangement of orderly succession to break down. By 311 A.D. there were four rival emperors contending for the throne. The eventual winner in the conflict would be Constantine.

## CONSTANTINE

Flavius Galerius Constantine would be the first Roman emperor to publicly convert to Christianity, though at least one of the former emperors of an earlier generation had been friendly toward Christians.

### 1. The Battle of the Milvian Bridge.

Constantine invaded Italy in 312 A.D. defeating his rival at the Milvian Bridge, just north of the city of Rome. He related the story that, on the way to the decisive battle, he had seen a sign in the sun; a Greek Chi superimposed with a Greek Rho. He took this



The author with a bust of Constantine the Great

symbol to refer to Christ and he claimed to have heard a voice saying, “In this sign conquer.” He had this symbol of Christianity, known as the “Labarum,” placed on the shields of his soldiers going into battle.

2. The Edict of Milan.

The following year, Constantine signed an edict effectively making Christianity legal within the western part empire and returning previously confiscated property and church lands. It would not be until 324 A.D. that he completed the conquest of his rival emperor and took over the entire empire.

3. The Reforms of Constantine.

There were two phases in which Christianity came to prominence under Constantine. First was the edict of Milan which made Christianity equal to all other Roman religions. Once Constantine had won his final victory, Christianity was given favored status over all the other Roman religions.

Constantine became personal friends with such highly placed church leaders as Eusebius of Caesarea and Hosius, Bishop of Cordova. Eusebius went so far as to write a highly euphemistic *Life of Constantine*. Bishops were given the legal right to judge civil cases among Christians and Sunday was made into a public holiday.

4. Constantinople.

Constantine ordered that a new capital city should be build on the Bosphorus on the site of the ancient village of Byzantium. It would replace Rome as the center of the empire and would continue to claim that title for the next thousand years.

In the spring of 337 A.D. Constantine became very sick and received baptism at the hands of Eusebius, the Arian bishop of Nicomedia. It had been customary for some converts to Christianity to delay baptism until late in life, believing that baptism washed away all sin and so limiting their opportunity to engage in post baptismal sins. Constantine had desired to make a trip to Palestine to be baptized in the Jordan, but it was not to be. He died a few days later.

Constantine had a two-fold effect on Christianity and the church. On the one hand, he brought a lasting freedom from persecution so that the gospel could

be proclaimed unhindered throughout the empire. On the other hand, as it became popular to be a Christian, the church began to be filled with those who had a less than sincere faith.

<b>Before Constantine</b>	<b>After Constantine</b>
There was a purity within the church	There was a lessening of purity within the church
There were long periods of catechism training prior to receiving baptism	There was a lessening of the required training to become a Christian
Christians lived a strict lifestyle	A loosening of standards
A martyr mentality among the pious	A monastic mentality among the pious

Christianity would continue to grow in influence until it became the official religion of the Roman Empire under the decree of Emperor Theodosius in 381 A.D.

## **BARBARIAN INVASIONS**

It is a common maxim that Rome was not built in a day. It is equally true that Rome did not fall in a day. Its fall was manifested in a series of successive invasions of barbarian tribes.

### **1. The Goths.**

Bordering the Roman Empire on the north were a number of tribes known collectively as the Goths. They would eventually divide into two groups as they moved down into the Roman Empire.

- Visigoths (West Goths).
- Ostrogoths (East Goths).

Both of these tribes were converted to Christianity through the preaching ministry of Ulfias, a bishop who translated portions of the Bible into their Gothic language.

To the east of the Goths were Mongolian tribes known as the Huns.

The Goths lived in fear of the Huns and in 376 the Goths were permitted by the Romans to cross the Lower Danube and to settle in Roman territory. However, they were mistreated by Roman officials and they revolted. The Emperor Valens subsequently attacked them, but was killed in the Battle of Adrianople in 378. He was followed by Emperor Theodosius who made peace with the Goths and that turned to open friendship as they fought common enemies.

The Goths began a new migration under their chieftain Alaric in 395. Entering Italy, they marched on Rome, taking the city in 410. It was in response to the fall of Rome that Augustine wrote his famous work, *The City of God*. He sought to demonstrate that, even though the city of Rome had fallen, it did not mean that the plans and purposes of God had been thwarted, for the Lord has another city that is not of this world.

Following the sack of Rome, Alaric prepared a fleet to invade North Africa, but it was sunk in a storm. Alaric died shortly thereafter and the Goths departed from Italy, moving into Gaul and then into Spain.

## 2. The Vandals.

The incursions of the Visigoths had left the northern borders of the empire undefended. There was little resistance when the Vandals crossed the Danube in 406. Like the Goths who were before them, the Vandals were Arian Christians. They attempted to enter Italy, but were driven back by the Goths.

Instead, they moved through Spain and crossed the Straits of Gibraltar into North Africa. From there, they used Carthage as their base of operations and sailed across the Mediterranean to take Rome, “vandalizing” the city for two weeks.

## 3. The Huns.

The Huns were fierce nomadic warriors who fought for profit and plunder. They were united under the leadership of Attila and in 440 they ravaged the border cities along the Danube, pausing for a period when the Romans sued for peace, but then continued southward to attack Constantinople. He was unable to capture Constantinople, but he did destroy the trapped Roman army at Gallipoli and exacted an enormous tribute from the Romans.



In the spring of 450, the emperor's sister, Honoria, sent a ring to Attila, asking him to rescue her from a marriage that had been arranged for her to a local Roman senator. He took this as a proposal of marriage and demanded half the western empire as her dowry, using this as a pretext to march into Gaul. At the Battle of Chalons, he was defeated by a combined force of Romans and Visigoths and forced to withdraw from Gaul. Next he turned toward Italy, marching into the Po Valley. It was here that Pope Leo I came to meet with Attila, interceding on behalf of Rome. Attila agreed and left Italy, returning to his homeland where he died in his sleep in 453. With his death, the Huns divided into groups of small tribes and ceased to be a threat to Rome.

Modern historians normally mark the end of the Roman Empire to 476 when the German chieftain Odoacer forced the young emperor Romulus Augustus to abdicate. Odoacer made himself king of Italy and the western arm of the Roman Empire now became a Germanic kingdom.

## **REASONS FOR THE DECLINE AND FALL OF ROME**

Edward Gibbon, in his monumental work on *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, lists a number of reasons why the empire fell.

1. The Injuries of Time and Nature.

Rome suffered bouts of destruction several times throughout her history. The city was vulnerable to fire, flood, and disease and these left their marks on the city.

2. Barbarians and Christians.

As we have noted, the Roman Empire saw a number of migrations take place in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. These migrations were often violent as invaders moved against the empire. It has been argued that these outward attack were assisted by Christianity, the new state religion.

Christianity taught men to love their neighbors and this can be difficult to accomplish when you are seeking the kill them on the battlefield. Likewise, it taught men to worship God rather than

Caesar and was therefore a battle of loyalties. This should not be thought of as a failure on the part of Christianity. Though it is true that the barbarians conquered Rome, it is also true that Christianity conquered the barbarians. Thus, when the vandals entered Carthage, they had already converted to an Arian form of Christianity and were shocked at the presence of houses of prostitution. They promptly destroyed these while leaving the churches intact.

3. Abuse of Natural Resources.

Octavius Augustus had once said, “I found Rome brick; I left her marble.” But later Romans tore down the marble from the great buildings to mix with lime for roadways. The great monuments were not so much destroyed by fire or by sword, but by the greed of Rome’s own inhabitants. High taxes forced the small farmers out of business and into the cities where they lived in poverty. As merchants and business owners were taxed ever heavier, they also collapsed.

4. Domestic Quarrels.

In its later years, the empire was plagued by civil wars and internal strife as one ruler after another sought to take power for himself. The Romans who had once prided themselves on their laws became a nation of rebels and law-breakers.

As the ranks of the Roman armies were filled with men from the provinces, they lost their patriotic spirit and discipline, becoming more interested in loot. It had been this self discipline that had been the source of Rome’s initial greatness.

Thus, Rome did not fall because of external forces such as invasion by the barbarians. Rome fell because she had no sufficient inward base. The barbarians only completed the breakdown and Rome gradually became a ruin.

We should also note that the eastern part of the empire centered in Constantinople would continue to stand as a “Christian kingdom” for the next thousand years. Though it will not be the topic of this study, the legacy of Rome would continue to be seen in Constantinople until its fall in 1453.

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# The Bible is a historical book...

...and that means it can only be fully understood against the backdrop of the history in which its narrative is set. It is like looking at a painting that is set in a frame. One can normally see only that which is encompassed by the limitations of the frame. But imagine if the viewer could move past the frame to see the larger perspective beyond that which is captured by the painting itself. The purpose of this study is to take the reader “through the looking glass” to see the historical framework in which the story of the Bible takes place.



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