

THE JEWISH FOUNDATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



Class III – Who is Our King?

January 28, 2017



Last Week

The Land and the Bible

- Examined three ways the land influences the narrative of the Bible
 - Ethnic/political boundaries
 - Cultural themes
 - Keeps us honest



Introduction

- Why are we studying the Jewish background of the New Testament?
 - Context – meaning is grounded in the original audience
 - Submission to the Word – danger of reading our own anachronisms into Scripture
 - Worship of God - called to worship with our whole being, including the mind

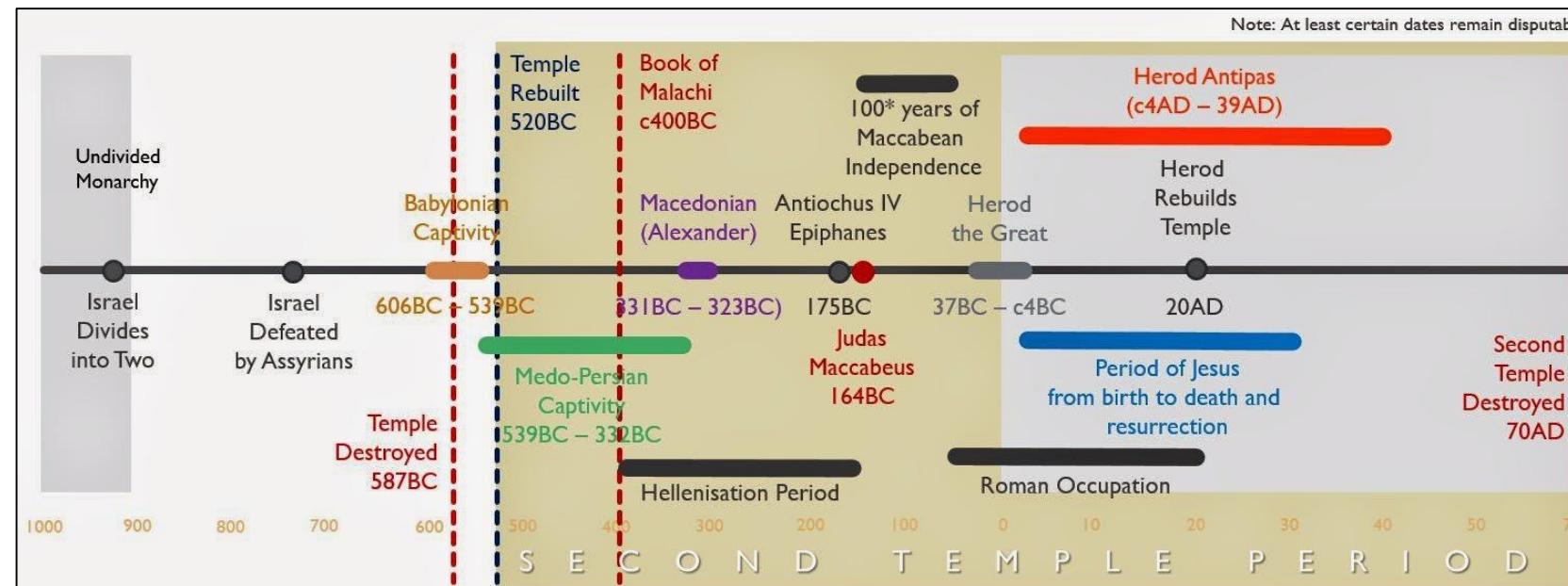
We want to grow a deeper relationship with God through encountering the Bible!

Where Are We Going? (Tentative)

- Class I - II: Introduction & the Land of the Bible
- Class III: Who is Our King?
 - *What happens after the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple?*
 - *If worshiping YHWH means sacrificing at the Temple, what do you do when it no longer exists or you can't get to it?*
- Class IV: Beware Getting What You Ask For
- Class V-VII: Judaism in the First Century
- Class VIII-IX: What is the New Testament?

What Is the Intertestamental Period?

- Time between (“Inter”) the Old and New Testaments (“Testamental”)
- Period from the end 5th c. BCE to the 1st c. CE
- Mediterranean world unified under single rulers / governments
- Rise of a single culture called Hellenism



Why Is This Period Important?

- Four Centuries is a long time!
 - *Fills in the “gap” of history between the Old and New Testaments – History doesn’t stop!*
- Major challenges and changes in the world
 - *New groups appear, new kingdoms rise (and fall), and new ideas sprout*
- This period is the lens through which the New Testament writers view the Old Testament
 - *New Testament writers looked back at the Old Testament through this period’s issues and ideas*

An Introductory Reading

Numbers 23:9 (JPS) –

“As I see them from the mountain tops, gaze on them from the heights,
There is a people that **dwell apart, not recognized** among the nations.”

Philo Judeaus in *Book of Moses* 1.278 (early 1st c. CE) –

“For I shall behold them with my eyes from the loftiest mountains, and I shall see them with my mind; and I shall never be able to injure **the people which shall dwell alone, not being numbered** among the other nations, not in accordance with the inheritance of any particular places, or any apportionment of lands, but **by reason of the peculiar nature of their remarkable customs**, as they will never mingle with any other nation **so as to depart from their national and ancestral ways.**”

New Challenges

The loss of local political control and independent nationhood caused a re-evaluation of what it meant to worship *YHWH* and live as faithful Jews.

- The transition from detached, distant rulers to localized “foreign” rulers spurred new thinking about what it meant to be *YHWH*’s special people in a Gentile world
- The actions of these rulers created pressure points with Hellenistic Judaism, either soothing or antagonizing groups

Our focus for today:

- Persian Period to Alexander the Great (late 6th c to 323 BCE)
- Ptolemaic Period up to Maccabean Revolt (323 to 167 BCE)

4 Important Numbers

- 587
 - Final destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian and beginning of the Exile
 - No national king, no Temple, removed to a new land
- 334
 - Beginning of Alexander the Great's campaign of conquest
 - Introduction of Hellenism to the larger world
- 167
 - Campaign of Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes to culturally unite his kingdom via Hellenism
 - Rebellion to uphold Hellenistic Judaism leading to eventual Jewish kingdom
- 63
 - Entry into Jerusalem by Romans to establish order and control

Homework Discussion: 2 Chron. 30:1-31:1

What does the worship of *YHWH* look like during this period of the monarchy?

What institutions exist to support the worship of *YHWH*?

What activities did the people take part in?



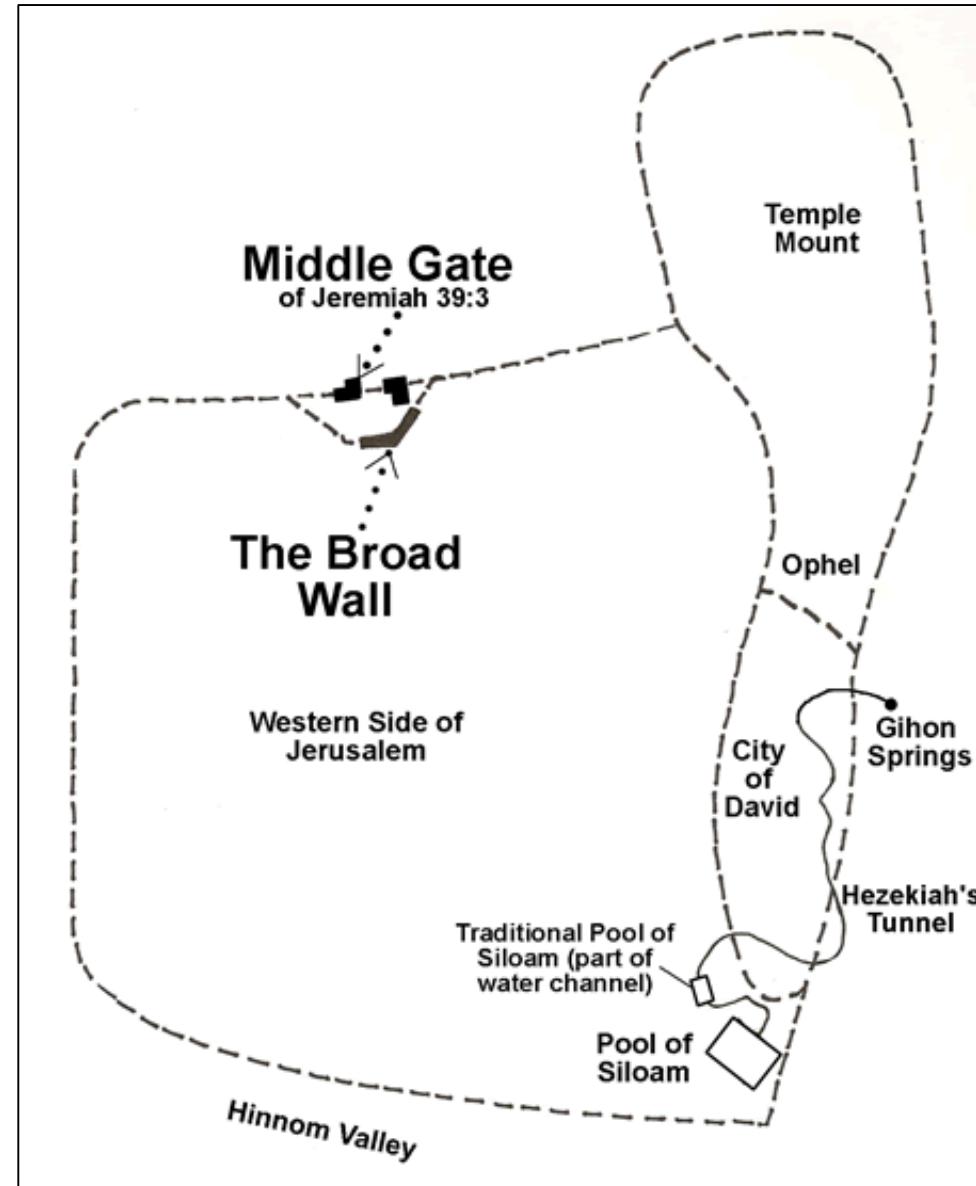
Asherah idol

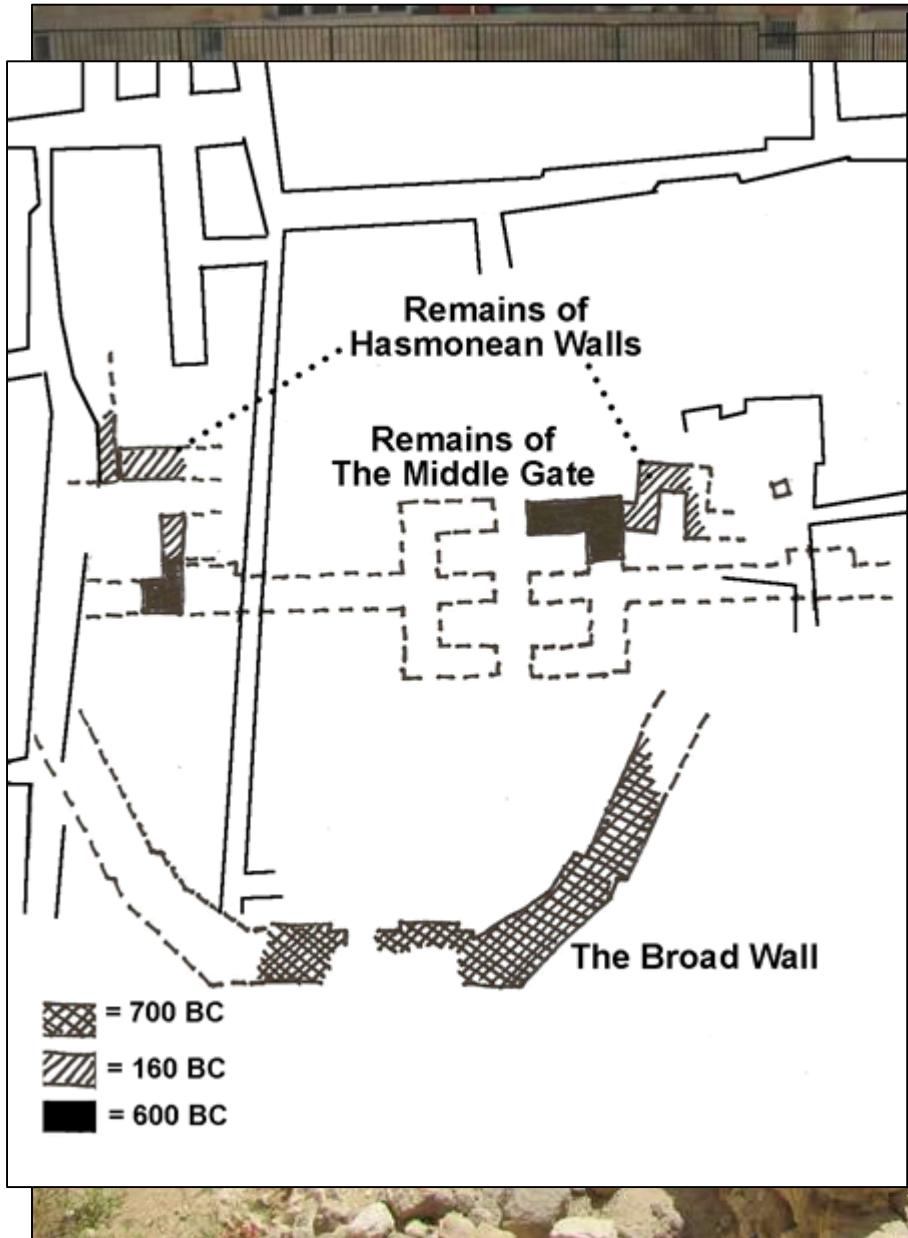
“High Place” – pagan altar

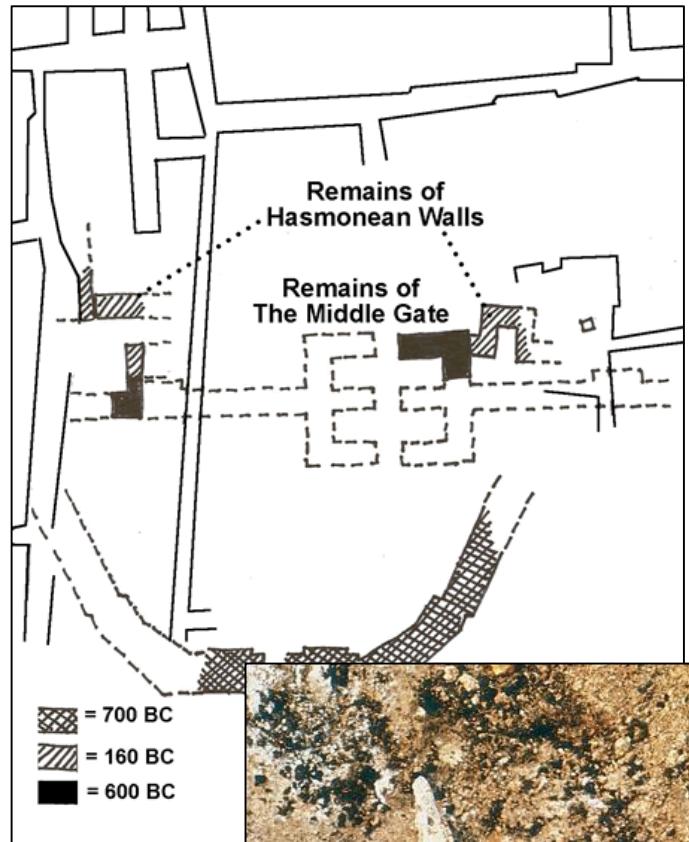


Babylonian Exile

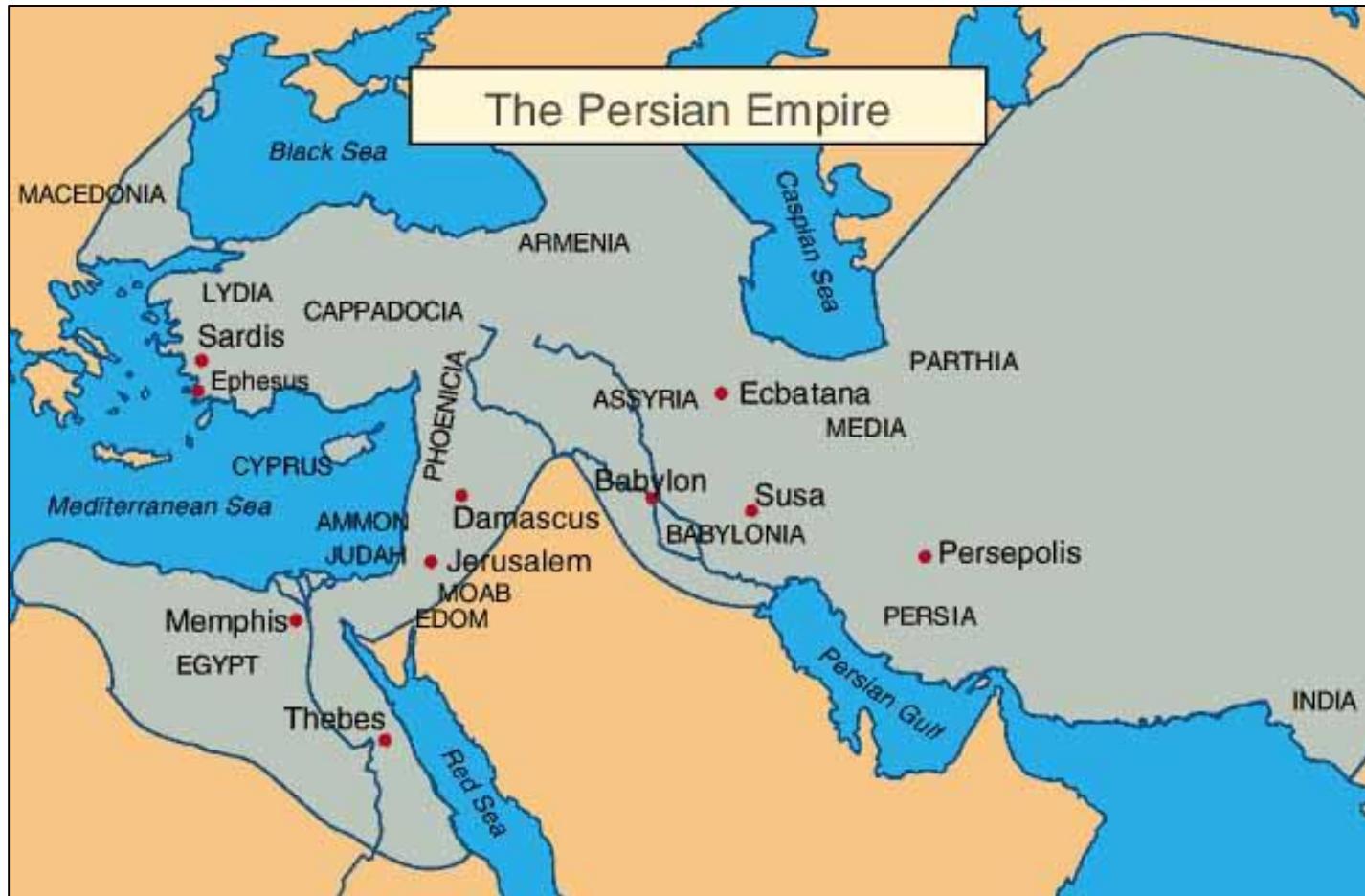
- Series of population removals from Jerusalem and surrounding area by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and his allies starting in 605 BCE
- Caught between the two superpowers of the day, Egypt and Babylonia, the King Zedekiah sides with the Egyptians
- Final destruction of Solomon's Temple and city in 586/7 BCE



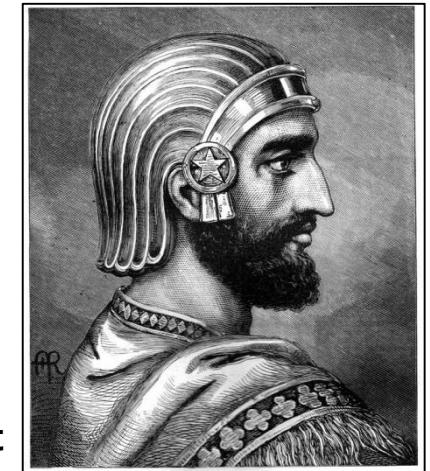




The Exile Ends with the Persians in Control



Cyrus the Great

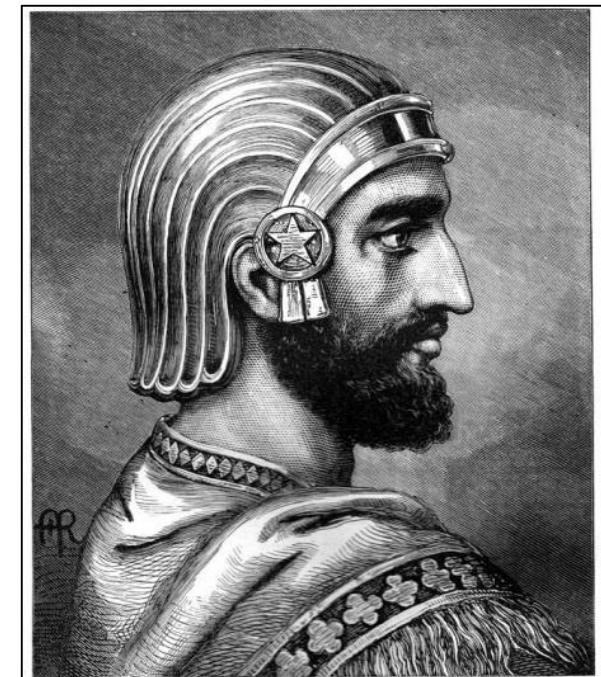


Darius I



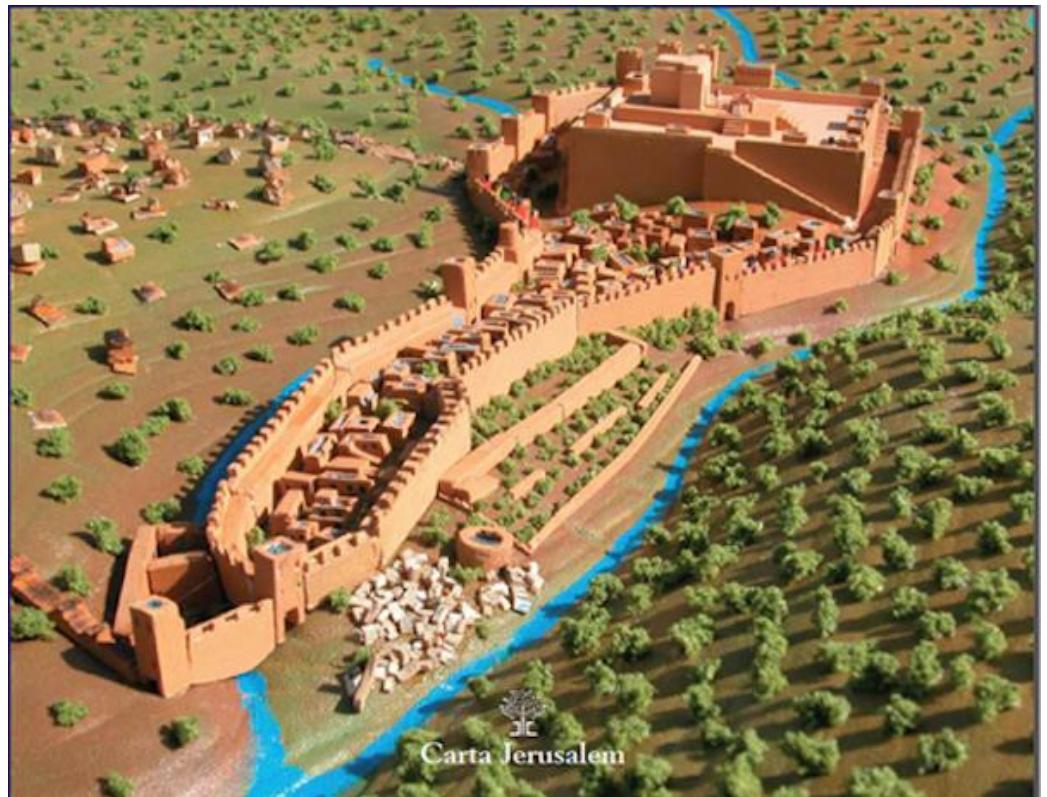
The Exile Ends with the Persians in Control

- Allowed to return to Jerusalem by the Mede-Persian king Cyrus the Great in 538 BCE, a group of approximately 55,000 people return to Judea and begin to re-build
- Persians allow relative freedom for localized rule
 - Appoint a local governor
 - Levy taxes
 - Provide for an umbrella military defense
 - Adjudicate any local disputes
 - Allow for religious freedom of worship

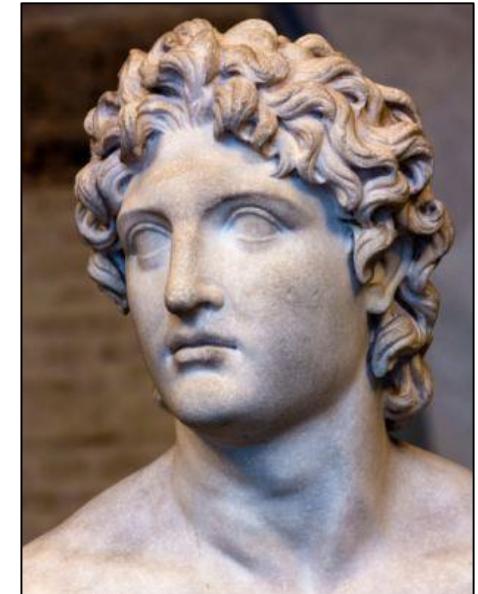


Small Group Discussion: Nehemiah 13:23-30

- What problem is Nehemiah trying to address?
- Why do you think he saw this as a big issue?
- How did Nehemiah deal with them?
- Turn a couple pages to the right – who is Esther married to?

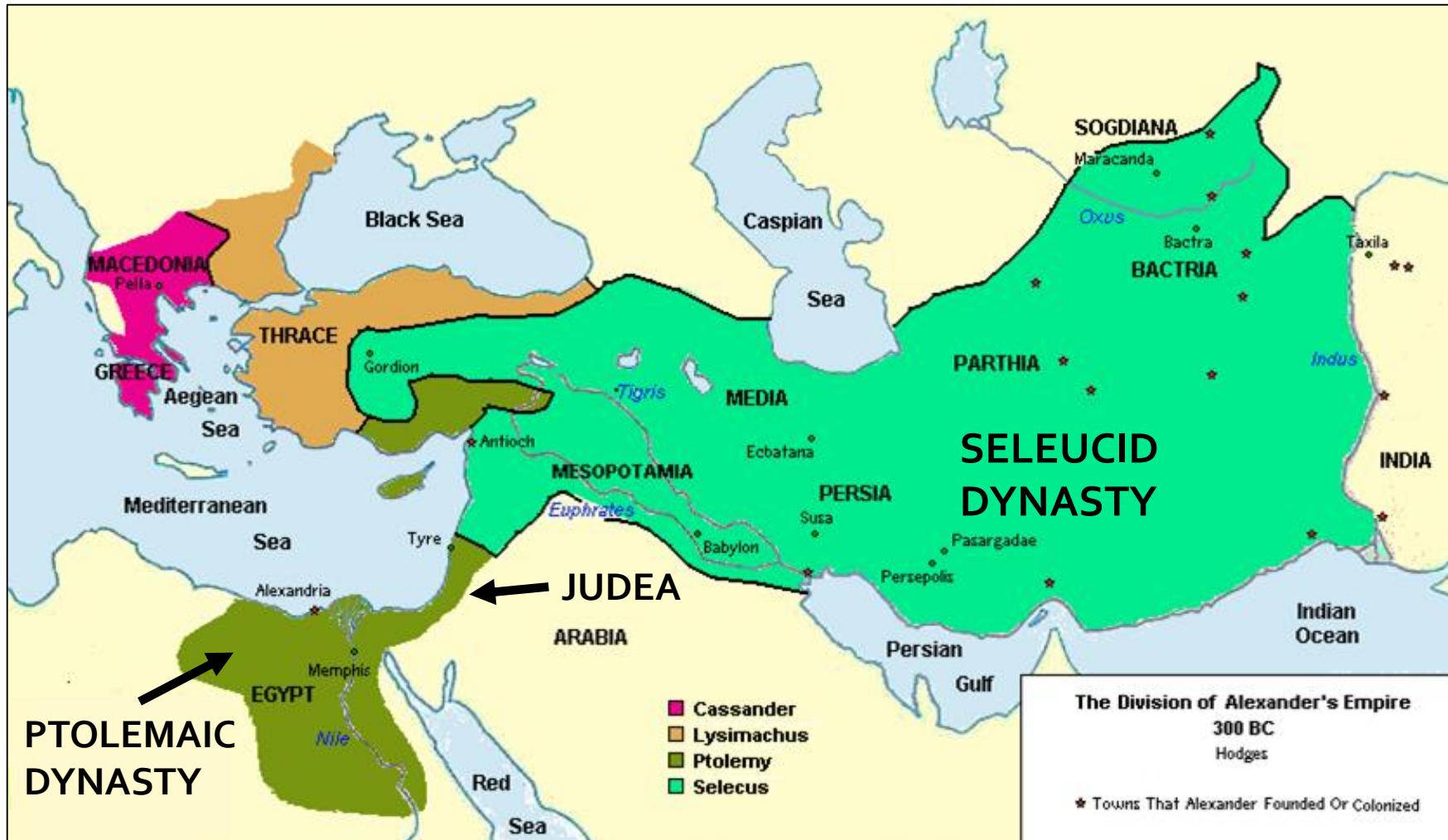


Alexander Conquers the World



Alexander I of Macedonia
"The Great"

His Generals Divide the Kingdom



Ptolemy I "Soter" (Savior)

Next Week's Homework

- Read Esther Ch. 7–9
- Is the plot to kill the Jews a governmental affair, a religious dispute, or an ethnic conflict?
- What is the Jewish response once the political upper hand has been gained?

