

Nehemiah 1

Rolana Smith | Feb 7th

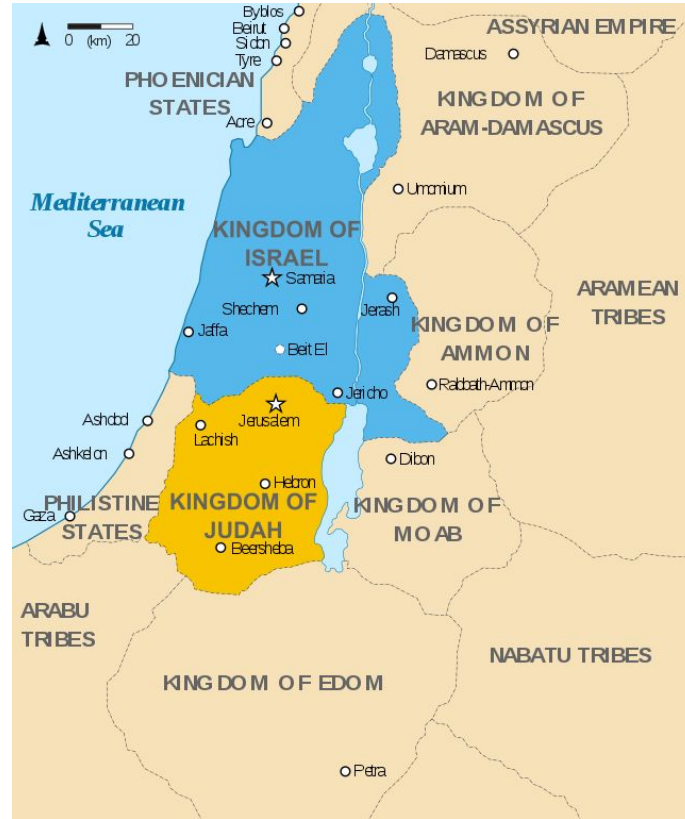
History

- “Chosen people”
- Israel is a nation
- Splits in two around 1050-930 BC
 - Northern Kingdom (The Kingdom of Israel) | 10 Tribes
 - Southern Kingdom (The Kingdom of Judah) | 2 Tribes
- Assyrian Empire conquers Israel in 722-720 BC
 - 10 Tribes Exiled
- Babylonian Empire conquers Judah in 587 BC
 - Jerusalem & Temple destroyed; remaining Jews exiled
- Babylon falls to Persians (539 BC)

Maps



United Kingdom of Israel



Divided Kingdom of Israel + Judah



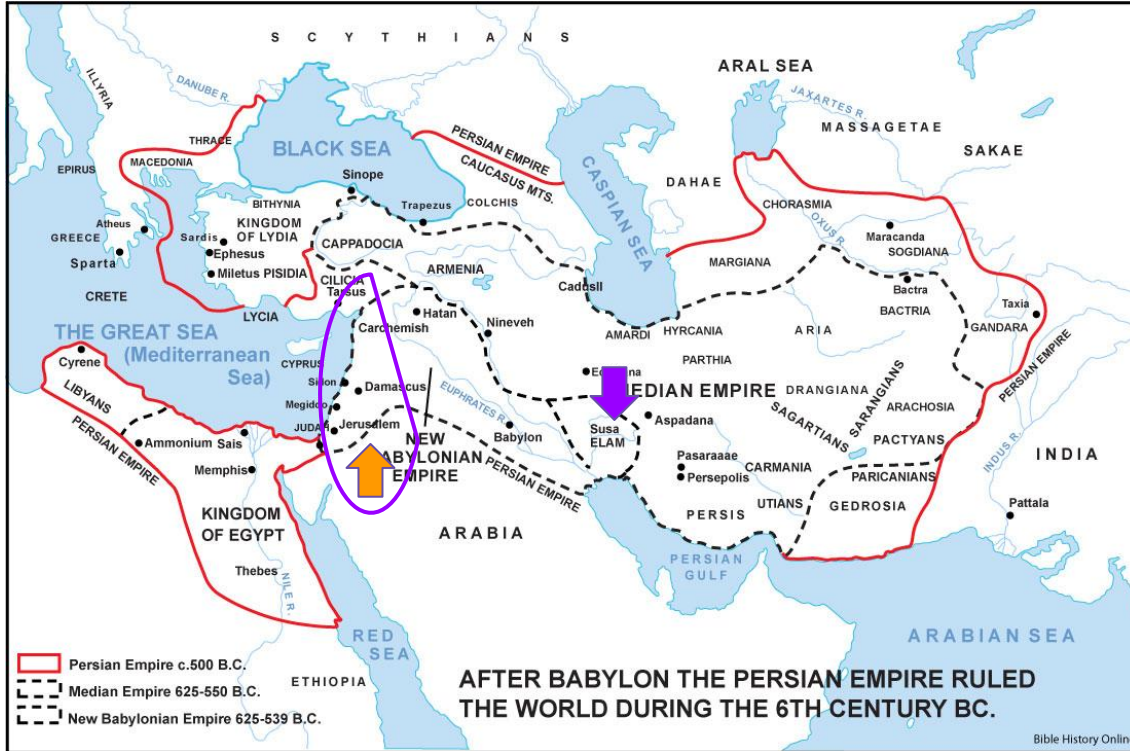
Current Israel

History

Under the Persian Empire, restoration begins

- First wave of Jews returning
- Altar and temple foundation built
- Sacred items returned to temple
- Temple completed
- Second wave of Jews return
- Nehemiah enters the picture (~444 BC)

Maps



Persian Empire 625-500 BC

Susa (now in Iran)



Province of Judah

Nehemiah 1:1-3

The words of Nehemiah (*the Lord comforts*) the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev (*~Nov/Dec*), in the twentieth year (*444 BC*), as I was in Susa the citadel, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah (*~1,000 miles away*). And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

Nehemiah 1:4-7

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

Nehemiah 1:8-11

Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Nehemiah 1:4

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah allowed his grief to shape his emotions, time, prayers, and physical posture.

Do we allow our emotional response to God to shape our lives?

Nehemiah 1:5-6a

And I said, “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants...

Even though Nehemiah is in grief, he starts by praising God.

How does it change us when we begin our prayers with praise?

Nehemiah 1:6b-7

...confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

Nehemiah confesses for God's people, himself, and his father's household.

Do we sense God asking us to grieve or repent a failure of our community?

Nehemiah 1:8-9

Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'

Nehemiah leans on God's promise for hope.

What promises help us when we grieve the broken church or our own brokenness?

Nehemiah 1:10-11

They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

Nehemiah asks for mercy and that his prayer will be effective.

How can we create space for God’s leading to change our lives?