

Moses, The Prophets, and Me!

Coming to Grips with the Older Testament

Focus #3: THE MIGHTY ACTS OF GOD [the historical narrative of the Old Testament]

I. HISTORICAL PERIOD #1: UNIVERSAL DEALINGS [God and MANKIND] (Genesis 1-11)

FOCUS: Three great events of the period of Universal Dealings

A. Event #1: Creation and the fall (Genesis 1-3)

1. The Creation of Mankind (Genesis 1-2)

Notes:

- [1] There are in fact *two* creation accounts. The first (1:1-2:4) describes the act of creation from God's perspective; only He could provide such a narrative, because only He was there throughout the week of creation. The second account (2:4 - 25) is written from Adam's perspective (cp. Gen 5:1); its primary emphasis is God's provision of a wife for Adam.

Note Concerning Chronology:

This period covers the events from creation to the call of Abram from Ur of the Chaldees (2091 BC). Therefore, using the most conservative date for the creation of the world (ca 4000 BC), this period covers almost 2000 years, which is more than the rest of the Old Testament in total.
(Abraham - Malachi = ca 1700 years)

- [2] There is no reason to take the creation account as anything but a literal and entirely factual record of God's creative activity at the beginning of time.

2. The Fall of Mankind into Sin and Condemnation (Genesis 3)

Notes:

- [1] It is important to acknowledge and appreciate the significance of the fall in Genesis 3, both biblically (i.e., the way in which that narrative colors all that happens thereafter) and personally (i.e., the way in which the reality of fallenness colors the life of every human being).
- [2] Notice that after the sin, God made a remarkable *promise* (Gen 3:15) and a very important *provision* (Gen 3:21). In these God provides the seed from which the plan of salvation will erupt.

B. Event #2: Overspreading of the earth with evil & the Noahic Flood (Genesis 6-9)

Notes:

- [1] It is important to understand that it was the wickedness of men which caused God to send the flood upon the earth. (In this regard: the extent of the flood--universal or local?)
- [3] Notice the way in which the ecology and climate of the earth changed at the Flood. (In this connection, what happened to the dinosaurs?)
- [4] After the flood, God ratifies a covenant with mankind through Noah (Gen 8:20-9:17); that covenant includes: 1] the promise that God would never again destroy the earth *by flood*; 2] permission for mankind to eat meat (but no blood); 3] the responsibility to punish evildoers; 4] the sign of the covenant--the rainbow.

C. Event #3: Rebellion at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 10:11)

Note: What was the sin of the builders of the tower of Babel, and why did God judge that sin in such a remarkable way?

II. HISTORICAL PERIOD #2: THE PATRIARCHAL AGE [God and ISRAEL] (Genesis 12-50)

Introductory Notes:

- [1] Remember that in choosing Abraham/Israel, Yahweh was *not*: abandoning the rest of humanity. The choice of the family (and later the nation) of Abraham was God's gracious means of powerfully putting Himself on display to the world, and thus drawing many to Himself.
- [2] Understand that when Yahweh chooses Israel, He actually chooses a man who, by God's grace and in the fulfillment of God's promises, will *become* a great nation.
- [3] This period is known as the *Patriarchal Age*, because it narrates four successive generations of a small clan, the first three of which were governed by a ruling *Patriarch* who plays a role important to the biblical narrative. (It is important to understand the concept of *patriarchal rule*, as it is so basic to what is happening here.)
- [4] The story told in the book of JOB occurred during this period. (There is debate as to when that story was written down in the form in which we possess it in the Scriptures.)

Note concerning chronology:

This first period of the history of Israel as a people lasts 215 years, from the call of Abram (2091 BC) to the time Abraham's grandson, Jacob/Israel, moves his clan to Egypt in order to rejoin his long-lost son, Joseph (1876 BC).

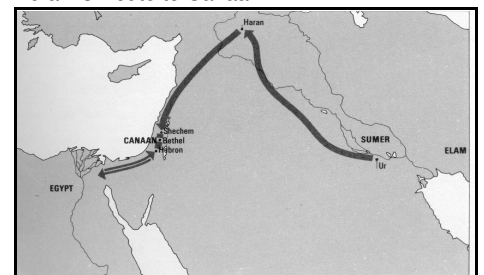
FOCUS: The three great *patriarchs* of this period

I. Patriarch #1: Abraham (Genesis 12 - 26)

Notes:

- [1] Abram was part of a wealthy and powerful clan living in the Mesopotamian delta; God called him to abandon that clan, to go to a land which He would show him, and to allow God to make of him a great clan which would be a blessing to all people. (Note: Abraham would have understood that promise in relationship to the earlier promise of Gen 3:15.)
- [2] A very important element of this narrative: the ratification and establishment of the *Abrahamic Covenant* (Gen 12:)
- [3] Abram follows the command of Yahweh to depart his homeland (albeit haltingly), but he waited for 25 years for the first son to be born to him. (Thus, Abraham was 100 years old when his wife, Sarah, finally bore him a son, Isaac.)
- [4] During those years of waiting, Abram often doubted God. But God was faithful to Abraham. He confirmed His covenant promises in a remarkable and blessed ceremony of legal ratification (Gen 15)

Abram's Route to Canaan



II. Patriarch #2: Isaac (Genesis 12 - 26)

Notes:

- [1] Isaac was the son of promise for whom Abraham and Sarah had waited for 25 years! Nonetheless, when Yahweh commanded that Abraham offer Isaac up as a sacrifice, Abraham was willing to do so (Gen 22), fully persuaded “that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Heb 11:19).
- [2] Isaac married Rebekah, and in God’s time they bore twin sons, Esau (the elder) and Jacob (the younger). God promises that Jacob would inherit the birthright (i.e., the place of honor and authority, and thus the right to carry on the line of promise), but Jacob goes about to seize that honor for himself by deceit and trickery.

III. Patriarch #3: Jacob (Genesis 37- 50)

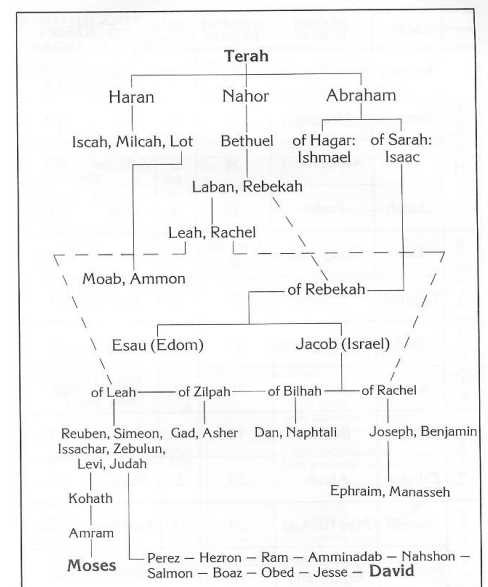
- [1] As a result of his deceitful attempts to seize the birthright for himself, Jacob is forced to flee from his brother, Esau.
- [2] During his years away from his family, Jacob marries Leah and Rachel, tends sheep for his uncle, Laban, and bears 12 sons by his two wives and their two handmaidens. Those 12 sons of Jacob become the 12 tribes of Israel (with some permutations!). Rachel (the favorite wife of Jacob), who was unable to bear children for much of her life, finally gives birth to two sons—the last two sons of Jacob/Israel, Joseph and Benjamin.

- [3] Jacob finally returns home, and along the way he is confronted by the Angel of the Lord. Jacob insists that the Angel bless him, and thus Jacob’s name is changed to Israel and the covenant is reconfirmed in his line.

- [4] In one of the most beautiful and compelling stories of all literature, Jacob’s favorite son, Joseph, is sold into slavery by his siblings, taken to Egypt, thrown into prison, but then released and exalted by reason of his divinely provided ability to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams. Joseph guides Egypt (and the Mediterranean world) through 7 years of famine, and in that connection is reunited with his family.

- [5] As the *family* period of Israel’s history draws to a close, Jacob takes his little clan of 70 souls and goes to Egypt to escape the famine and to be reunited with his son, Joseph.
- [6] This brings us to the end of the book of *Genesis*. As we close that book, the family of Abraham, now under the leadership of Jacob, is living happily in Egypt. They are a tiny clan, but because of Joseph they have been received very well in Egypt.

Patriarchal Family Tree



III. HISTORICAL PERIOD #3: ISRAEL BECOMES A NATION (Exodus 1 - Deuteronomy 34)

Introductory Notes:

[1] The Jewish people think of Abraham as the father of their family, but of Moses as the father of their nation. Think about the difference between a family and a nation. What does it take to make a nation of a family?

[3] Remember that when we close the book of Genesis, Jacob's little clan are living happily in Egypt.

However, Exodus 1:7-22 records two very dramatic changes in the fortunes of that family during their extended stay in Egypt:

The first change (Exodus 1:7, 9, 12):

The second change (Ex 1:8-22):

Notice that this was in fulfillment of a promise made by Yahweh to Abraham much earlier (Gen 15:13-16).

[4] Another distinction: the balance of the Old Testament (Moses - Nehemiah) can be divided again into two distinct periods.

✧ During the first period, Israel is an *independent nation*, ruled in a real sense by King Yahweh (who administers that rule through human mediators of his own choosing). We have called that period "Israel under *God as King*." This situation continues from the Exodus (1446 BC) until the Kingdom of Judah is carried off to Babylon (586 BC).

✧ Daniel prophesied a series of four Gentile kingdoms who would rule over Israel until Messiah's appearance (Dan 2, 7). Those four were BABYLON, MEDO-PERSIA, GREECE, and ROME. Thus, the second period of Israel's history as a *nation* in the Old Testament is "Israel under *Gentile Rulers*" (below). Jesus referred to this period as "the times of the Gentiles" (Lk 21:24). That period lasted from 586 BC to the close of the Old Testament. Notice that when the Old Testament *closes*, Medo-Persia is in power. So only the first two of those prophesied Gentile powers ruled over Israel in the pages of the Old Testament.

An important Distinction:

The family of Abraham, which had gone down to Egypt under Jacob/Israel, will become a nation under Moses, and she will, of course, remain a nation throughout the Old Testament narrative. It is important to grasp the distinction between that portion of Israel's history when she was simply a clan/family (i.e., the period of the Patriarchs, recorded in Gen 12-50), and the later period when she becomes a nation (Exodus through the rest of the Old Testament).

The Biblical Record

This initial period of Israel's history as a nation (indeed, the record of her establishment as a nation) is recorded in Exodus - Deuteronomy (i.e., the rest of the Pentateuch). Notice that this is basically the life of Moses; he is born in Exodus 2, and he dies in Deut 34. So in these four books he is writing his diary (i.e., he lived these events); in Genesis he was writing history (events which happened before he was born.)

FOCUS: Three great *events* of the life of Moses

A. Event #1: The exodus of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 1- 18)

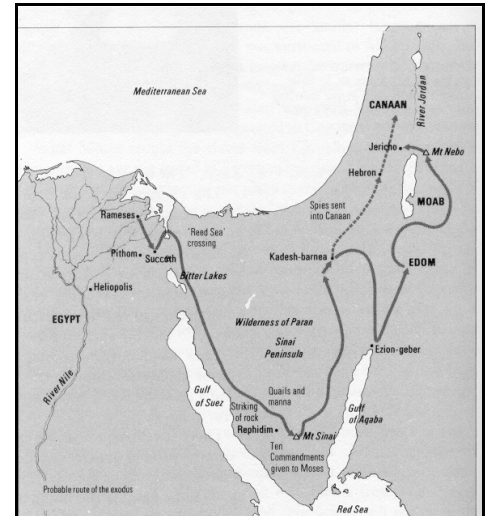
[1] The Exodus is the most important and defining miracle of the Old Testament. It is important to come to grips with the majesty and power which Yahweh demonstrated in that event.

[2] The Exodus occurred in 1446 BC (1 Kgs 6:1), after the Israelites had been in Egypt for 430 years (Ex 12:40).

[3] If the biblical date for the Exodus is accepted (as it should be), the Pharaoh of the Exodus was almost certainly Amenhotep II; he fits the biblical narrative remarkably well. (See under Chronology.)

[4] God used the pride and stubbornness of the Egyptian Pharaoh to put on display His own infinite power and glory. This is an important element of the biblical narrative, and it shapes Israel's history through the rest of the Old Testament and beyond (cp 1 Sam 4:8).

- [5] Included in the remarkable and dramatic narrative of the exodus from Egypt are the following elements:
- ✧ God’s providential preservation of the baby Moses, honoring the faith of the child’s parents (Heb 11:23) and causing him to be reared in the palace of the Pharaoh, as the adopted son of the daughter of the king of Egypt
 - ✧ Moses’ choice to identify with the people who possessed a promise of the Messiah, and thus his flight and exile from Egypt for 40 years (Heb 11:24-27)
 - ✧ Moses’ call at the burning bush, and his return to Egypt to confront the Pharaoh with the demand of Yahweh that the children of Israel be allowed to depart
 - ✧ The series of 10 plagues, culminating in the death of the first born on the night of the first Passover, and then the hasty and forced departure of the people of Israel (now over 2 million in population) from the land of Egypt
 - ✧ The miracle of the Red Sea, when Israel was ensnared and Yahweh delivered that people by parting the waters of the Sea and providing a way across the dry seabed and out of Egypt. Pharaoh’s horses and armies were destroyed as the waters of the Red Sea collapsed upon them.
 - ✧ After God delivered Israel from Egypt, He joined them in their travels in the Person of the Glory Cloud (Ex 13:21), the most important *theophany* of the Old Testament. Throughout their journey, God protected the people as they made their way across the desert of Sinai, and He provided for their every physical need.



B. Event #2: Covenant of the Law made at Mt Sinai (Ex 19 - Num 10)

- [1] The Glory Cloud led Israel to Mt Sinai, and there He made another covenant with them. This was the Mosaic Covenant (sometimes called the Sinaitic Covenant, or simply “the Law”), the most dominant (though not the most important) covenant of the Old Testament (thus that name). When Israel accepted that covenant, she became in a unique and profound sense “the people of Yahweh” (Ex 19:5,6). God became Israel’s king--in the most literal, actual and immediate sense. (This unique form of rule was a *true* Theocracy.) King Yahweh always administered His rule through a human officer/mediator of His choice (Moses, Joshua, the local Judges, the succession of kings), but God always intended that those human mediators of His rule acknowledge His supreme authority and glory, and that rule be exercised in order to give such glory to King Yahweh.

⇒ After the covenant had been properly ratified (Ex 24:1-8), Moses was called into the Mount and given instructions as to how to build a throne room for King Yahweh (i.e., the Tabernacle). When that throne room was completed, King Yahweh moved in and occupied His throne, the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies (Ex 40:33-38, the enthronement of King Yahweh).

⇒ Once enthroned, Yahweh began to speak legislation to His people (Lev 1:1). He spoke an extensive law system which touches every facet of life. Though often misunderstood and caricatured, this divinely conceived system of law was simple but comprehensive, and it was infinitely wise and just. Had it been consistently and faithfully honored, it would have made the nation of Israel a haven of justice and righteousness. However, it was only haltingly obeyed at best, and was more often neglected and rejected entirely.



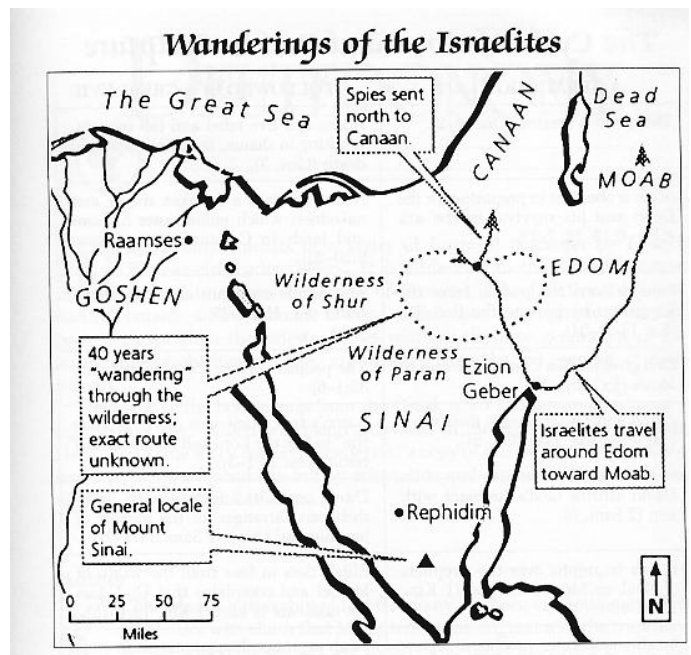
⇒ The Mosaic Law (as it is most often known) is composed of three distinguishable elements: ① the moral law (declogue); ② religious (or ritual) law, concerning how Yahweh might be approached (the levitical system of worship at the central altar, including restrictions concerning how a person might approach God, the occasions of approach, the personnel to be utilized in that approach, the stated seasons of approach, and the means by which approach could be made); and ③ civil law (dealing with relationship between citizens of the theocratic kingdom, legal principles of tort, personal responsibility, contractual obligations, etc.). That law system was designed as the “constitution” of the covenant nation--the religious, moral and legal frame of reference within which God intended His special nation to conduct itself in every facet of life.

- [2] One very important element of the Mosaic covenant: the doctrine of the *central altar*. The point was that after the Mosaic covenant was ratified, the only place sacrificial worship was to occur was at the tabernacle/temple. Further, such sacrificial worship had to be performed through the agency of the priestly family chosen by God, and in accord with the standards carefully laid down in that law code. In short, the place where the Mosaic covenant crystallized most graphically was at the tabernacle/temple.
- [3] In thus forming a *unique* relationship with the covenant nation of Israel, God was *not* abandoning the rest of humanity. To the contrary, He was raising up a nation which would be a testimony to the rest of the world. Understand this in light of the reality that in the ancient world every nation had its “tribal deity,” and that national identity was defined primarily by allegiance to that deity. (That is, to be a Canaanite was to worship Baal; a Babylonian by definition was a worshiper of Bel; a Philistine of Dagon, etc.) But those gods were no gods; they were lifeless idols who could only provide a self-serving excuse for the sin which the “worshiper” longed for. In that milieu, Yahweh, the God of Israel--the living God (Josh 3:10) who can actually do things, who can hear the prayers and respond to the needs of His devotees--was a sharp and compelling contrast. (Remember, too, that the geography of the land of Israel was an important element of that divine strategy.)

Further, the Law mandated that the proselyte (i.e., the “stranger in your midst”) be treated as if he were a native born citizen of the covenant kingdom (Ex 12:48-49; 22:21; 23:29; Lev 19:33,34).

C. Event #3: Disbelief of the nation & years of wilderness wanderings (Num 11 - Deut 34)

- [1] At Kadesh-Barnea (southern “entrance” to the land of promise), the Israelites sent in 12 spies; when those spies returned, the people refused to believe that Yahweh could give them the victory over the inhabitants of Canaan. They murmured against Moses and against God, (Num 13).
- [2] Because of their sin (Num 14:2), the nation would wander for 40 years before reaching the border of the Promised Land. During those years the unbelieving generation (everyone over 20 at the time of the Exodus--except the two believing spies, Joshua & Caleb) would “die in the wilderness.”
- [3] Later in the course of the wanderings in the wilderness, Moses “spoke ill advisedly with his lips,” taking to himself some of the glory that belonged only to God. Because he had failed to give God the honor in all things, Moses would also die at the border of the Land (Num 20 ;Ps 106:33).



IV. HISTORICAL PERIOD #4: THE CONQUEST & DIVISION OF THE LAND (Joshua 1-24)

FOCUS: Three great *events* of the life of Joshua

A. Event #1: Joshua succeeds Moses, leads Israel across the Jordan River (Josh 1- 5)

- [1] In order to cross the waters of the flood-swollen Jordan River, God miraculously parted the waters as He had parted the waters of the Red Sea at the behest of Moses. Thus, Joshua was demonstrated to be God's choice to succeed Moses as leader of the covenant people.
- [2] Israel camps on the plain of the Jordan Rift, at a place called Gilgal. There the new generation accepts the sign of the Abrahamic covenant (5:1-9); the nation observed the Passover [exactly 40 years after the 1st Passover] (5:10, 11), and the manna ceased to fall from the skies (5:12).

B. Event #2: The 7-year conquest of the land of Canaan (Josh 1- 18)

- [1] The land of Canaan was inhabited by several tribes of people. God commanded that those people be destroyed and the land claimed for Israel (Deut 7:1-6; 20:16, 17; Josh 6:21).

However, the responsibility of Joshua and the army of Conquest was to destroy the *armies* of the Canaanites, and thus to cripple the ability of the various cities to defend themselves. Then, after the land had been divided among the tribes, those individual tribes were to destroy the remainder of the people living in the region allotted them. Indeed, God intended that the Canaanites would be driven out "little by little" so that the land would not be overrun by animals (Ex 23:29, 30; Deut 7:22), so that Israel might learn warfare (Jud 3:1,2), and so that God might test the faithfulness of Israel (Jud 2:21,22).

Joshua and the army of conquest were entirely faithful; they accomplished all that King Yahweh had instructed them to do (Josh 11:23). However, the tribes were not faithful; they allowed Canaanites to remain in the land, and soon they were marrying the daughters of those Canaanites, and then worshipping their gods (Jud 2:1-15).

- [2] The initial conquest under Joshua lasted for seven years (1406-1399, cf Josh 14:7-10).
- [3] Some have taken offense at God's command to destroy the Canaanites and dwell in their land. In that regard, remember the following:

✧ The Canaanites had been given a remarkable measure of "light" from God; Abraham and his family had lived out their lives in their midst.

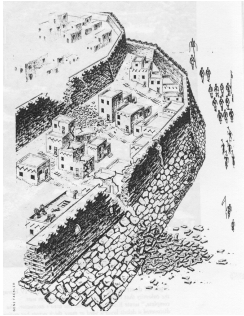
✧ Yahweh had patiently endured the wickedness of Canaan for hundreds of years (Gen 15:16; cp 2 Pet 3:9).

✧ The Canaanites were unspeakably corrupt in religion and morals (Cp. Lev 18:25).

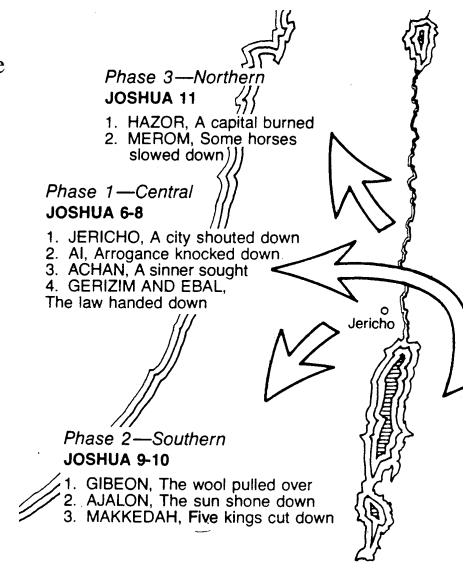
✧ The Canaanite tribes had not submitted to God's determination to give the land to His covenant people (with the exception of one city, the Gibeonites); instead, they had prepared themselves for stout resistance against the Israelites.

✧ The command to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan must not be understood as divine sanction upon imperialistic advances by an invading foreign power. Yahweh was removing a cancerous growth from the human race, and the nation of Israel was simply the "scalpel" in the hand of the God of the universe.

- [4] The 7-year conquest was conducted in three stages, as reflected on the chart below. God had promised Israel that He would give them houses to dwell in which they had not built and vineyards to harvest which they had not planted. In order to accomplish this, Yahweh contrived to have the Canaanites form extensive alliances and fortify especially strategic cities. As a result, the Israelites were able to destroy the defensive capability of the entire land by winning those strategic battles. The battles are summarized at right.



The drawing at the left is a very accurate representation of the way in which the walls of Jericho “fell down upon themselves” so that each of the soldiers of Israel had a ramp by which he could ascend into the exposed city.



C. Event #3: The land is divided among the tribes of Israel (Josh 19 - 24)

- [1] After the land had been conquered, Joshua oversaw the division of the land among the 12 tribes of Israel. The process of dividing the land was carried out in such a way that the will of King Yahweh was clearly made known. The chart at right describes the relative position of the various portions. The map on the next page gives a more precise representation of the tribal divisions.

Notice the following concerning this division of the land among the tribes:

- ① The first tribe given a portion was Judah, and that tribe’s portion was a large plot of land in the southern part of the territory.
- ② Because of a sin committed in the days of the Patriarchs, Simeon was not given her own portion; rather, they were given cities scattered in the region of Judah (Gen 34:1-31; 49:5-7).
- ③ Because of his participation in that same sin (Gen 34:1-31), Levi was not given a portion in the land. However, because of that tribe’s faithfulness in the days of Moses (Exod 32:27), they were selected as the priestly tribe (Dt 33:11), and thus were given 48 “Levitical Cities” in which to dwell (Josh 21). These cities were situated evenly throughout the land, so that the entire nation would have access to the instruction and ministry of the Levites.
- ④ Dan was given a very fruitful region near the Mediterranean, but that area was populated by the Philistines. When the Danites saw their fortified cities, rather than trusting Yahweh they fled far to the north, conquered a city named Laish, and claimed that territory for themselves (Jud 18). (Thus “Dan [in the far north] to Beersheba” [in the south] came to mean all Israel (1 Sam 3:20).
- ⑤ Benjamin was given a small but important area just north of Judah, but because of the wickedness of a Benjamite city the tribe was reduced to 600 men (Jud 19-21) and ultimately “absorbed” into Judah.
- ⑥ There is no tribe of Joseph, but there are two “Joseph” tribes: Ephraim & Manasseh. These were the two sons of Joseph. Because Joseph was the favorite of Jacob/Israel, he (Joseph) was given the double portion; that double portion finds expression in the tribal allotments given his two sons.
- ⑥ Notice that Reuben & Gad and ½ Manasseh settled in Transjordan (i.e., beyond the Jordan Rift). These tribes had asked to settle in that territory when the nation had passed through that area and conquered the local kings on the way to the Promised Land; Moses had granted that request with the proviso that those tribes go across the Jordan and fight for the land with their brothers (Num 32). The 2½ fulfilled that demand, and thus were given their portion in Transjordan (Josh 4:12; 22:9f).



V. HISTORICAL PERIOD #5: THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES (Judges 1 - 1 Samuel 12)

FOCUS: Three unique *realities* about the Period of the Judges

A. Reality #1: Judges were LOCAL leaders (except the final judge)

Notes:

- [1] As to chronology, this period extended from the death of Joshua (ca 1350 BC) to the time when Saul was made king over the entire nation (1051 BC). So the period of the Judges lasted around 350 years. However, some of the Judges ruled and ministered simultaneously. Thus, the chronological data in the book are sometimes difficult.
- [2] A very important distinctive: during the period of the Judges, there was no one central ruler (as there had been before under Moses & Joshua, and as there would be afterward under the kings).

This is reflected in the “key verse” of the book of Judges: “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes, *because there was no king in Israel*” (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

Thus, the distinctive of this period of OT history is that the tribes were functioning as independent entities. Indeed, there were many times during this period when tribes were at war *with one another*.

B. Reality #2: This is the period of the greatest sin and failure of all the Old Testament

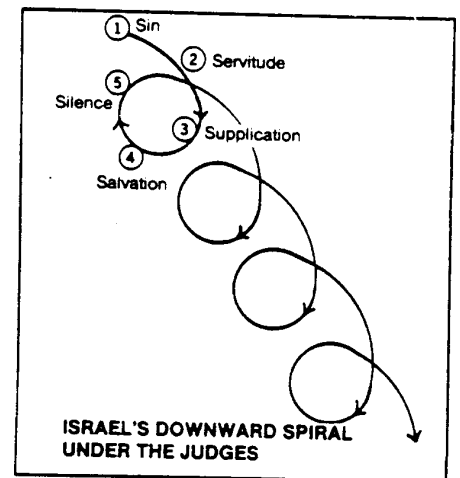
- [1] The period of the Judges is most notable for failure and apostasy. (Notice the repeated refrain, “Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord” (2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). The attraction was to the wicked and licentious religions of the Canaanites. The Canaanite religion was in fact concerned with little but sex and fertility. In this regard, notice:

✧ The cycle of wickedness which prevailed throughout this period is defined in Jud 2:11-20 -- *Sin* (2:11-13); *Suffering* (2:14, 15); *Supplication* (2:15b, 18b); *Salvation* (2:16, 18a).

✧ The depth of the wickedness of this period is deliberately reflected in two awful episodes which form the epilogue of the book of Judges (18-21).

✧ The failure is the more remarkable because it follows the great victory and obedience of the book of Joshua. The Bible twice makes the point that the nation remained faithful “all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel” (Josh 24:31; Jud 2:7, 10).

✧ Joshua had warned the Israelites that if they let the Canaanites live and dwell in the land, they would become “snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you” (Josh 23:12, 13). But the Israelites did not drive out the Canaanites (Josh 17:11-13; Jud 1:27-36), and as a result they were soon marrying the Canaanites and worshiping their gods (2:11-14). These specific sins produced the depressing days known as the period of the Judges.



C. Reality #3: The careers of some of the judges overlapped in time with one another

[1] The leaders during this period were known as Judges. They were local leaders; that is, no judge (except the last one) was a national leader. The judges ministered in portions of the country, and in many cases their ministries overlapped one another in time. (See map on former page.)

[2] The Judges mentioned by name in the book (in approximate chronological order) are as follows:

Othniel (defeated a king of Mesopotamia, gave 40 years of rest after 8 years of oppression)

Ehud (defeated Eglon, King of Moab; gave 80 years of rest after 18 years of oppression)

**Shamgar* (defeated 600 Philistines, probably ruled during part of the 80 years rest of Ehud)

Deborah (with Barak, defeated army of Sisera; gave 40 years rest after 20 years of oppression)

Gideon (defeated Midianites, gave 40 years rest after 7 years oppression)

**Tola* (Judged during years of rest won by Gideon)

**Jair* (with 30 sons who were itinerant judges, probably judged during years of rest won by Gideon)

Jephthah (defeated Ammonites; a ruthless man; judged for 6 years after 18 years of oppression)

**Ibzan*, **Elon*, **Abdon* (these three are identified as Judges, no info concerning their ministries)

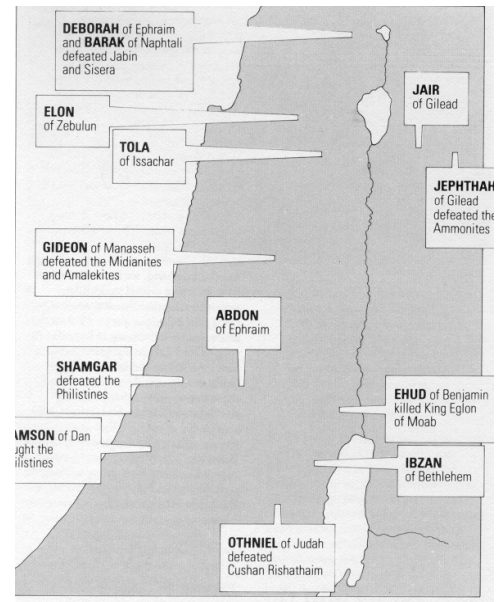
Samson (troubled the Philistines; judged Israel for 20 years; did not end Philistine oppression)

Samuel (not in the book of Judges; finished the work begun by Samson, defeated the Philistines)

*The judges marked with an asterisk are often called minor judges. They are mentioned as judges, but virtually nothing is recorded as to the specifics of their ministry.

[5] The story of Ruth occurred some time during the period of the Judges.

[6] The most important Judge, and the only Judge to exercise leadership over the entire nation, was the final Judge, Samuel. His life is recorded in 1 Samuel 1-25. He preached for 20 years and turned the nation back to God. As he grew old, the nation realized that they had no mechanism for choosing a successor, and that they did not want to return to the days when the tribes warred among themselves. Therefore they demanded that Samuel choose a leader before he died, and that he make that leader a king (the distinctive of which is that when the king dies his son succeeds him) so that the issue would be settled once and for all (1 Sam 8). Samuel realized that there was wickedness in the demand, but Yahweh directed him to fulfill the request, and so he did. The first (human) king to be anointed and enthroned was Saul. (Remember that Yahweh had been, and continued to be, the King in Israel. But beginning with Saul He administered His rule through a succession of hereditary human leaders whom we know as “kings”.) In 1 Samuel 12, Samuel preaches a sermon in which he abdicates civil rule, turning it over to the newly enthroned King Saul. Notice that Samuel insists, however, that he was not abandoning spiritual leadership, that he would continue to call upon the nation to follow their real King, Yahweh (1 Sam 12:23-25).



VI. HISTORICAL PERIOD #6: THE PERIOD OF THE UNITED MONARCHY (1 Samuel 12 - 1 Kings 11)

FOCUS: The three *monarchs* of the United Monarchy Period

A. **King #1: Saul of Benjamin, son of Kish**

Notes:

- [1] Q: What is it that makes a monarchy (i.e., rule by kings) distinctive from all other forms of rule?
A: The principle of succession. (That is, when the king dies, he is *automatically* succeeded by the son whom he has designated as his successor.)
This is the distinctive of this period of Israel's history--Kings were ruling over the covenant nation.
- [1] King **Saul** ruled 1051 to 1011 BC. He was a Benjamite, and thus an unlikely choice; but God told Samuel to make Saul King
- [2] Saul began well, committed two grievous sins, his house (dynasty) was rejected as king in favor of a "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam 13:13, 14)

The Biblical Record:

The monarchy of Israel extends from the enthronement of the first king (1051 BC) to the time when the nation carried off as slaves to a foreign country (586 BC). Thus, for about 450 years Kings ruled in Israel. Remember that Yahweh did not *cease* ruling as King during this time. He simply instituted a succession of human mediators of His rule, rather than hand-picking each one as He had done in the past. The monarchy is recorded primarily in the section of the Old Testament which the Jewish people know as 1, 2, 3, & 4 Kings. (We know the books as 1, 2 Samuel and 1, 2 Kings.) The history of the Southern Kingdom is retold, with special emphasis upon the throne of David and the temple, in 1, 2 Chronicles.

B. **King #2: David of Judah, son of Jesse**

- [1] King **David** (ruled from 1011 to 971 BC); for 7 years from Hebron, only over Judah; for 33 years over all 12 tribes
- [2] David was from the tribe of Judah (cp Gen 49:10); united the nation, captured Jerusalem as capital
- [3] David was given a *covenant* (2 Sam 7; Ps 89) in which God promised never to do to his house (dynasty) what He had done to Saul's, never to remove king from throne of David; therefore, Messiah (who will be King of Israel) must be descended from David
- [4] Committed awful sins, but repented (Ps 51; 32) and was blessed by God; under David, the nation of Israel became the mightiest nation in the eastern Mediterranean world
- [5] David wrote most of the Psalms

C. **King #3: Solomon, son of David and Bathsheba**

- [1] Solomon ruled from 971 to 931 BC
- [2] Solomon was the son of David, asked God for wisdom, became wisest & most powerful man in world. He built the temple that David was not allowed to build; using the materiel and plans left by David, Solomon crafted a temple that was the wonder of the world in his day.
- [3] Later, Solomon abandoned God, multiplied wealth, horses and [foreign] wives (cf. Dt 17), and the nation began to stagger; however, Solomon's writings offer compelling evidence that he repented in old age
- [4] According to Jewish remembrance, Solomon wrote Song of Solomon as a youth, [most of] Proverbs in middle age, and Ecclesiastes as an old man

VII. HISTORICAL PERIOD #7: THE PERIOD OF THE DIVIDED MONARCHY (1 Kgs 12 - 2 Kgs 24)

FOCUS: The three *tragedies* of the Divided Monarchy Period

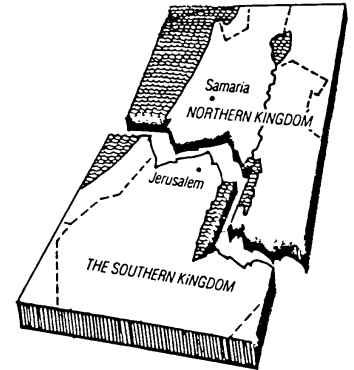
A. Tragedy #1: The division of the Kingdom under Rehoboam, son of Solomon

Notes:

[1] The *reason* for the division of the kingdom: after Solomon died, the 10 tribes to the north begged his son and successor (King Rehoboam) to lighten the load of taxation and labor which Solomon had imposed in order to make his kingdom the grandest the world had ever known. When Rehoboam refused, those tribes broke away and established their own (rebel) kingdom (2 Kgs 12)

[2] Pertinent data regarding the *Northern Kingdom*

- ⇒ Made up of 10 tribes; known in Scripture as *Israel* or *Samaria*
- ⇒ Lasted from 931 (division at death of Solomon) to 722 BC (carried captive by Assyria)
- ⇒ first king was Jeroboam, who established a false religion with altars at Dan and Bethel
- ⇒ Had a total of 19 kings, from *seven* different dynasties (ruling families), NO good kings
- ⇒ Capital first at Shechem, then at Tirzah, finally at *Samaria*
- ⇒ Conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC (2 Kings 17)



[3] Pertinent data regarding the *Southern Kingdom*

- ⇒ Made up of 2 tribes (Judah/Benjamin); known in Scripture as *Judah*
- ⇒ Lasted from 931 (division at death of Solomon) to 586 BC (carried captive by Babylon)
- ⇒ A total of 19 kings (and 1 queen), *all of house of David*; **8** good kings
- ⇒ Solomon's son, Rehoboam, angered northern tribes, caused split (1 Kings 12)
- ⇒ Capital remained at Jerusalem; nation remained (often superficially) loyal to worship of Yahweh
- ⇒ Conquered by the Babylonians in 606 -586 BC

[4] During the period of the Divided Monarchy, much prophetic activity.

Prophets from this period who wrote a book in the Old Testament include:

- ⇒ to Northern Kingdom: Hosea, Amos, Jonah (also to Assyria)
- ⇒ to Southern Kingdom: Obadiah, Joel, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk

[5] The great crisis of the Divided Monarchy occurred when King Ahab of Israel married a Sidonian princess named Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31). Jezebel set out to obliterate the worship of Yahweh in the Northern Kingdom and institute the worship of her patron deity, Baal.

The crisis spread to the Southern Kingdom when Ahab & Jezebel contrived to have their wicked daughter, Athaliah, marry the son of Jehosaphat, king of Judah (2 Chron 21:6). Athaliah attempted the slaughter of the Davidic line, and only one young boy was saved from her murderous plot (2 Kings 11:1-3).

In order to meet this crisis, Yahweh raised up two mighty prophets: Elijah and Elisha.

B. Tragedy #2: The Northern Kingdom carried off by Assyria

Notes:

- [1] The Northern Kingdom (Israel) was carried off by the Assyrians in 722 BC. Many of the citizens of the North had moved south because of the false religion and/or in fear of the approaching Assyrians. Therefore, all 12 tribes were well represented in the Southern Kingdom (Judah).
- [2] The destruction of the Northern Kingdom is recorded in 2 Kgs 17.

C. Tragedy #3: The Southern Kingdom carried off by Babylon

Notes:

- [1] The Southern Kingdom was carried off in three stages to Babylon:

⇒ Stage #1: in 606 BC Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon puts Judah/Jerusalem under seige; hears of father's death, must return to secure the throne; takes with him young Jewish men to train for leadership (including Daniel and his friends)

⇒ Stage #2: in 597, because Judah had withheld the annual tribute payment, King Nebuchadnezzar comes to punish the city, carries off 10,000 of the best people (including Ezekiel, who would be called as a prophet while living in exile in Babylon)

⇒ Stage #3: in 586 BC, because Judah had again withheld the tribute, Nebuchadnezzar's army destroys the city *and the temple*, carried off all but the old and infirm to Judah.

- [2] In order to protect His name in the day of His people's captivity, and in order to prepare the way for His people to be treated remarkably well even in captivity, Yahweh caused the prophet **Daniel** to be carried off to Babylon early. By the time Nebuchadnezzar carried off the bulk of the nation, Daniel had already risen to second place in the kingdom. (Thus was Daniel to the Babylonian captivity what Joseph had been to the Egyptian sojourn.)

VIII. HISTORICAL PERIOD #8: THE PERIOD OF THE EXILE IN BABYLON (No biblical record)

Notes:

- [1] When Judah and Jerusalem were conquered by Babylon and the inhabitants of the land carried off to captivity (in fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy in Jer 25:11), the period of Israel's independence as a nation came to an end. The "times of the Gentiles" had commenced. Thus, the rest of Old Testament history might be classified as "Israel under Gentile Rulers." (See the one-page summary of the history of Israel.)
- [2] One very remarkable facet of this period of Old Testament history: there is no miracle! (Compare the departure of the Glory-Cloud at the end of the Monarchy.)

The Biblical Record:

There is in the Old Testament no explicit record of the 70 year captivity. It seems that God considered the land so important that when the nation departs the land, the spotlight of sacred history grows dim.

However, the conditions and experiences of the nation in captivity in Babylon is reflected in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel, in certain of the psalms (e.g., Ps 137), and in the book of Esther.

FOCUS: The three *divine interventions* of the Period of Exile in Babylon

A. Intervention #1: Judah is carried off to Babylon (not scattered among the nations)

Notes:

- [1] The theocratic rule of King Yahweh in Israel commenced in 1446 BC at Mt Sinai, when the descendants of Abraham accepted the offer of a covenant and became the nation of Israel. Moses had constructed a tabernacle after the pattern given him in the mount, and when that throneroom/tabernacle was completed the Glory-cloud lifted up off the mount and took its (His) place on the throne (i.e., on the ark of the covenant). God had ruled as King in the midst of Israel from that time until the day when the glory-cloud departed. Ezekiel dates the vision of that departure as 592 BC, just before the destruction of the city and the temple. The prophet watched as the Glory-Cloud reluctantly departed from the temple (Ezek 9 - 11); thus did the formal theocratic relationship come to an disappointing end.
- [2] Understand that the covenant arrangement did not end at that time; that covenant relationship is timeless (Jer 31), and the Mosaic covenant specifically, which was destined to come to an end (Mt 5:17; Gal 3:19; Heb 8:13), was itself still to endure for another 600 years.
- [3] By the same token, when Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem in 586 BC, he destroyed the marvelous temple which Solomon had built. Thus did the *First Temple Period* come to an end.
- [4] Note that the exile of Judah (i.e., Israel) to Babylon was not an indication of the carelessness or incapacity of God. Indeed, that captivity was demonstration of the covenant-keeping character of Yahweh. He had set before Israel a blessing and a curse (Deut 11:26-28), and the greatest curse was to be captivity in to a foreign people (Deut 30:11-20).

B. Intervention #2: Daniel is carried to Babylon in the first stage of the deportation

Notes:

- [1] An important element of the cultures of the Bible:
 - ✓ When two nations (each with its own god[s]) went to war with one another, the universal popular perception was that the battle was in fact between the competing patron gods of the two nations.
 - ✓ Thus, it was assumed that the god of the victorious nation was by definition, for that time and that place, the stronger of the two competing gods.
 - ✓ Thus, Yahweh had “painted Himself into a corner”! He had made a covenant in which included a blessing for obedience and a curse for disobedience (Deut 11:26-28), and He had spelled out the specific curses which would befall the nation if they persisted in disobedience (Deut 28). The culminating curse was destruction by an invading army and exile from the land of promise. Because He is a covenant-keeping God, and because the nation had indeed persisted in disobedience, Yahweh was under moral obligation to allow this curse to befall the nation. But in so doing, Yahweh would place His own name in danger of disreverence by a watching world. One of the most intriguing elements of the narrative of the exile is the strategy by which Yahweh protected His own reputation even in the face of such a danger. And the single most important element of that strategy is the man, Daniel.
- [2] Important: Daniel was taken captive by Babylon in 606 BC, the first stage of the deportation. Thus, he was there by the time the mass of exiles arrived from Judah/Jerusalem in 597 BC, and then in 586 BC. (Note: what Joseph was to God’s people in Egypt, Daniel was in Babylon.)
- [3] It is instructive and encouraging to trace the influence of Daniel in Babylon—and more specifically, upon the man Nebuchadnezzar—in Daniel 1-4. In that connection, it is also important to appreciate the way in which that relationship between Daniel and the emperor of the conquering state redounded to the glory of Yahweh.

C. Intervention #3: Cyrus of Persia conquers Babylon (cf. Isa 44, 45)

Notes:

- [1] Jeremiah had specifically prophesied that the nation would be captive for 70 years. (Compare Dan 9:1.)
- [2] Important historical note: the Neo-Babylonian empire fell to Persia in 539 BC. Cyrus issued the decree allowing the Jews to return in 538 BC, and they actually arrived in the land and reinstated sacrificial worship in 536 BC. The temple which they began to build in 536 BC was neglected for some time, and through the efforts of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah was finally completed and dedicated in 516 BC.
- [3] Thus were two very important lines of Old Testament predictive prophecy fulfilled:
 - [a] Jer 25:10,11 – the return of the Jews after 70 years of captivity.

Note: There is some question as to exactly how to compute the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity

Beginning date	Ending date
606 BC (first deportation)	to 536 (foundation of 2 nd temple laid)
<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 10px;">or</div>	
586 BC (final deportation)	to 516 BC (2 nd temple completed)

- [b] Isa 44:23-45:7 – the prediction of Cyrus as the Gentile ruler who would allow the Jews to return to their land. (Note: the political/economic calculus involved in Cyrus’ decision to issue that decree [2 Chr 36:21-22] is one of the most remarkable evidences of divine intervention in all of human history.)

IX. HISTORICAL PERIOD #9: THE RESTORATION TO ISRAEL (EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER)

Notes:

- [2] Remember that it was *Babylon* who carried Judah off to captivity, but it was *Persia* who allowed that nation to return.

This happened because, in the careful providence of God, Persia conquered Babylon just in time to change the policy and allow the Jews to return. (The final battle came in 539 BC, and then Cyrus, the Persian emperor, issued the decree in 538, but the Jews were not able to make their way back to Israel until 536 BC.)

- [2] Prophets continued to minister during the Restoration Period

✧ During the first stage of the restoration, when Israel was to be busy constructing the temple, Haggai and Zechariah ministered. They had a remarkably successful ministry, compelling the people to get back to temple rebuilding, so that the temple was completed just four years after their ministries began (Ezra 5:1, 2; 6:15).

✧ During the final stage of the restoration, when Israel was rebuilding the city of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, the prophet Malachi--the last prophetic voice of the Old Testament era--was ministering to the Jews in Jerusalem.

The Biblical Record:

There are three distinct returns which take place over the course of about 100 years

Those three returns are recorded in 2 books, Ezra and Nehemiah.

⇒ Ezra records the first return, but he was not personally involved in that effort. (So he is writing history in 1-6.)

⇒ Ezra records the second return, but he was very much involved in that effort. (So Ezra is writing his diary in Ezra 7-10.)

⇒ Nehemiah records the third return, and he is very much involved in the effort.

✧ Ezra is still living in Jerusalem when Nehemiah ministers; indeed, they work together.

FOCUS: The three *times* Jews returned to Israel from Babylon

A. Return #1: Under Zerubbabel, to rebuild the temple (538 BC)

Notes:

- [1] This is the initial stage of the Restoration, made possible by the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-3), and led by Zerubbabel. About 50,000 Jews accompanied Zerubbabel in this return. The record of this return is found in Ezra 1-6 (though the man Ezra was not involved in this effort--indeed, he was not yet born).
- [2] The purpose of this return: To rebuild the temple which had been destroyed by Babylon in 586 BC. That work was begun in 536 BC, but neglected for 16 years. God raised up two [post-exilic] prophets to revive the work of temple rebuilding, Haggai and Zechariah. Those two prophets were marvelously successful, and the second temple was completed and dedicated in 516 BC.
- [3] However, understand that the second temple as originally constructed under Zerubbabel was a very disappointing structure: it was small, plain, and unprotected, but more important, there was no Glory-Cloud or Ark of the Covenant. During the years between the Old and New Testaments, that temple was gloriously remodeled, so that the second temple became even more breathtakingly beautiful than the first (Solomonic) temple had been. But the Holy of Holies in the second temple remained empty.
- [4] The Second Temple Period began with the completion of the temple in 516 BC, and it lasted until that temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.

B. Return #2: Under Ezra, to restore pure worship at the 2nd Temple (458 BC)

Notes:

- [1] This second stage of the Restoration was led by the scribe, Ezra, who was accompanied by about 1,800 Jews. The account of this return is found in Ezra 7-10.
- [2] The purpose of this stage of the return: to restore purity and obedience to the sacrificial system being practiced at the (second) temple in Jerusalem.

C. Return #3: Under Nehemiah, to rebuild & reinhabit the city of Jerusalem (444 BC)

Notes:

- [1] This third and final stage of the Restoration was led by Nehemiah, and is recorded in the book of Nehemiah.
- [2] The purpose of this stage of the return: to rebuild and reinhabit the city of Jerusalem. Nehemiah had held a very responsible position in the court of the Persian king, Artaxerxes. When he had heard that the sacred city was yet unprotected and lying in waste, Nehemiah was broken hearted, and the king allowed him to return to restore the city. Nehemiah was resisted in the effort by the local inhabitants, but he was able to complete the project of rebuilding the walls in just 52 days.
- [3] This is where the Old Testament historical narrative comes to a close. The Jews have been allowed to return to their sacred city and land, but the greater measure of the Jewish people have chosen to remain in Babylon. Israel is once again worshiping in her temple on Mt. Zion, but it is a terribly disappointing and unimposing structure. Though the Jews in Israel are allowed a measure of self-rule, there is no king in the land; Israel is simply a province in the greater kingdom of Persia, and the final authority is the Persian monarch. The spirit of the Restoration community is perfectly represented in Ezra 3:10-13 (esp. 10:13).