THE DESTRUCTION OF KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

TISHA B'AV: THE 9TH OF AV, 586 BCE
THE BABYLONIAN EXILE: 604-539 BCE

INTRODUCTION

The Land of Israel is a natural bridge between the African and Eurasian continents, not only in terms of territory, but also between different peoples, cultures, languages and religions. It has been the focus of so much attention, the home of so many nations, and the stage for many events that have shaped world history. The Jewish people have called it their home for over 3,000 years. It is where they were born, matured and molded into a nation. This process was often challenging and involved several defining events, including the Babylonian Exile and the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem as, arguably, the most important of them all.

The profound effects of the Babylonian Exile were far-reaching: it transformed the Judeans into Jews, from one of many peoples into the People of the Book. 1,000 years later in 500 CE, they completed the Talmud, yet their 2,500 year sojourn in Babylon ended when they were deported from Iraq in 1951.

JEREMIAH LAMENTING THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM 586 BCE

By Rembrandt, 1630

"How lonely sits the city
That was full of people!
She has become like a widow
Who was once great among the nations!
She who was a princess among the provinces
Has become a forced laborer!

She weeps bitterly in the night
And her tears are on her cheeks;
She has none to comfort her
Among all her lovers.
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her;
They have become her enemies.

Judah has gone into exile…"

Lamentations 1:1-3

TIMELINE

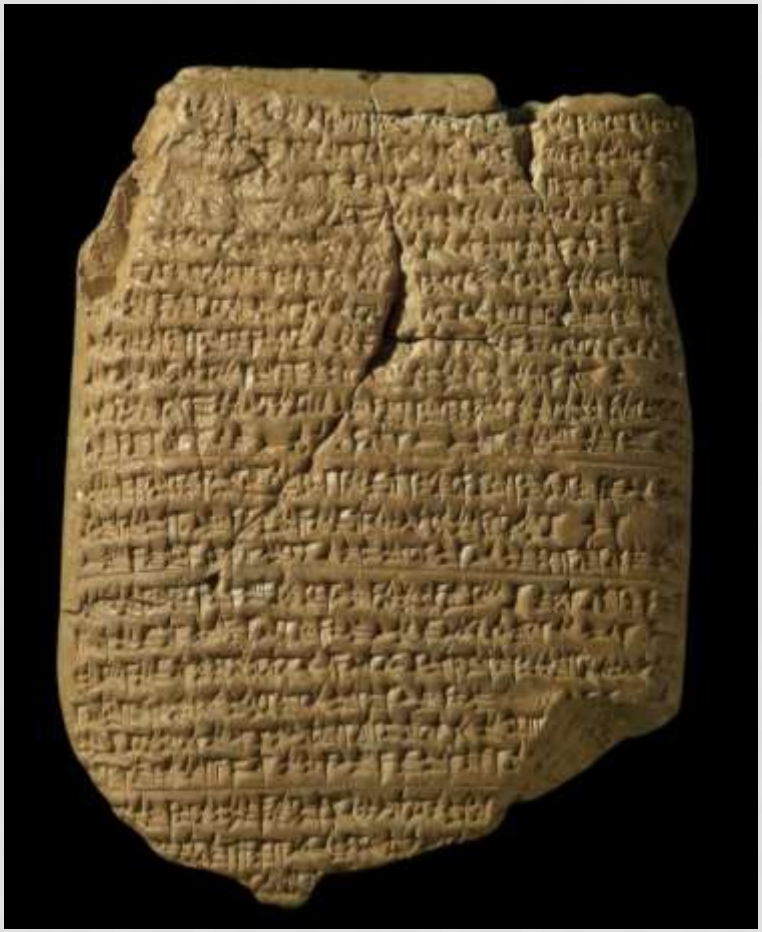
- 612 BCE – The Babylonians sack Nineveh, signaling the collapse of the Neo-Assyrian Empire
- 605 BCE – Nebuchadnezzar II becomes king of Babylon
- 604 BCE – Nebuchadnezzar II subjugates the Land of Israel. King Jehoiakim of Judah (r. 608-598) submits to Nebuchadnezzar's rule, Nebuchadnezzar begins the exile of Jews to Babylon.
- 598 BCE – King Jehoachin (r.598-597), son of Jehoiakim becomes king of Judah for 3 months
- 597 BCE – Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem, King Jehoachin is taken hostage to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar appoints Zedekiah (r. 597-586) as the new king of Judah
- 586 BCE –On the 9th of Av, the Babylonians destroy Solomon's Temple
- 571 BCE – First tablet denoting Jews in the Babylonian City – Al Judah
- 562 BCE – Nebuchadnezzar II dies
- 556 BCE – Nabonidus becomes king
- 539 BCE – Cyrus the Great of Persia conquers Babylon and allows Jews to return.
- 477 BCE – Last text in the Al-Yahudu Archive mentions Xerxes (Ahasuerus)
- 500 CE – The Babylonian Talmud is completed
- 1951 – The Jews of Israel are deported from Babylon

EXILE OF 604 BCE

"In his days, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him."

2 Kings 24:1

BABYLONIAN CHRONICLE 5 / NEBUCHADNEZZAR CHRONICLE (OBVERSE) 604 BCE



The British Museum

"The first year of Nebuchadnezzar: In the month of Sivan he mustered his army and marched to Hattu (Syria-Land of Israel region). All the kings of Hattu came into his presence and he received their vast tribute. He marched to Ashkelon and in the month of Kislev he captured it, seized its king, plundered and sacked it."

EXILE OF 597 BCE

"At that time, the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem, and the city came under siege. And Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon came to the city, while his troops were besieging it. Thereupon King Jehoiachin of Judah along with his mother and his courtiers, commanders, and officers, surrendered to the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign…

He exiled all of Jerusalem: all the commanders and all the warriors—ten thousand exiles—as well as all the craftsmen and smiths; only the poorest people in the land were left... And the king of Abylon appointed Mattaniah his uncle, king in his place changing his name to Zedekiah."

2 Kings 24:10-17

BABYLONIAN CHRONICLE 5 / NEBUCHADNEZZAR CHRONICLE (REVERSE) 597 BCE

The British Museum

"The seventh year: In the month of Kislev (December 598) the king of Akkad mustered his army and marched to Hattu. He encamped against the City of Judah (i.e. Jerusalem) and on the seond day of the month of Adar (March 597) he captured the city and seized the king. A king of his own choice he appointed in the city and taking the vast tribute he brought it into Babylon."

KING JEHOIACHIN
598 -597 BCE

"Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, his wives, his officials and the prominent people of the land."

2 Kings 24:15

THE BABYLONIAN RATION LIST FOR KING JEHOIACHIN 592 BCE

Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

List of rations allocated by the Babylonian royal court to exiles settled in Babylon.

"10 liters (of oil) to Jehoiachin, king of Judah, 2.5 liters for the 5 sons of the king of Judah..."

KING ZEDEKIAH
597 - 586 BCE

"Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem."

2 Kings 24:18

JEREMIAH IS THROWN INTO THE PIT BY GEDALIAH AND SHELEMIAH

"Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehukal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah heard what Jeremiah was telling all the people…

"This is what the Lord says: 'This city will certainly be given into the hands of the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it.' "

Then the officials said to the king [Zedekiah], "This man should be put to death…"

Jeremiah 38:1-4

GEDALIAH SON OF PASHHUR

YEHUCHAL SON OF SHELEMIAH

JEREMIAH'S PIT

City of David Excavations

"Then they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malchijah the king's son, which was in the court of the guardhouse; and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. Now in the cistern there was no water but only mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud."

Jeremiah 38:6

BARUCH, THE SON OF NERIYAHU, THE SCRIBE

City of David Excavations

"In the fourth year of King Jehoiakim…

Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the Lord had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll."

Jeremiah 36:1, 4

GEMARYAHU SON OF SHAPHAN

City of David Excavations

"From the room of Gemariah son of Shaphan the secretary, which was in the upper courtyard at the entrance of the New Gate of the temple, Baruch read to all the people at the Lord's temple the words of Jeremiah from the scroll."

Jeremiah 36:10

LACHISH AND AZEKAH

"…when the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the remaining cities of Judah, that is, Lachish and Azekah, for they alone remained as fortified cities among the cities of Judah."

Jeremiah 34:7

LACHISH LETTER
586 BCE

"…we are watching the Lachish (fire-) signal according to the signs which my lord has given, because we do not see (the fire-signal from) Azekah."

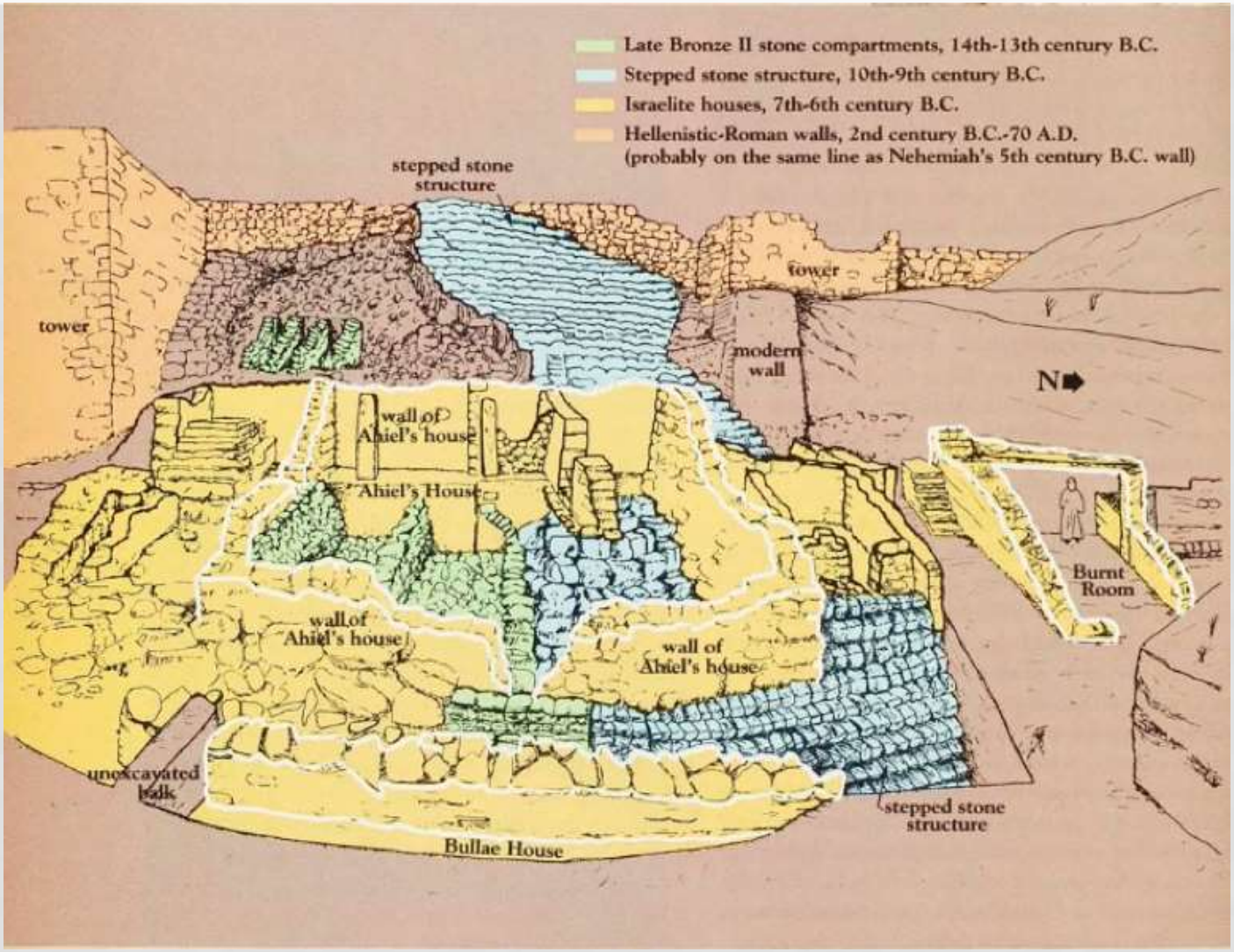
THE BABYLONIANS DESTROY SOLOMON'S TEMPLE 586 BCE

Now on the tenth day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, who was in the service of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the LORD, the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every large house he burned with fire.

Jeremiah 52:12-13

ARROWHEADS AND SLINGSTONES FROM THE BABYLONIAN DESTRUCTION

AHIEL'S HOUSE



THE BURNT ROOM

BAR Magazine

Dramatic evidence of Jerusalem's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 B.C., a thick layer of dark ash covers this small Iron Age building at the base of the stepped structure.

PSALMS SCROLL FRAGMENT

"By the rivers in Babylon, there we sat, also wept when we remembered Zion."

Psalm 137:1

HOUSE OF THE BULLAE

Over 50 seal impressions (bullae) found in the ash of the Babylonian destruction.

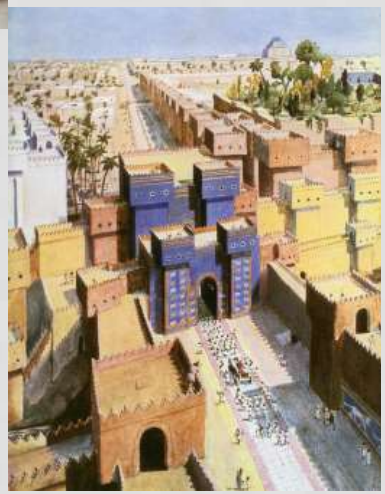
PROMISSORY NOTE FOR BARLEY WRITTEN IN AL-YAHUDU, 550 BCE

"Shalam-Yama" inscribed in Paleo-Hebrew

"(x) liters of barley are owed to Gummulu son of Bi-hame, by Shalam-Yama son of Nadab-Yama."

THE ISHTAR GATE

The **Ishtar Gate** was the eighth gate to the inner city of Babylon. It was constructed in about 575 BC by order of King Nebuchadnezzar II on the north side of the city.



Pergamon Museum, Berlin

TEXT FROM LESS THAN 15 YEARS AFTER THE BABYLONIAN DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE 572 BCE

"Tub-shalam son of Ahiqar, Azar-Yama son of Yahu-Kullu, Ah-lumur son of Balassu and the scribe Nabu-Na'id, son of Nabu-zar-iqisha. (Written in) Al-Yahudaia (City of the Judeans), on the 20th day of Nissan, year 33 of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon."

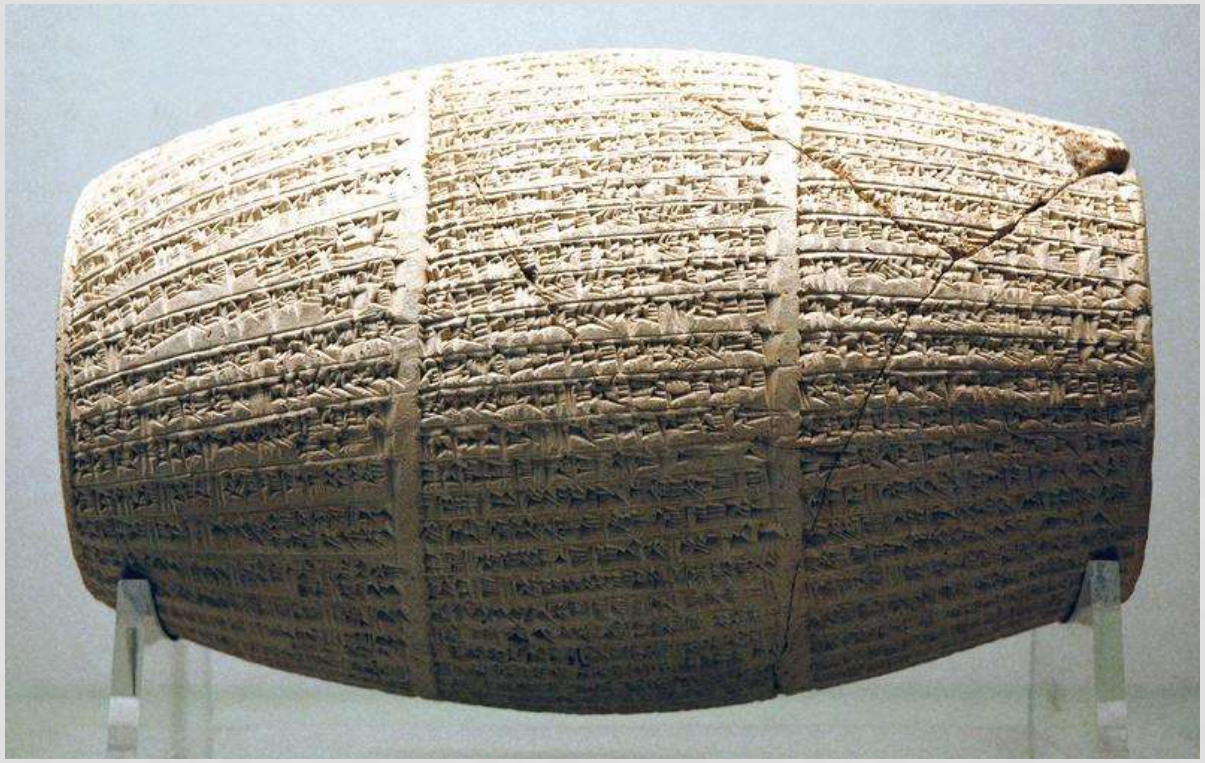
BELSHAZZAR
CO-REGENT KING OF BABYLON, 550-539 BCE
THE WRITING IS ON THE WALL

"King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them…

Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace."

Daniel 5:1, 5

NABONIDUS CYLINDER
539 BCE



British Museum

"And as for Belshazzar my (Nabonidus) firstborn son, my own child, let the fear of your great divinity be in his heart…"

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST
539 BCE

Rembrandt

KING CYRUS OF PERSIA
539 BCE

"The LORD has chosen Cyrus as his ally. He will use him to put an end to the empire of Babylon and to destroy the Babylonian armies."

Isaiah 48:14

"King Cyrus of Persia, in the first year of his reign made a decree that the house of God should be rebuilt (in Jerusalem) . . ."

Ezra 5:13-15

CYRUS CYLINDER
537 BCE

British Museum

"I Cyrus returned the [images of] the gods to the sacred centers . . . I gathered all their inhabitants and returned [to them] their dwellings."

TOMB OF CYRUS

"Mortal! I am Cyrus son of Cambyses, who founded the Persian empire, and was King of Asia. Grudge me not then my monument."

LATEST TEXT OF AL-YAHUDU ARCHIVE 477 BCE

"(Written in) Al-Yahudu on the 25th day of Av, year 9 of Xerxes (Ahasuerus), king of the lands."