



# ***Introducing the Old Testament***

Week 7

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## ***Overview of this week***

- ❖ Micah
- ❖ Back to the story!
  - The rise of Babylon
  - The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple
  - The exile
  - Life in Babylon (and Egypt!)
  - The return from exile
  - The temple is rebuilt

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## **Micah**

- ❖ From a small town, 25 miles from Jerusalem
- ❖ A prophet in Judah from about 730BC to 700BC when Judah was under the heavy influence of Assyria.
- ❖ A contemporary of Isaiah
  - There is a strong similarity between in some of their passages.
- ❖ Message
  - Judah will be punished for her apostasy.
  - Judah will be conquered and exiled.
  - Judah will be returned from exile.
  - God will establish permanent peace.
- ❖ What does God want from his people?
  - Micah 6:6-8



## **Isaiah (means “YHWH will save”)**

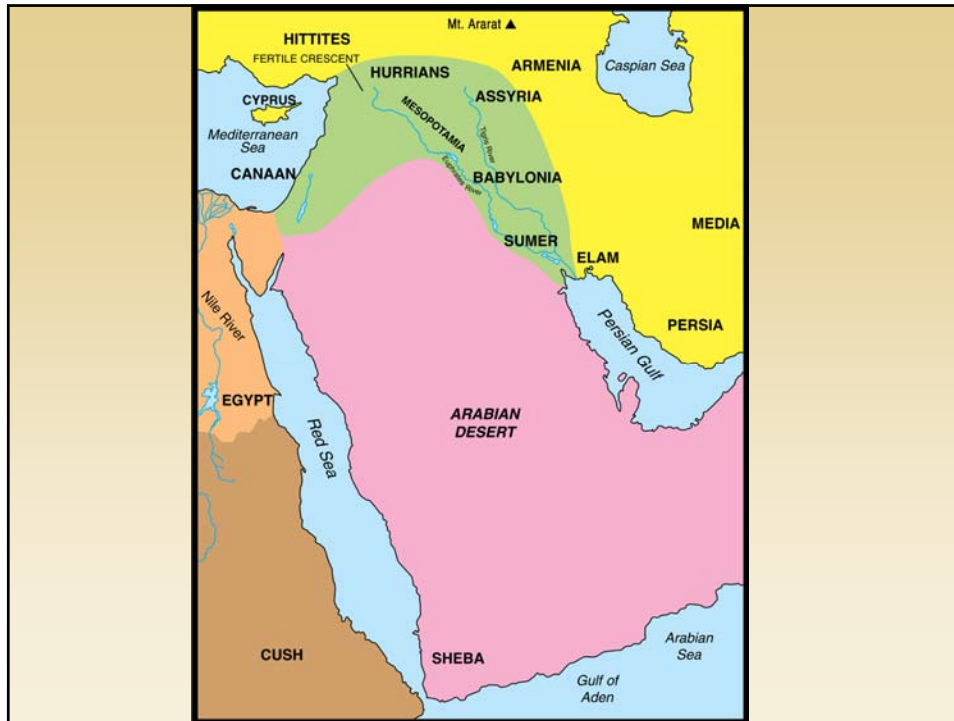
- ❖ The dominant prophetic voice in the last half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, c.a. 740-700BC. (a prophet in Judah)
- ❖ Many scholars suggest that the book of Isaiah is the work of Isaiah and 1 or 2 much later authors
  - Chapter 44 names Cyrus of Persia 200 yrs before his time. If this is a true prediction, it is the only naming prediction in the OT.
  - Notice the change in emphasis begins in chapter 40.
- ❖ Regardless of authorship – all of it is canonical!
- ❖ Some themes in Isaiah (the theologian of the OT)
  - God is the holy Savior of Israel, trustworthy and incomparable
  - The remnant theme – a purified nucleus of a renewed, chosen people
  - The suffering servant of the Lord (Jesus as a remnant of one)



## **Back to the story!**

- ❖ The rise of Assyria and the destruction of Israel (the Northern kingdom, 721BC, aka Samaria)
- ❖ Judah as a vassal of Assyria
  - Hezekiah tried to break free – egged on by Egypt!
- ❖ Assyria’s decline and Judah’s struggle for independence under Josiah (640BC – 600BC)
  - The book of Nahum is a celebration of Nineveh’s destruction!
- ❖ The rise of Babylon (from 620 onward)
  - Nebuchadnezzar would go on to crush Judah
- ❖ Babylon asserts its control over Judah and, finally, destroys Jerusalem and the temple in 587BC





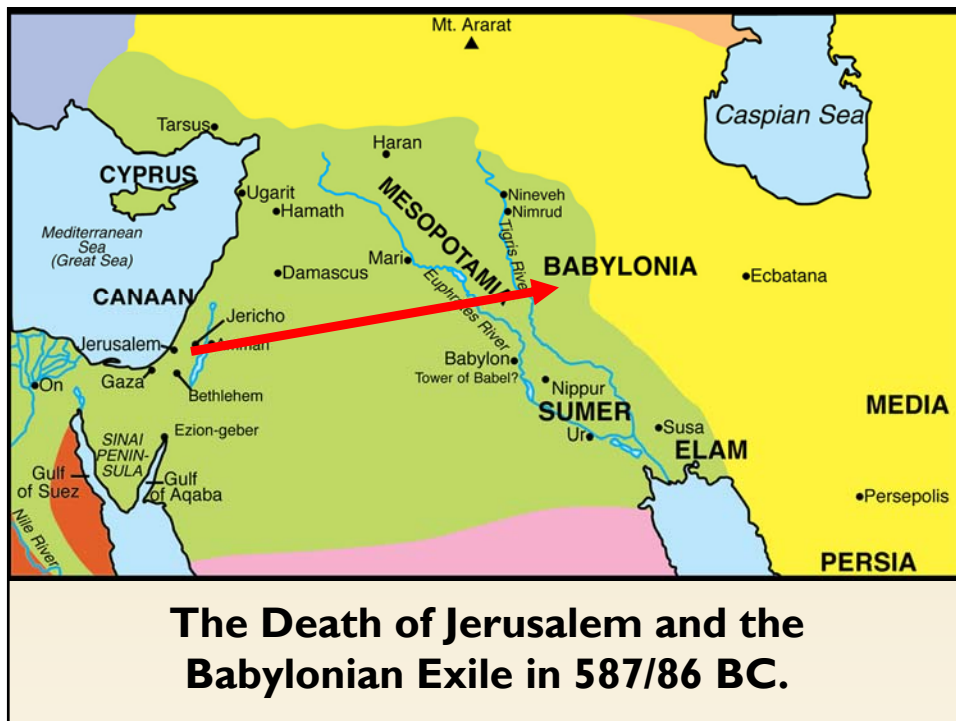
## *The Book of Daniel*

- ❖ Set in Babylon, though portions were probably written much later (160BC or so)
- ❖ Daniel was a statesman and prophet living in exile
- ❖ The first half of the book are the stories of Daniel and his friends
  - The fiery furnace, the handwriting on the wall, Daniel in the lions' den
- ❖ The second half of the book is apocalyptic literature
  - Daniel's visions are another way of retelling the same "story"
    - These are God-given visions that Israel will be vindicated, despite the way things appear! God **will** rescue Israel!
    - Lots of creation- & exodus- imagery!



## Ezekiel

- ❖ A prophet in Babylon, during the exile
- ❖ Like Daniel, Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon before the siege of Jerusalem.
  - Chapters 1-24 – before the siege
  - Chapters 25-32 – during the siege
  - Chapters 33-48 – after the siege
- ❖ Ezekiel brings a message of hope: that God will restore Israel
- ❖ Key chapter: 37
  - Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones



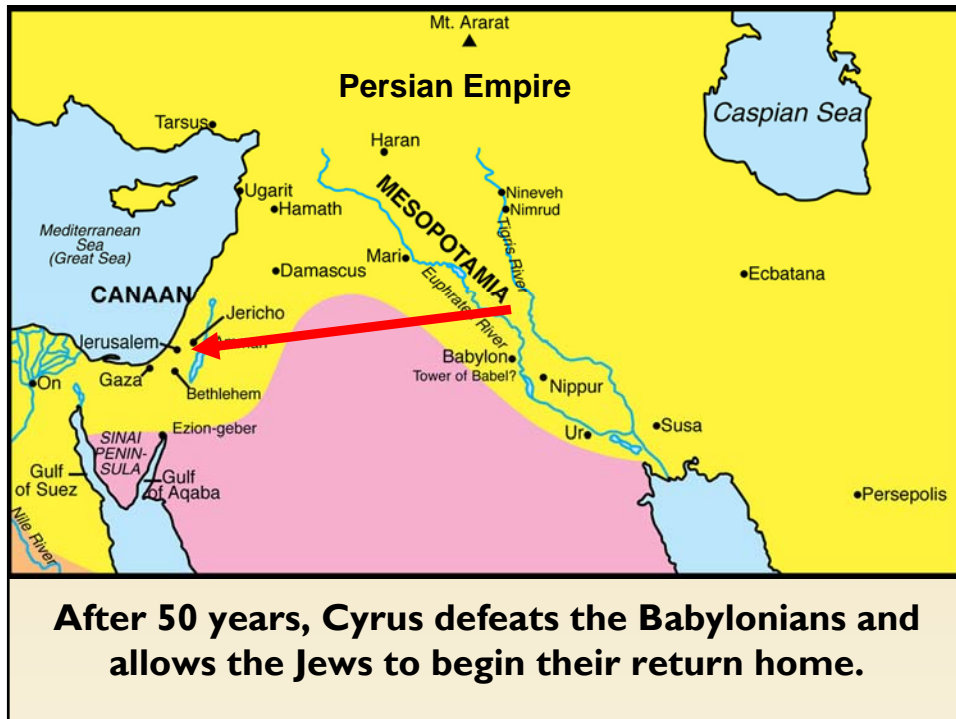


## **The Meaning of the Exile for God's People**

- ❖ This is what really matters! How did God's people interpret the exile and its aftermath?
  - All the geopolitical stuff is just the stage for what really matters.
  - The effect on Israel was profound!
    - David's dynasty comes to a humiliating end!
    - Jerusalem, David's capital, is ransacked and burned!
    - The temple, the center of Israel's worship, was destroyed and the ark was carried away and lost forever!
- ❖ The exile was due to Israel's turning from God!
- ❖ How would the exile end?
  - Through God's grace
  - Israel's repentance

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## ***Ezra & Nehemiah (one book in the Hebrew Bible)***

- ❖ These books tell the story of Judah's return
  - The rediscovery of the Law
  - The first efforts at the rebuilding of the temple
- ❖ Ezra was an influential priest and scribe during the period after the return from Babylon.
  - He is given the task of imposing the Law on the returning people of God.
- ❖ Nehemiah plays a key role in Cyrus' decision to send the Jews home.
  - Becomes "governor" overseeing the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple.



## ***The Book of Esther***

- ❖ Set in Persia, in 480BC or so – between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra
- ❖ A story of the Jews left in Persia after many have returned to Palestine
- ❖ God is never mentioned by name.
- ❖ The theme of Esther's story is one of God's providence and protection for his people.
- ❖ The story!
  - The king, Xerxes, & Esther
  - Mordecai
  - Haman



## **Post-exilic prophets**

- ❖ Haggai and Zechariah are complementary prophets after the exile
  - They bring messages of hope and covenant renewal, but also repentance.
  - They call for the rebuilding of the temple.
  - They speak against social injustice.
  - Zechariah's oracles speak of the coming Messiah and the day of the Lord.
- ❖ Malachi (the name means "the messenger")
  - Strong convictions against social injustice, easy divorce, and idolatry.
  - Predicts that an Elijah-like figure will announce the day of the Lord.



## **Was the return from Babylon the end of the exile?**

- ❖ The short answer – NO!
  - Judah was no more than another Persian (then Egyptian, then Greek, then Syrian, etc.) province! There would be no more kings! Where was the covenant God made with David, much less Israel?
- ❖ What a puzzle! God raised up Persia to crush Babylon and end the exile, but what was Israel to make of their on-going oppression? What was to be Israel's hope?
- ❖ The second-temple story
  - Israel would be oppressed and tempted by other gods or even ordered to worship them!
  - The true people of God would resist these pressures and would be vindicated when the one, true God arrives and reveals himself!
  - The second-temple story and the book of Daniel