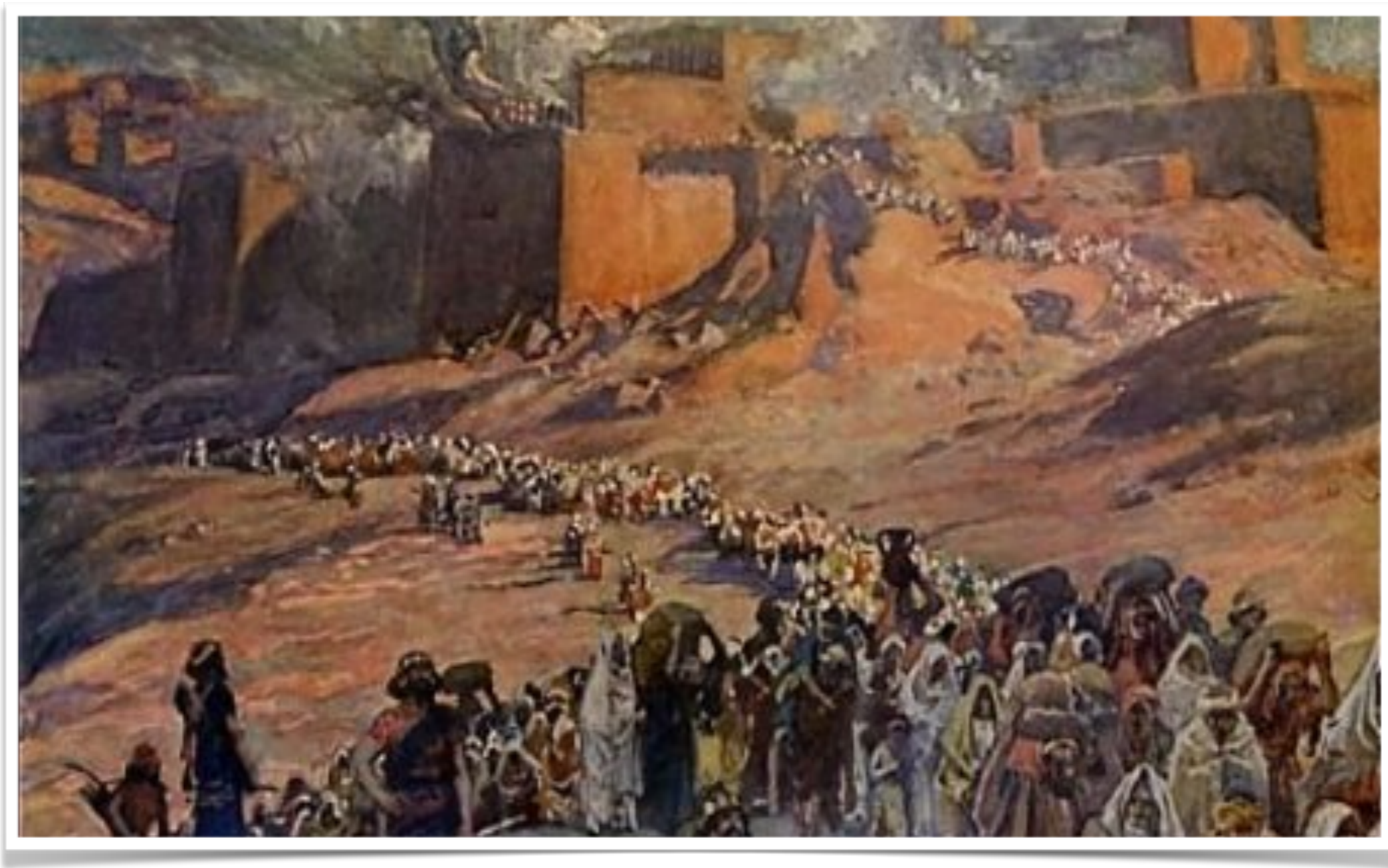


The Return of the Exiles



Class 1: Overview of Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra-Nehemiah

- Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book in the Hebrew Scriptures
- The story picks up after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and deported many of the Jews into captivity.
- Combined, Ezra and Nehemiah tell us about the returning exiles and how they rebuilt the city of Jerusalem, their nation, and their lives after captivity in Babylon.



A “Docu-Memoir”



Ezra-Nehemiah combines a historical narrative of the nation's return from Babylon with supporting documentary evidence:

- Narration (Ezra 1-6, Nehemiah 8-10)
- First person account (Ezra 7-9, Nehemiah 1-7, 11-13)
- Compilation of historical events from official source documents:
 - census records
 - inventories
 - correspondence

A Focus on 3 Key Leaders

Zerubbabel
Ezra 1-6

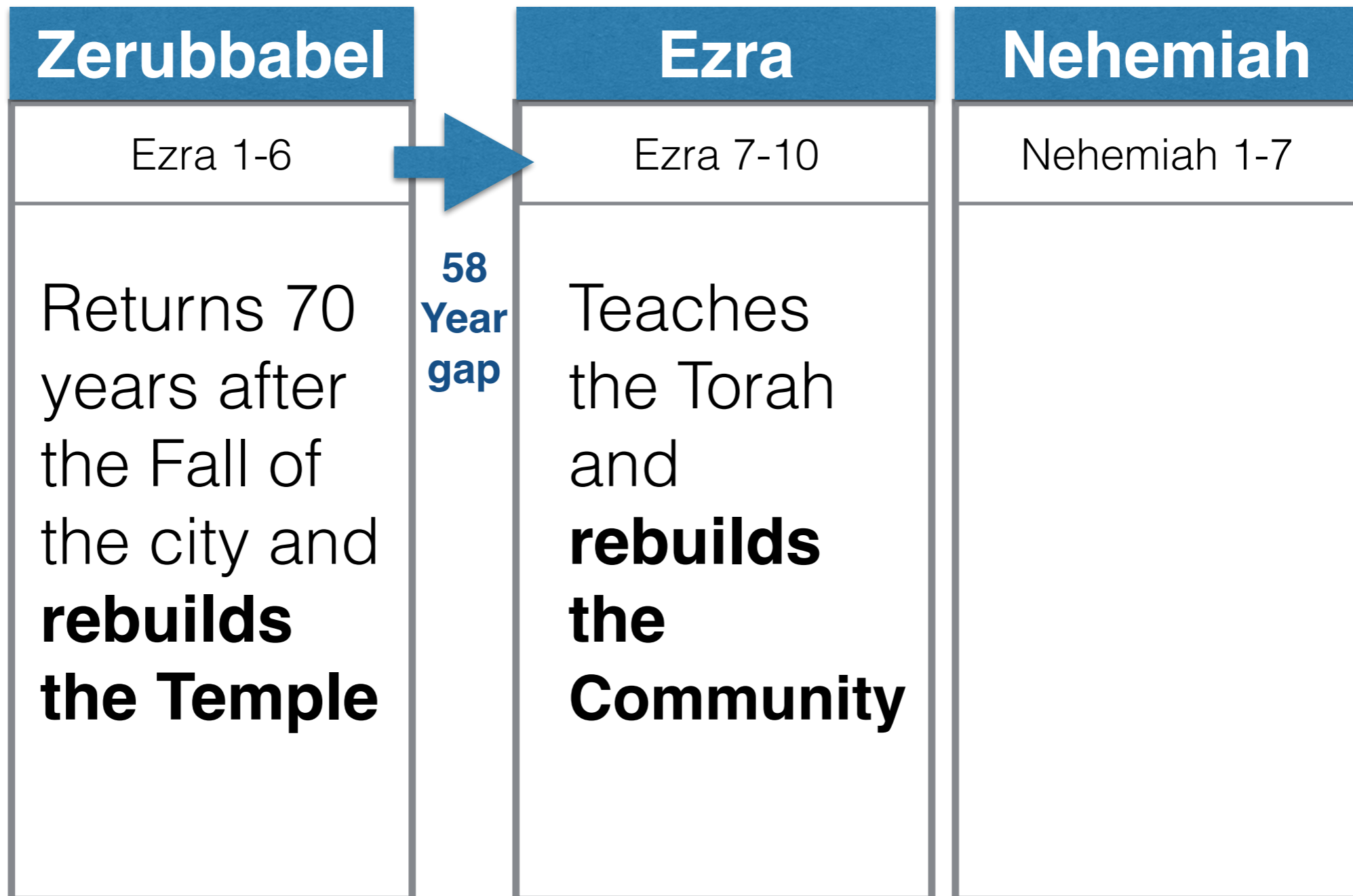
Ezra
Ezra 7-10

Nehemiah
Nehemiah 1-7

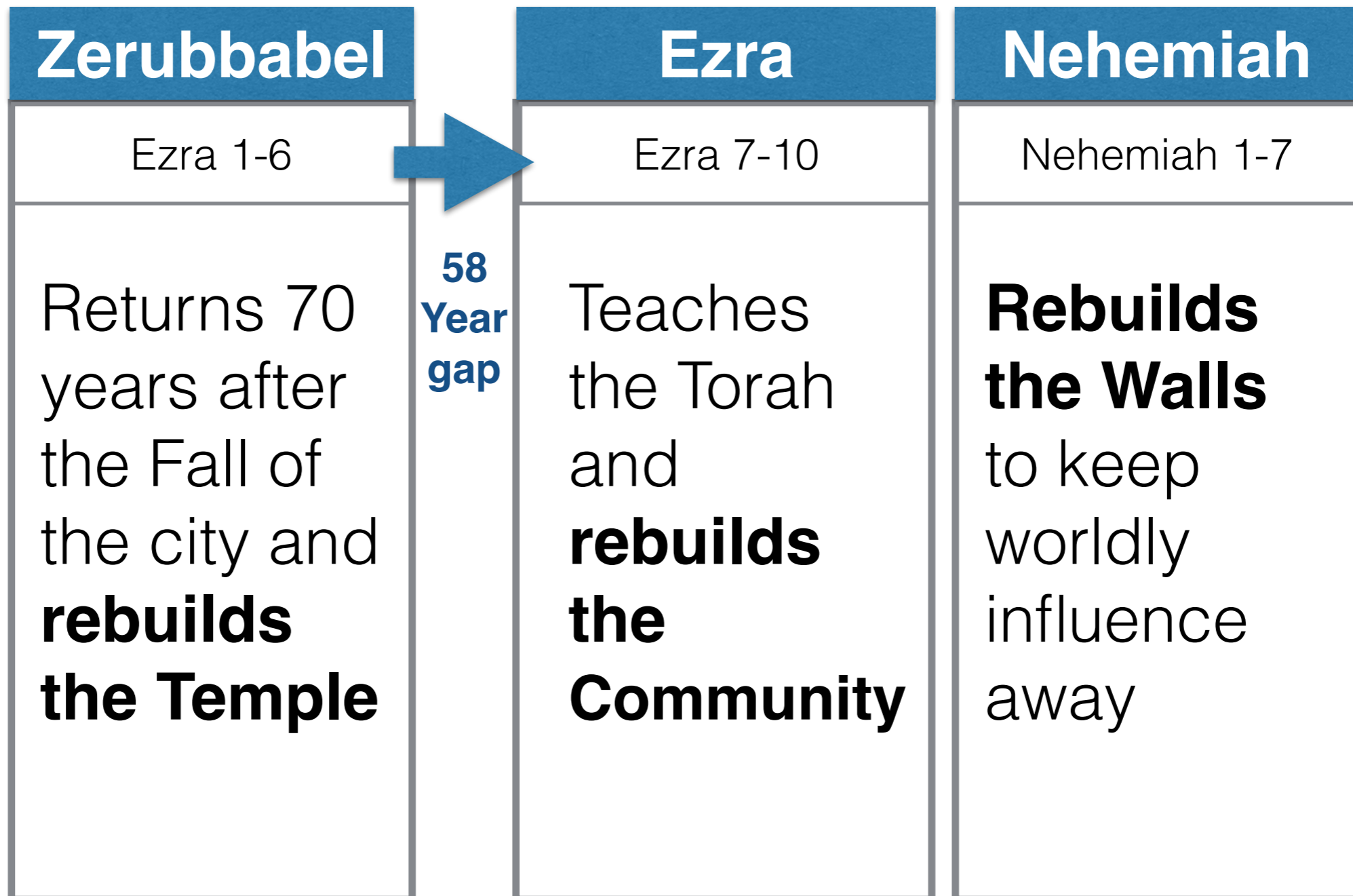
A Focus on 3 Key Leaders

Zerubbabel	Ezra	Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6	Ezra 7-10	Nehemiah 1-7
Returns 70 years after the Fall of the city and rebuilds the Temple		

A Focus on 3 Key Leaders



A Focus on 3 Key Leaders



A Focus on 3 Key Leaders

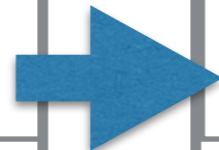
Parallel Accounts:

1. Persian King sends a leader to Jerusalem.
2. The people commit to rebuilding, but face opposition or difficulty.
3. Rebuilding efforts have varying degrees of success.

Zerubbabel

Ezra 1-6

Returns 70 years after the Fall of the city and **rebuilds the Temple**



58
Year
gap

Ezra

Ezra 7-10

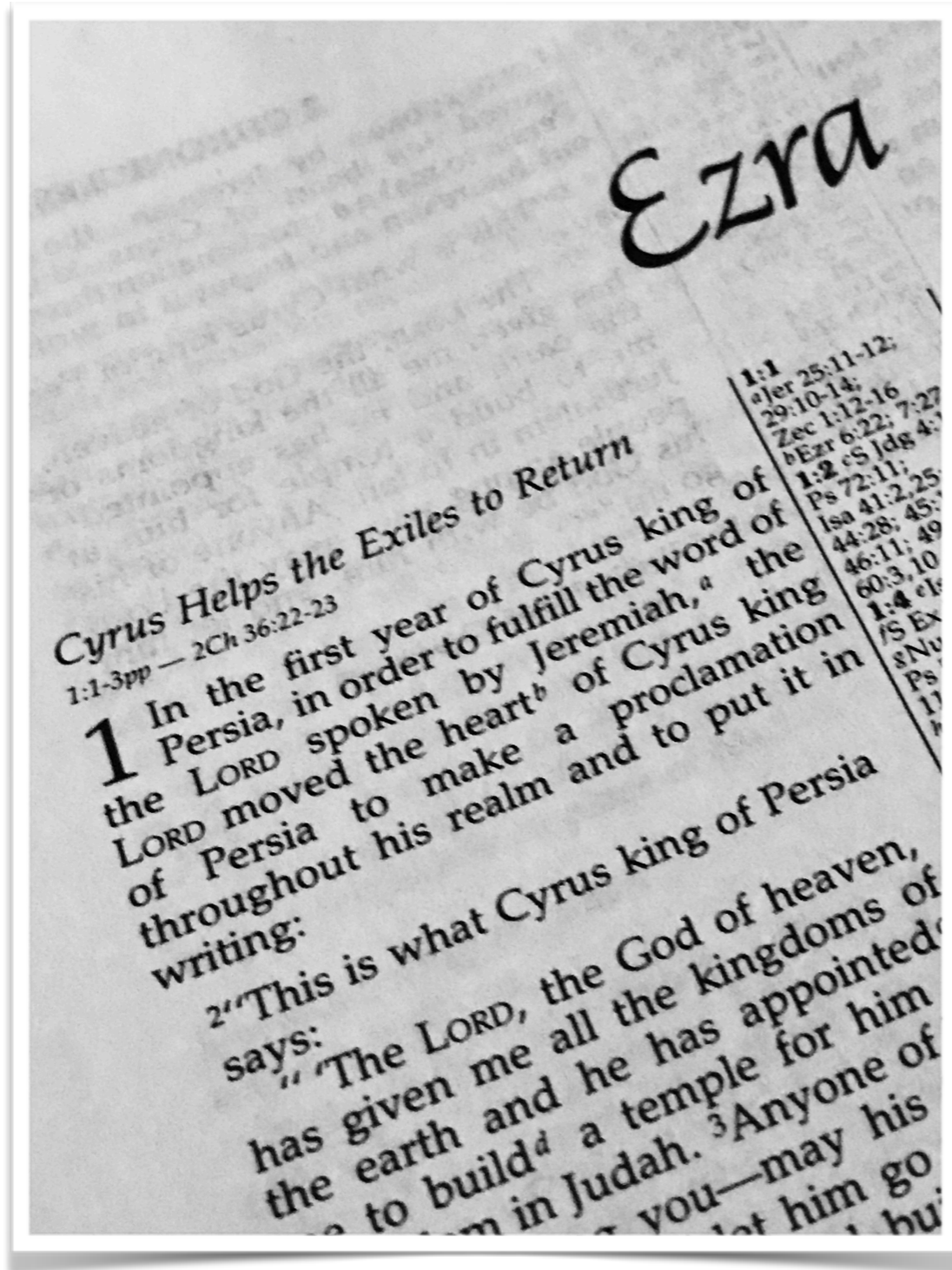
Teaches the Torah and **rebuilds the Community**

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 1-7

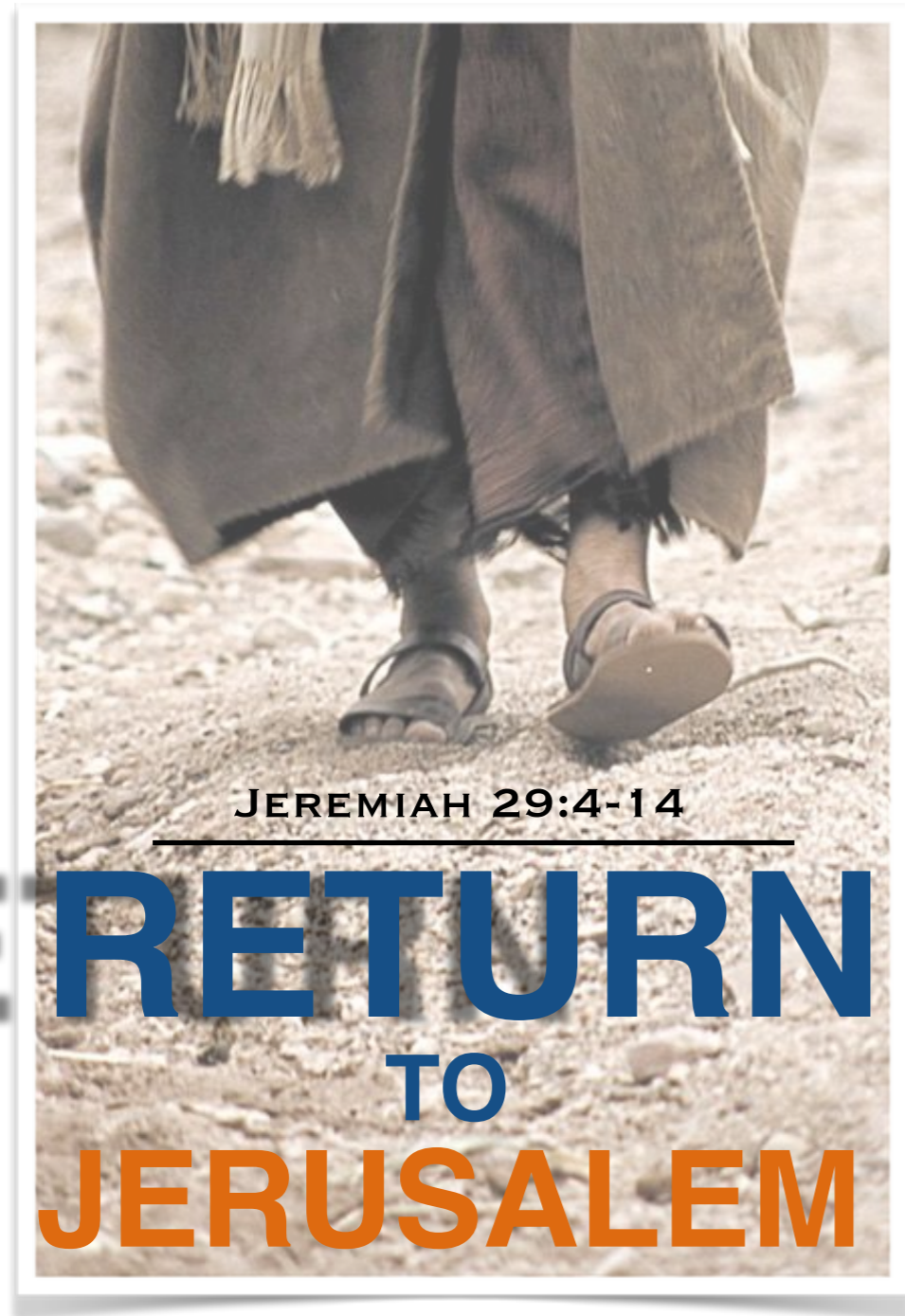
Rebuilds the Walls to keep worldly influence away

The Story Begins



- The story begins with the author telling us that God moved the heart of the King of Persia to allow the Jews to return from captivity.
- The reason He did this, the author says, was because God wanted to **fulfill the prophecy** he spoke through Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's Prophecies



Overcoming Disappointment

Throughout Ezra-Nehemiah we can come away disappointed when we realize the rebuilding efforts were only partially successful.



Overcoming Disappointment

Throughout Ezra-Nehemiah we can come away disappointed when we realize the rebuilding efforts were only partially successful.

- The temple was rebuilt, but God's Glory did not return to the Most Holy Place.



Overcoming Disappointment

Throughout Ezra-Nehemiah we can come away disappointed when we realize the rebuilding efforts were only partially successful.

- The temple was rebuilt, but God's Glory did not return to the Most Holy Place.
- The community, while back in the land, still struggled with sin and did not experience God's law "written on their hearts".



Overcoming Disappointment

Throughout Ezra-Nehemiah we can come away disappointed when we realize the rebuilding efforts were only partially successful.

- The temple was rebuilt, but God's Glory did not return to the Most Holy Place.
- The community, while back in the land, still struggled with sin and did not experience God's law "written on their hearts".
- The city of Jerusalem was rebuilt, but it did not become a House of Prayer for all Nations.



God had Planned Something better for Us...

Hebrews 8: 6-13

The ministry Jesus has received is superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one...

This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me from the least to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

Objective for the Week



1. See how Ezra and Nehemiah fit into history and the chronology of our Bibles.
2. Understand the three stories of the returning exiles and how they rebuilt the temple, the city, and their lives after captivity in Babylon.
3. Come away encouraged by God's faithfulness to fully restore Israel and establish a world-wide Kingdom just as He promised to Abraham and his seed.

Outline of Classes

Today: Ezra and Nehemiah in 45 Minutes -- Background and Overview

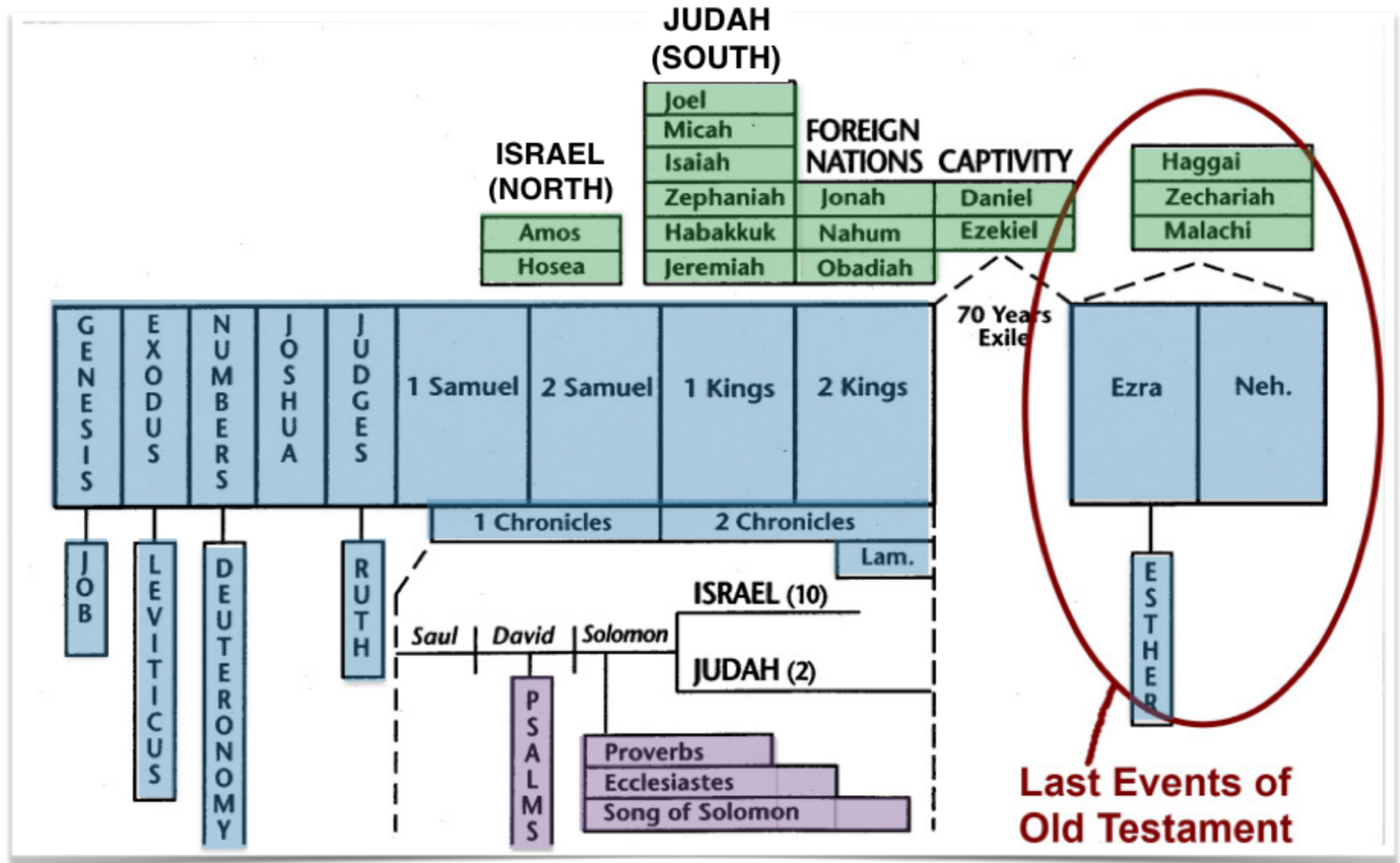
Tuesday : Return under Zerubbabel -- Rebuilding the Physical Temple (Ezra 1-6)

Wednesday : Return under Ezra -- Rebuilding the Spiritual Temple (Ezra 7-10)

Thursday: Return under Nehemiah -- Rebuilding the Walls (Nehemiah 1-7)

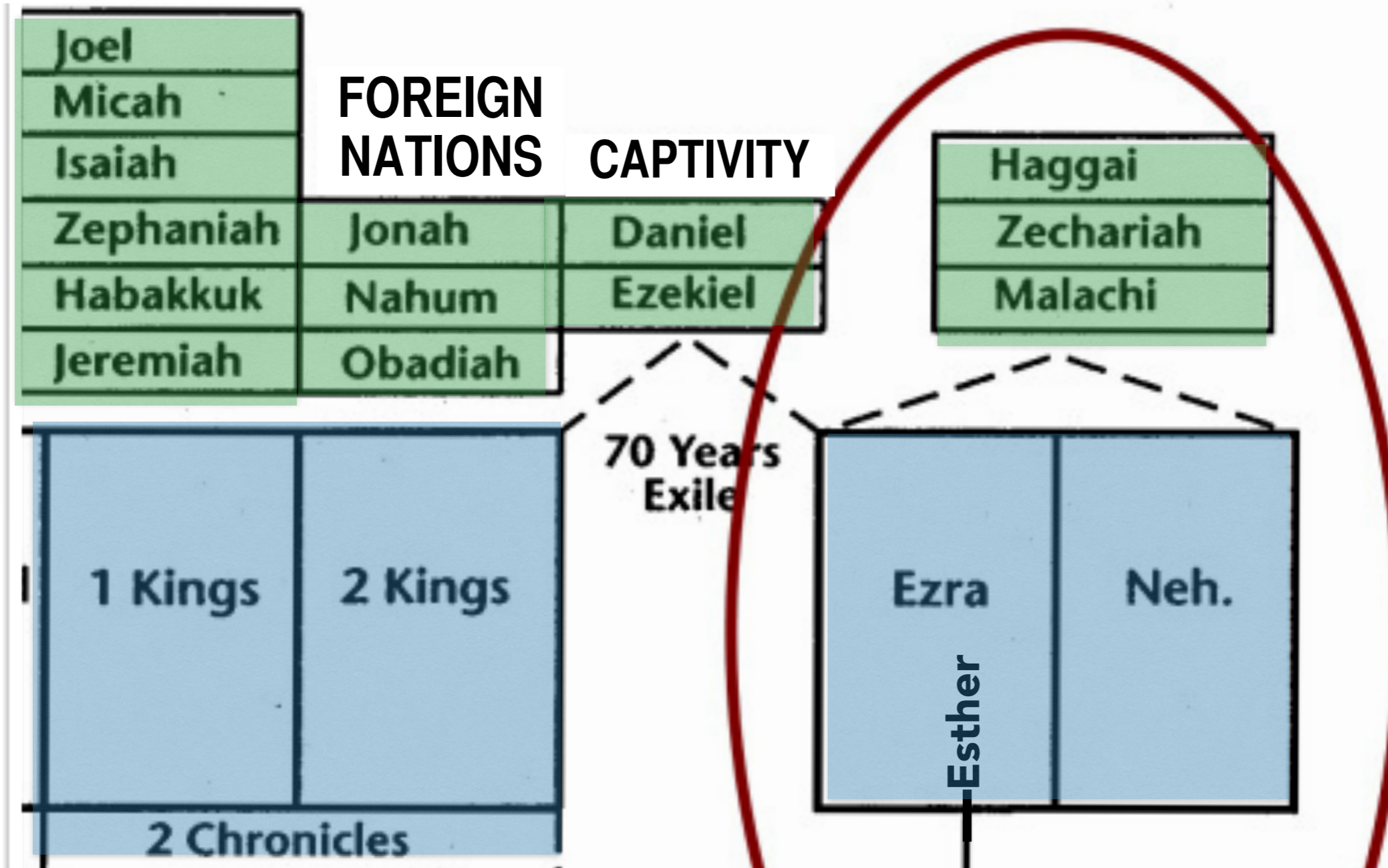
Friday: The Jerusalem Bible School -- Making Clear the Meaning (Nehemiah 8-13)

Old Testament Chronology



The Last Century of OT History

**JUDAH
(SOUTH)**



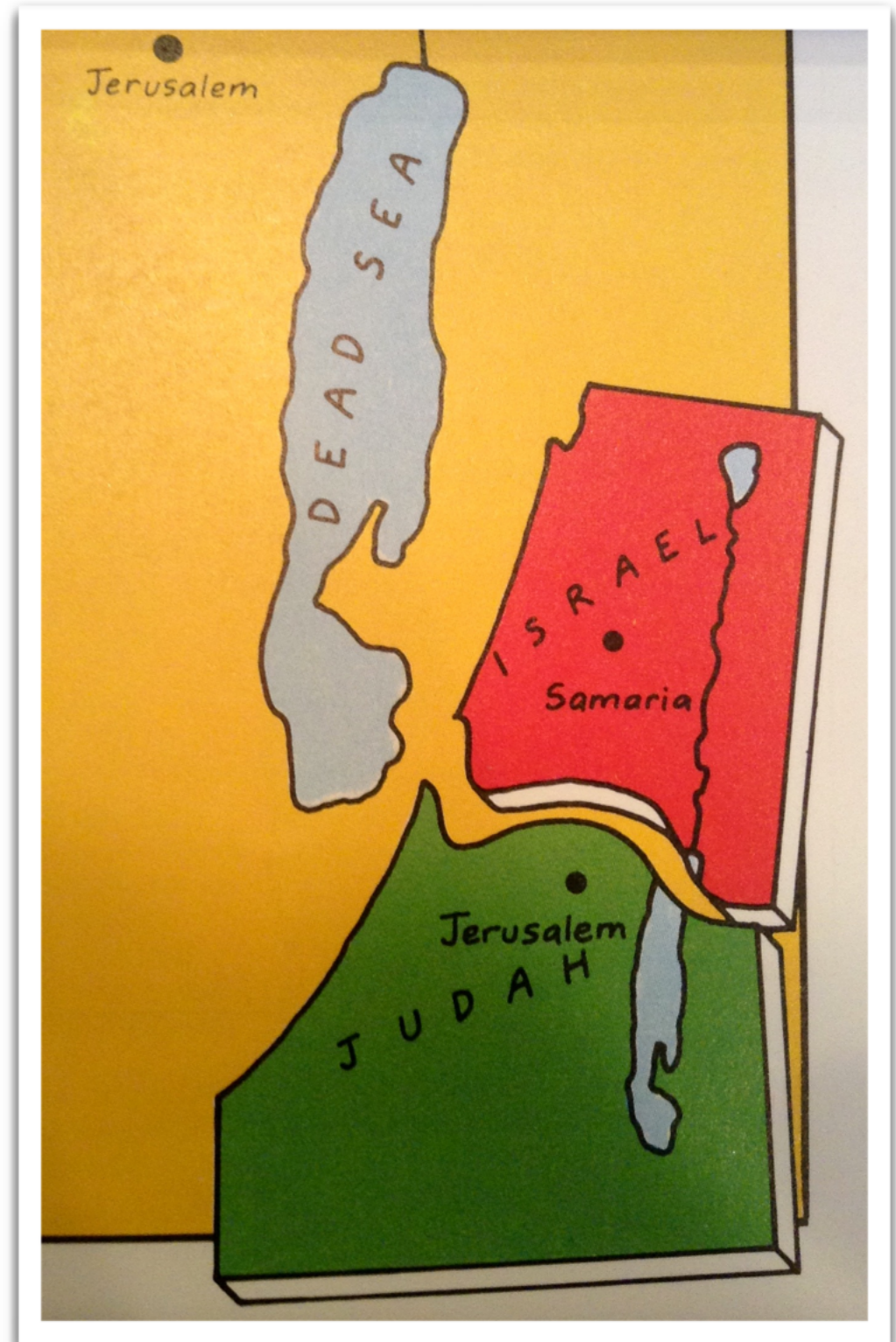
Historical Background

- **Unified Kingdom** reached its peak under David.



Historical Background

- **Unified Kingdom** reached its peak under David.
- **Divided** into 10 Northern Tribes (Israel) and 2 Southern Tribes (Judah) after Solomon's death.



Historical Background

- **Unified Kingdom** reached its peak under David.
- **Divided** into 10 Northern Tribes (Israel) and 2 Southern Tribes (Judah) after Solomon's death.
- Northern Tribes of **Israel** were "lost" when **taken into captivity** by the **Assyrians** (2 Kings 15-17).



Historical Background

- **Unified Kingdom** reached its peak under David.
- **Divided** into 10 Northern Tribes (Israel) and 2 Southern Tribes (Judah) after Solomon's death.
- Northern Tribes of **Israel** were "lost" when **taken into captivity** by the **Assyrians** (2 Kings 15-17).

2 Kings 17:5-12

Then the king of Assyria** invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he **carried the Israelites away to Assyria ... And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD** their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had **feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations...

Historical Background

2 Chron 36: 14-21

14 All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the LORD ...

cp. Ezekiel 14:1-6

15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

cp. Jeremiah 25:5-14

17 Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans (Babylonians), who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

cp. Daniel 5:23-30

The Fall of Jerusalem



The Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel not only warned about the coming invasion, they also documented the pillaging of the city and the deportation of the Jews to Babylon.

- Jeremiah 52:12-19
- Ezekiel 33:21, 27-29

Punishment with Purpose



Punishment with Purpose

The objective of God's judgment was to cause the people to repent and return to worshipping Yahweh.

"When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the LORD will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Dt. 30:1-3



Despair in Captivity

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars
we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for
songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said,
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

How can we sing the songs of the Lord
while in a foreign land? If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to
the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not
consider Jerusalem my highest joy.

Psalm 137

Hope in Captivity

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:4-14