



Cyrus, the Lord's Anointed

Daniel 2:39a; 7:5;

Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4;

Ezra 3; 4; 6

Daniel's World

DANIEL

- Babylon destroyed Nineveh and toppled the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C.
- In 605 B.C. they conquered Jerusalem, and by 586, the Temple had been destroyed and Judah had been carried off to Babylon.

Jeremiah 38:17-18, 20-21, 23 DANIEL

17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “Thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘If you will indeed go out to the officers of the king of Babylon, then you will live, this city will not be burned with fire, and you and your household will survive. **18** But if you will not go out to the officers of the king of Babylon, then this city will be given over to the hand of the Chaldeans; and they will burn it with fire, and you yourself will not escape from their hand.’” **20** ...But Jeremiah said, “They will not give you over. Please obey the Lord in what I am saying to you, that it may go well with you and you may live. **21** But if you keep refusing to go out, this is the word which the Lord has shown me...**23** They will also bring out all your wives and your sons to the Chaldeans, and you yourself will not escape from their hand, but will be seized by the hand of the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned with fire.”

Jeremiah 25:11-13

DANIEL

11 This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. **12** ‘Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the Lord, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation. **13** I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations.



Daniel 2:39a After you there will
arise another kingdom inferior
to you



Daniel 7:5

“And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’”

Isaiah 44:28

DANIEL

28 “It is I who says of **Cyrus,**
‘He is My shepherd! And he
will perform all My desire.’
And he declares of
Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’
And of the temple, ‘Your
foundation will be laid.’”

Isaiah 45:1-4 (c. 700 B.C.) DANIEL

1 Thus says the Lord to **Cyrus His anointed**, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: **2** “I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. **3** “I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden wealth of secret places, So that you may know that it is I, The Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. **4** “**For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name;** I have given you a title of honor Though you have not known Me.



Cyrus the Great | 600-530 B.C.

Cyrus 1st Appears

In 559 B.C.
at the age of
40, when he
inherits the
small
kingdom of
Anshan, a
tributary to
the Median
Empire.



Babylon at this Time

DANIEL

- Nabonidus was an unpopular king, who viewed himself as a philosopher and a mystic.
- He felt called by Marduk (Babylon's chief god) to restore the temple of the moon-god Sin at Harran.
- And so, he turned the kingship of Babylon over to his eldest son, Belshazzar (See Daniel 5:1; 7:1).

Nabonidus / Belshazzar

DANIEL

- Graft and mismanagement by these leaders destroyed the empire built by Nebuchadnezzar and brought on near starvation.
- At its weakest point, Babylon is forced to deal with the conquering force of Cyrus.
- Cyrus viewed himself as a deliverer, and this feeling was shared by many Babylonians.

Nabonidus' Defense

DANIEL

- As a religious man, he chose to let the gods act as his guardians instead of fortifying his military.
- He imported idols from surrounding cities as protection, which only further alienated his own people.
- As Cyrus' army approached Babylon, Nabonidus fled and left Belshazzar in charge.
- Two days later Babylon was captured without a battle.



The Cyrus Cylinder

6th Century B.C.
Discovered 1879

From the Cylinder:

DANIEL

“Marduk, the Great Lord, a protector of his people, beheld with pleasure his [Cyrus'] good deeds and his upright mind [and therefore] ordered him to march against his city Babylon. He made him set out on the road to Babylon going at his side like a real friend. His widespread troops – their number like that of the water of a river, could not be established... strolled along, their weapons packed away. Without any battle, he made him enter his town Babylon, sparing Babylon any calamity.”

Cyrus' "return to normalcy" DANIEL

- On his conquest:

“Marduk...scanned and looked [through] all the countries, searching for a righteous ruler...he pronounced the name of Cyrus, king of Anshan, declared him to be the ruler of all the world.”

- On the gods:

“Furthermore, I resettled upon the command of Marduk, the great lord, all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus has brought into Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed, in their chapels, the places which make them happy.”

What Was Different About Israel's Religion?



Scripture Confirms:

- 2 Chronicles 36:7 –

“Nebuchadnezzar also brought some of the articles of the house of the Lord to Babylon and put them in his temple at Babylon.”

- Jeremiah 28:3 –

“Within two years I am going to bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord’s house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon.”

Ezra 5:13-15

DANIEL

13 However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God. **14** Also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, and brought them to the temple of Babylon, these King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon and they were given to one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor. **15** He said to him, “Take these utensils, go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem and let the house of God be rebuilt in its place.”

Most Importantly...

DANIEL

- Cyrus will institute a new foreign policy.
 - The Babylonian practice was to remove peoples from their homeland and settle them in Babylon under the direct authority of the king.
 - The Assyrian practice was to not only transport populations from their former homes but also move others in to occupy the vacated areas.
- Thus a return by the northern tribes was impossible, but Judah had a ray of hope.

Psalm 137:1-6

DANIEL

1 By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down and wept, When we remembered Zion. 2 Upon the willows in the midst of it We hung our harps. 3 For there our captors demanded of us songs, And our tormentors mirth, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” 4 How can we sing the Lord’s song In a foreign land? 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, May my right hand forget her skill. 6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth If I do not remember you, If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy.

Cyrus Said:

DANIEL

“I gathered all their [former] inhabitants and returned [to them] their habitations.”

Cyrus' policy was grounded on the fact that when it comes to provinces under his control, the happier their lot, the more likely they would be to cooperate with Persian aims and goals.

Many Jews Remained

DANIEL

- Including an aged Daniel.
- The book of Esther records both the influence and trials of Jews in the Persian Empire.
- Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the Persian king.
- Ezra was most likely a royal scribe.
 - And he gives us a royal Persian decree in Scripture!

Ezra 6:2-5

DANIEL

2 In Ecbatana in the fortress, which is in the province of Media, a scroll was found and there was written in it as follows: “Memorandum— **3** In the first year of King Cyrus, Cyrus the king issued a decree: ‘Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the temple, the place where sacrifices are offered, be rebuilt and let its foundations be retained, its height being 60 cubits and its width 60 cubits; **4** with three layers of huge stones and one layer of timbers. And let the cost be paid from the royal treasury. **5** Also let the gold and silver utensils of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be returned and brought to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; and you shall put them in the house of God.’

At Cyrus' Decree

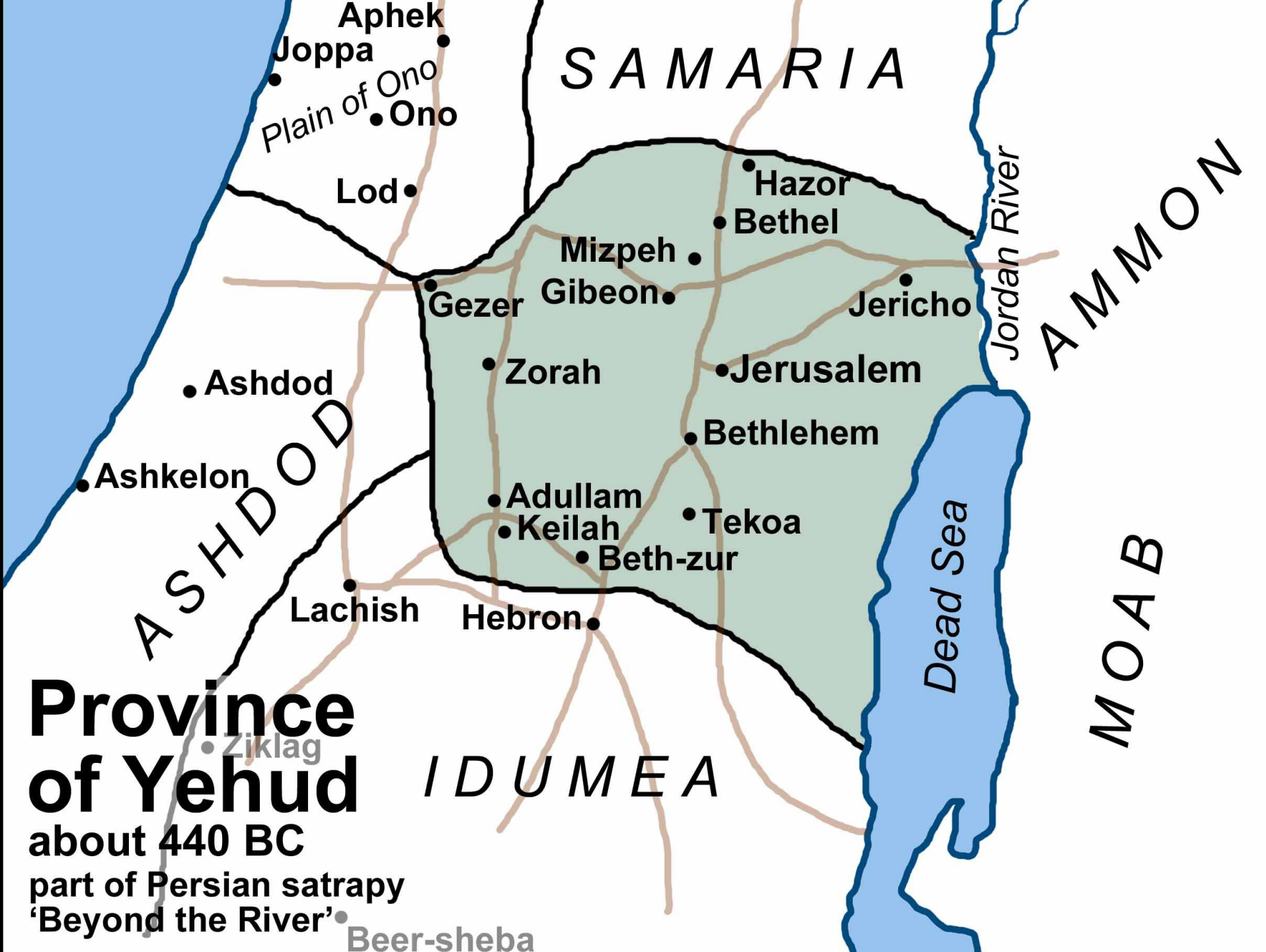
DANIEL

- About 50,000 Jews availed themselves of the opportunity to return to their homeland with the blessing and help of the king.
- The leader of the returning exiles was Zerubbabel (lit. “seed of Babylon”).
- He was joined by a priest named Jeshua.

In the 2nd Year of Return

DANIEL

- Ezra 3:3 says, “So they set up the altar on its foundation, for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening.”
- **The reaction of the people is one mixed with joy and sorrow.**
- According to Ezra 4, work on the Temple is hindered by enemies of Judah, and so nothing further is accomplished under Cyrus’ rule.



Judea Under Persia and Greece

Province of
Yehud/Judea

Old Kingdom
of Israel

Old Kingdom
of Judah



Who are these Enemies?

DANIEL

- What was once the northern kingdom of Israel was now inhabited by the deported captives from the Assyrian conquests.
- While there were certainly Jews left in the land, they had intermarried with these new inhabitants.

This new ethnic group will come to be known as Samaritans.

Enemies to the South

DANIEL

In the Judean highlands, the Negev, and in southern Judah (as far north as Hebron), the Edomites or Idumeans had settled.

- Psalm 137:7 –

“Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom
The day of Jerusalem, Who said,
“Raze it, raze it To its very foundation.”

Obadiah 10-11

DANIEL

10 Because of violence to your brother Jacob, You will be covered with shame, And you will be cut off forever. **11** On the day that you stood aloof, On the day that strangers carried off his wealth, And foreigners entered his gate And cast lots for Jerusalem—You too were as one of them.

Other Enemies

- The Nabatean Arabs had pressed from the Arabian desert into the traditional region of Edom.
- These nations profited from Israel's exile, so their opposition at Judah's return is expected.
- But some attempt to help in the reconstruction...

Ezra 4:1-2

DANIEL

1 Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the Lord God of Israel, **2** they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here."

Look Back at 4:2

DANIEL

What does their
statement reveal
about their
theology?

Ezra 4:3

DANIEL

3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us."

And As A Result...

DANIEL

The people of the land used every conceivable tactic to hinder the Jews from their work of rebuilding the Temple, from intimidation to diplomatic interference.

- Ezra 4:4-5 –

“Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.”

And They Succeeded

DANIEL

For a period of about 18 years (538-520 B.C.), little or no progress was made in the rebuilding of the Temple.

The Last Days of Cyrus

DANIEL

- Cyrus was wounded in a skirmish while attempting to deal with a nomadic revolt on the eastern frontiers of his empire.
- He died east of the Caspian Sea and his body was carried back to Pasargadae, one of his capital cities.

Cyrus' Tomb

DANIEL

- His body was covered with wax, according to Persian custom, and placed in a stately, dignified tomb which was guarded by faithful priests for two centuries.
- **The inscription (which no longer remains), was reported by Strabo to say:**
“Passer-by, I am Cyrus, who founded the Persian Empire, and was king of Asia. Grudge me not therefore this monument.”





Cyrus the Great Day

DANIEL

- Also simply known as Cyrus Day, is an unofficial holiday in Iran that takes place annually in the tomb of Cyrus on October 29th to commemorate Cyrus the Great.
- **October 29th is the anniversary of the entrance of Cyrus into Babylon.**
- The Mausoleum is said to be the oldest base-isolated structure in the world, meaning it is resilient to seismic hazards.

The Legacy of Cyrus

DANIEL

- The Persians called him father.
- The Greeks saw him as a master and lawgiver.
- To the Jews he was the Lord's "shepherd" and His "anointed" who ended the Babylonian exile and opened a new era in the history of Israel.

DANIEL