



Political Backgrounds to the New Testament

Assyrians to Alexander

Part 1



A Bird's Eye View of This Course

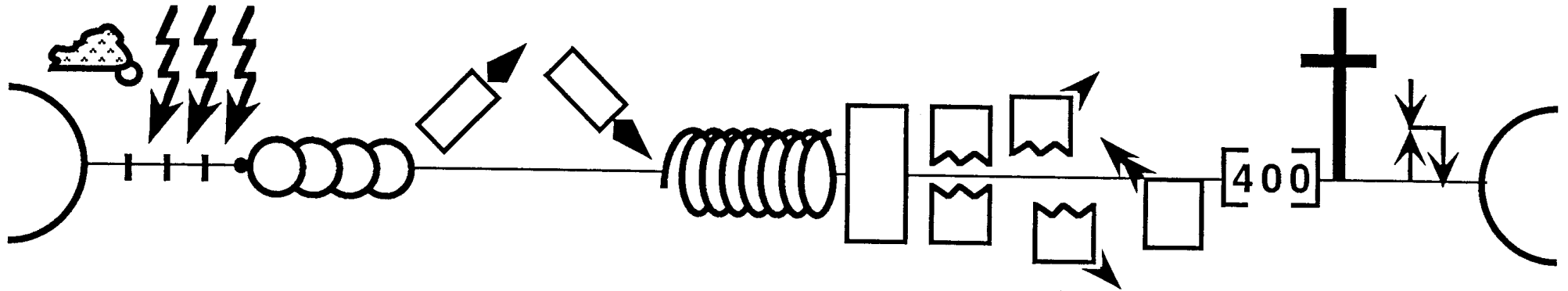
We're studying these backgrounds
to the NT:

- Geography (& Archaeology)
- Politics (History)
- Social-Economic Life
- Religion
- Literature



Stages of God's Plan in History

Eternity
 Creation
 Fall
 Flood
 Babel
 Abraham
 Isaac
 Jacob
 Joseph
 Moses
 Joshua
 Cycles
 S • D • S
 I (J) & J (R)
 I (A) & J (B)
 Z • E • N
 P • G • H • R
 1st Coming
 2nd Coming
 1000
 Eternity



Beginnings
 Patriarchs
 Exodus
 Conquests
 Judges
 United Kingdom
 Divided Kingdom
 Captivity
 Restoration
 Silent Years
 Church
 Kingdom

The Intertestamental Era (425 BC—5 BC)

35

<i>Issue / Time Period</i>	Malachi (close of OT)	Intertestamental Era	Advent of Christ
<i>Rulers Over Israel</i>	Persia (208 yrs.)	Greeks (188 yrs.) Hasmoneans (80 yrs.)	Rome (58 yrs.)
<i>Political Stability</i>	Peace / autonomy	Many wars (Dan. 11:1-35)	Peace (but via Rome!)
<i>Expectation of Messiah & Kingdom</i>	Moderate	Increasing “Two Messiahs”	High
<i>Language in Israel</i>	Hebrew / Aramaic	Greek (Septuagint)	Aramaic / Greek / Latin

The Intertestamental Era (425 BC—5 BC)

35

<i>Issue / Time Period</i>	Malachi (close of OT)	Intertestament Era	Advent of Christ
<i>Ability to Evangelize</i>	Limited	Increased	Extensive
<i>Road System</i>	Very Limited	Expanded	Extensive
<i>Places of Worship</i>	Temple only	Rise of Synagogues	Synagogues / Temple
<i>Religious Leaders</i>	Priests/Levite s	Rise of Jewish Sects	Pharisees / Sadducees

The Intertestamental Era (425 BC—5 BC)

35

<i>Issue / Time Period</i>	Malachi (close of OT)	Intertestament Era	Advent of Christ
<i>Priesthood achieved by . . .</i>	Genealogy	Fighting illegitimate high priest	Bribes / Executions
<i>Extent of Power</i>	Local Jurisdiction	Rise of Sanhedrin	Corrupt Sanhedrin
<i>Hermeneutic</i>	Literal	Instable + Apocalyptic	Letterism
<i>Authority</i>	OT Law	Rise of Oral Law	Pharisees

The "Kingdom Stage" is Set!

The time was right:

Galatians 4:4 NIV
"But when the time had fully come,
God sent his Son, born of a
woman, born under law, to redeem
those under law, that we might
receive the full rights of sons."

■ Transportationally

The Gospel of Matthew

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(probably written in the 40s)

answers the two questions *all* Jews were asking:

Q: **Non-Christian Jews** asked, “How do we know **Jesus is the Messiah?**” (Matt. 1-10)

Q: **Christian Jews** asked, “Yes, He's Messiah, but **where's the promised kingdom?**” (Matt. 11-28)

Answer:

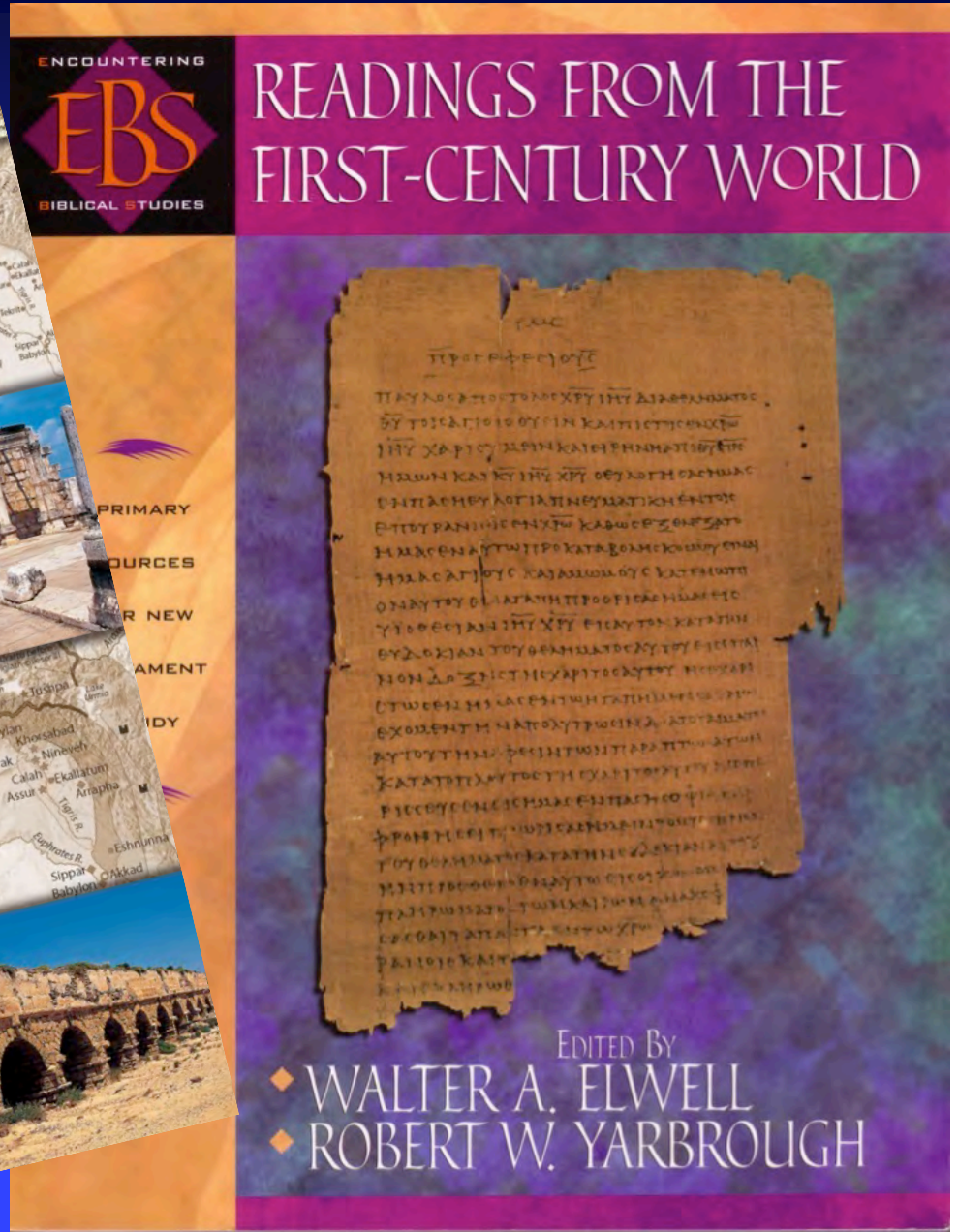
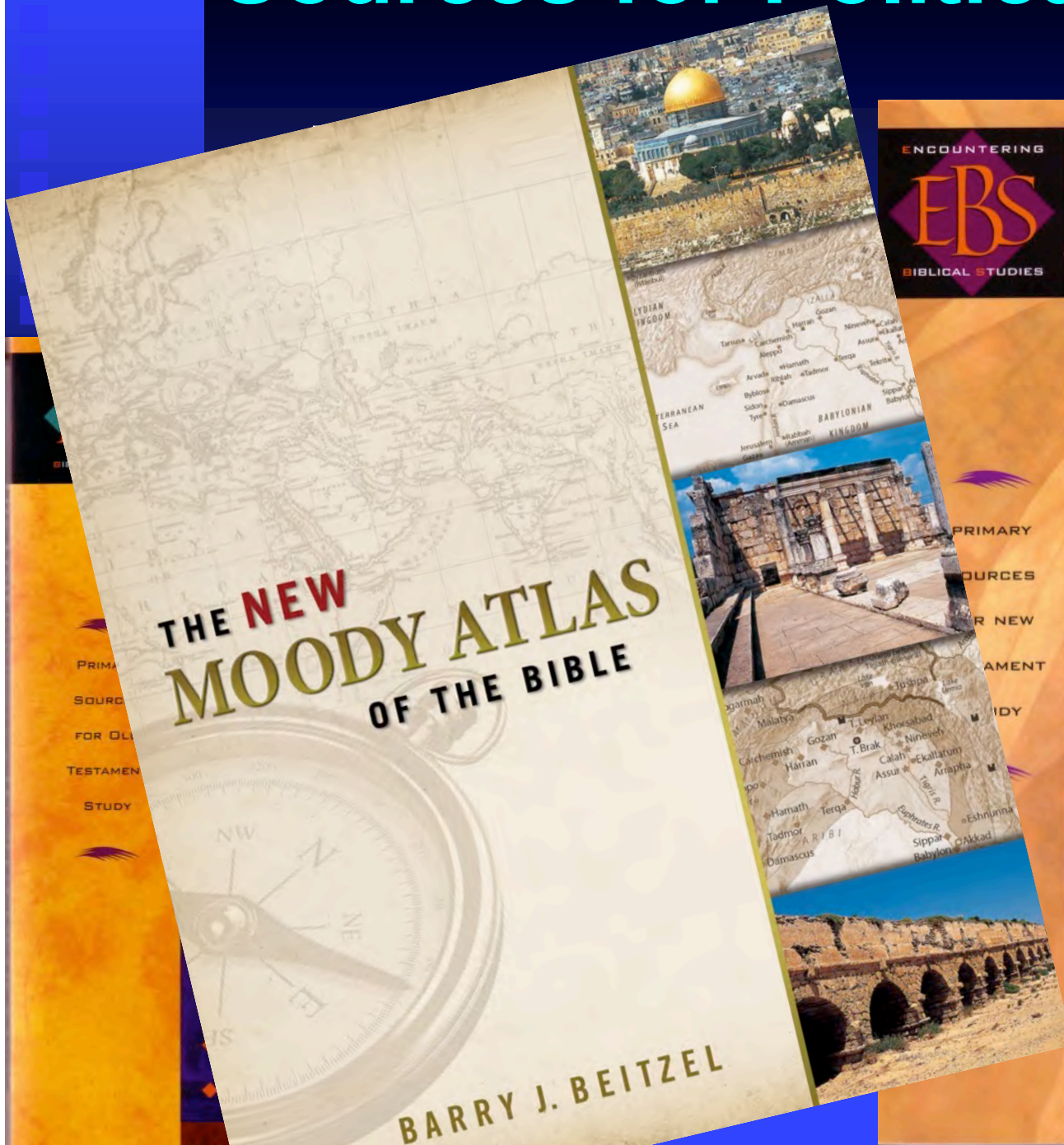
- His advent (1–2) and approvals (3:1–4:11) show Jesus **fulfilled OT** prophecies
- His **teaching** and **revealed office**
- He **showed His divine power** by healing (8:1–9:34) and authority by delegation (9:35–10:35)

Answer:

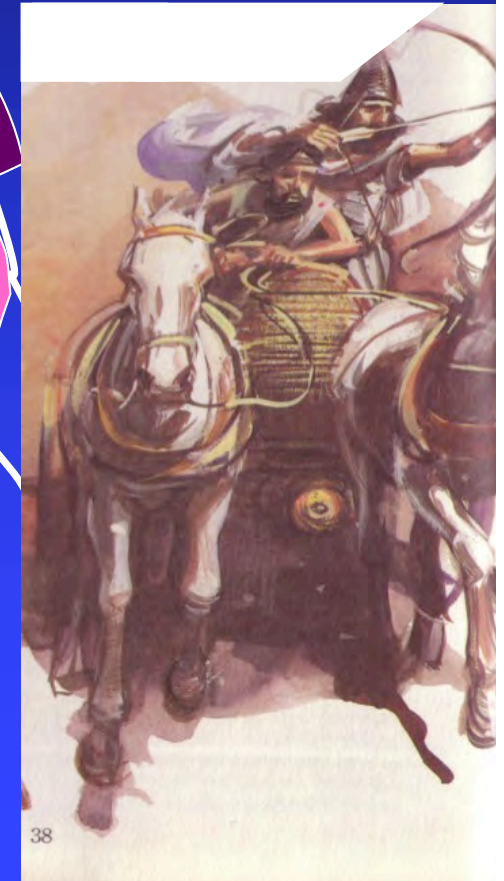
- **Israel** **rejected His kingdom offer** by **not believing** He now has **authority** to teach (11–16) **principles for** the kingdom is **not of this world**
- **They rejected Him as Messiah** but God sovereignly used this to pay for man's sin (21–27)
- **Christ defeated death** to show His messianic authority & ability to bring in the kingdom (28)

So how has God prepared your background for you to minister effectively?

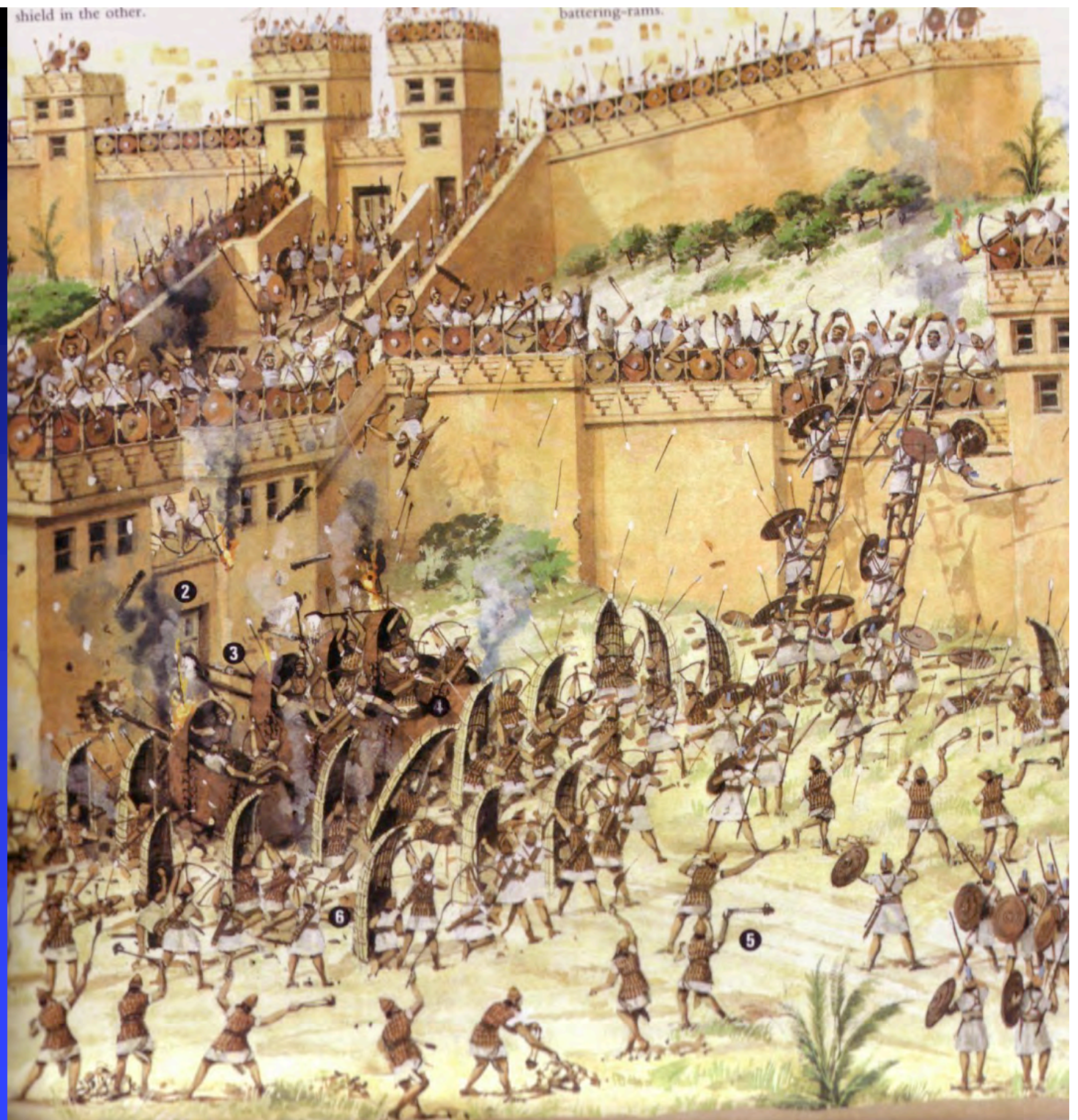
Sources for Political History



The Assyrian Empire



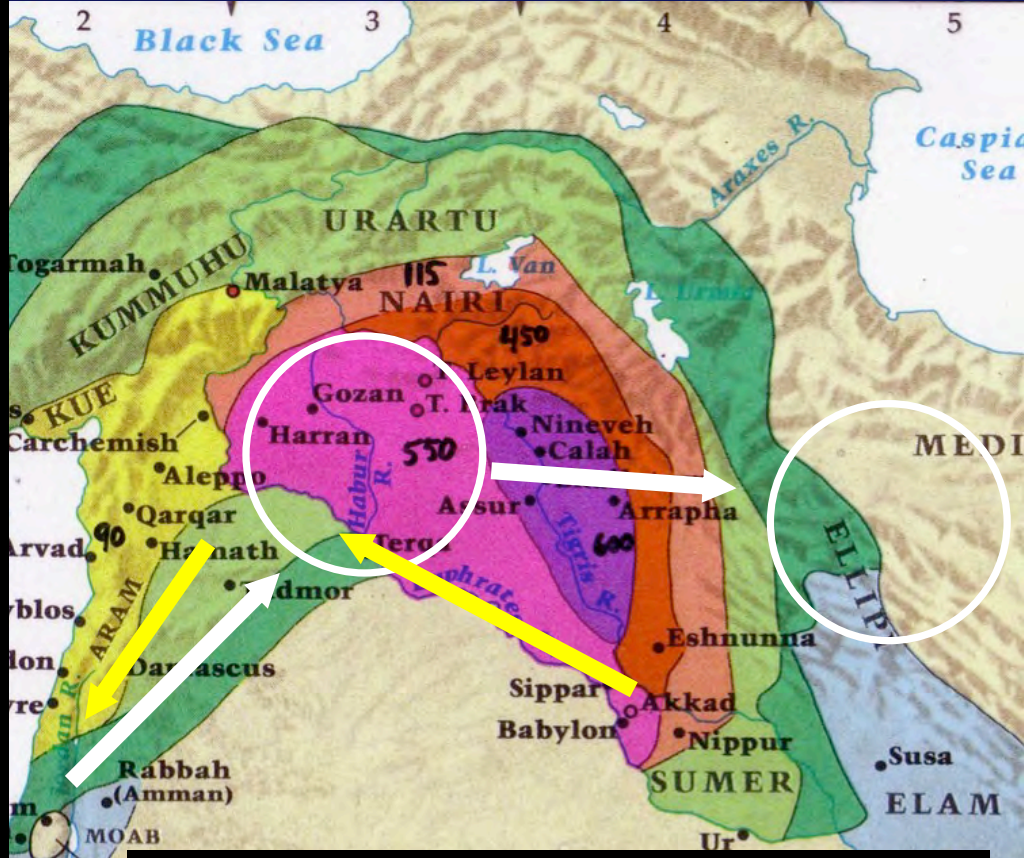
Assyrian Siege of Lachish



And the king of Assyria transported groups of people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and resettled them in the towns of Samaria, replacing the people of Israel. So the Assyrians took over Samaria and the other towns of Israel (2 Kings 17:24).

Assyrian Developments

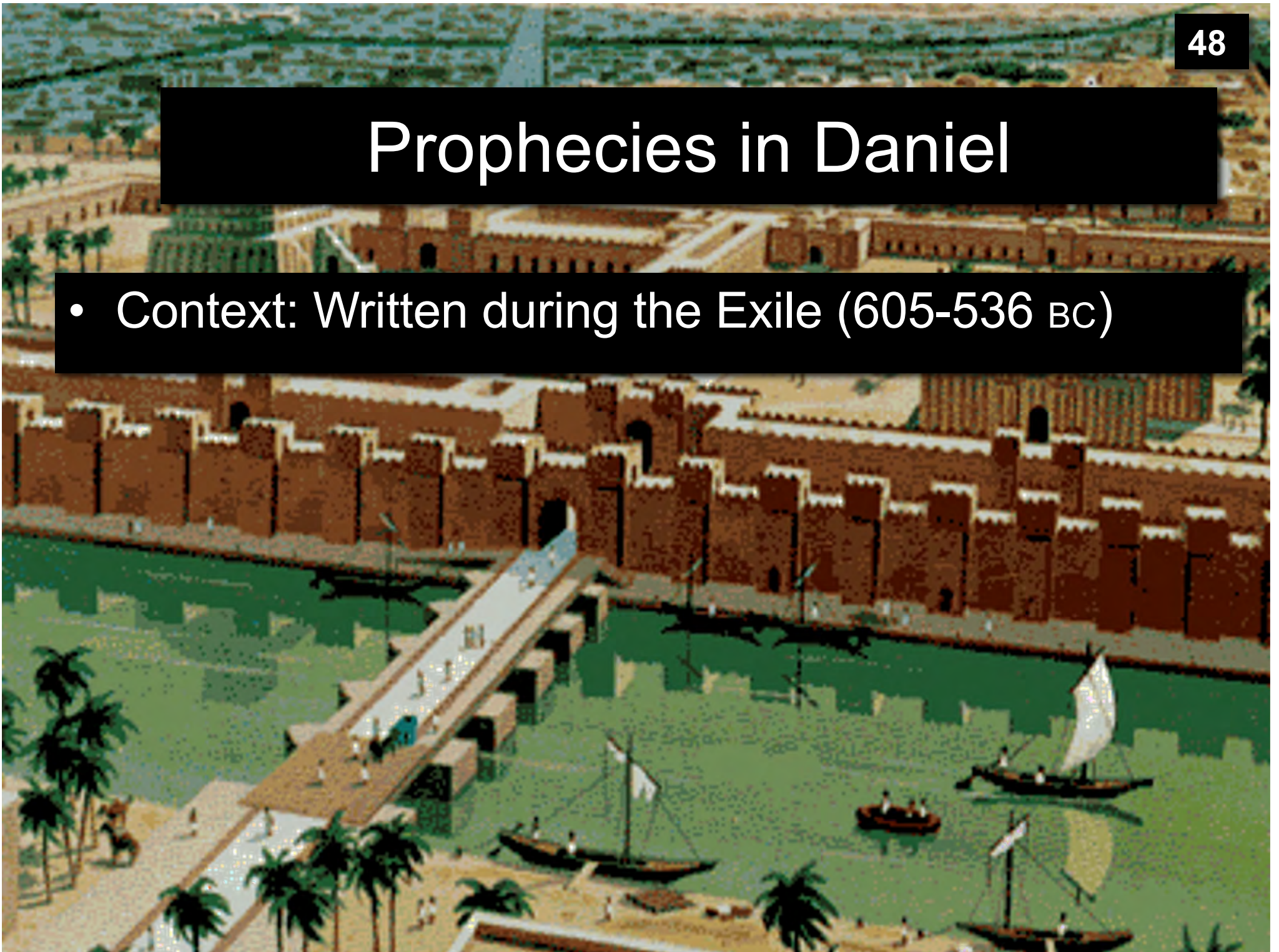
Finally, in the ninth year of King Hoshea's reign, Samaria fell, and the people of Israel were exiled to Assyria. They were settled in colonies in Halah, along the banks of the Habor River in Gozan, and among the cities of the Medes (2 Kings 17:6).



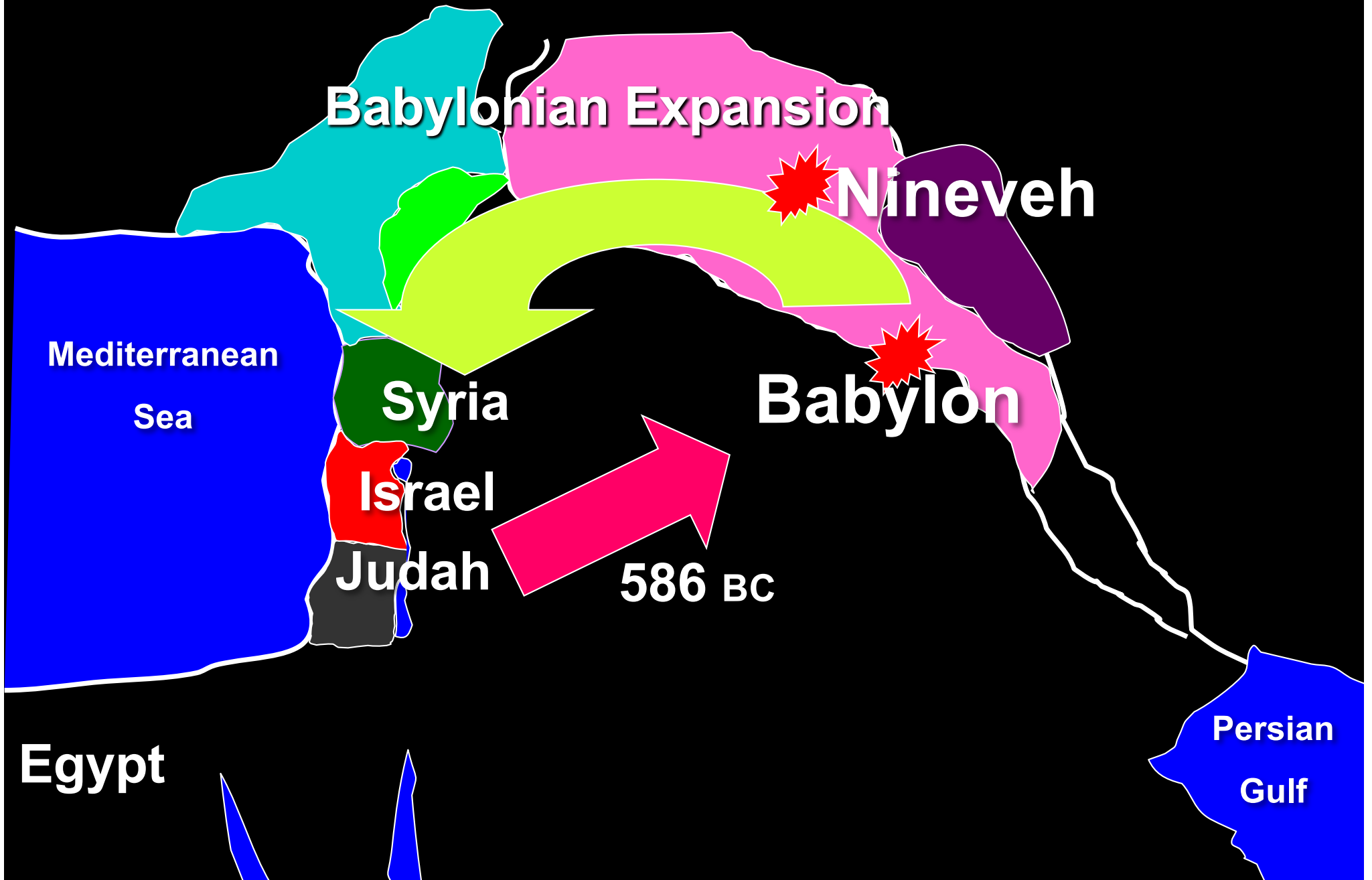
- Fall of Samaria
- Rise of Samaritans

Prophecies in Daniel

- Context: Written during the Exile (605-536 BC)

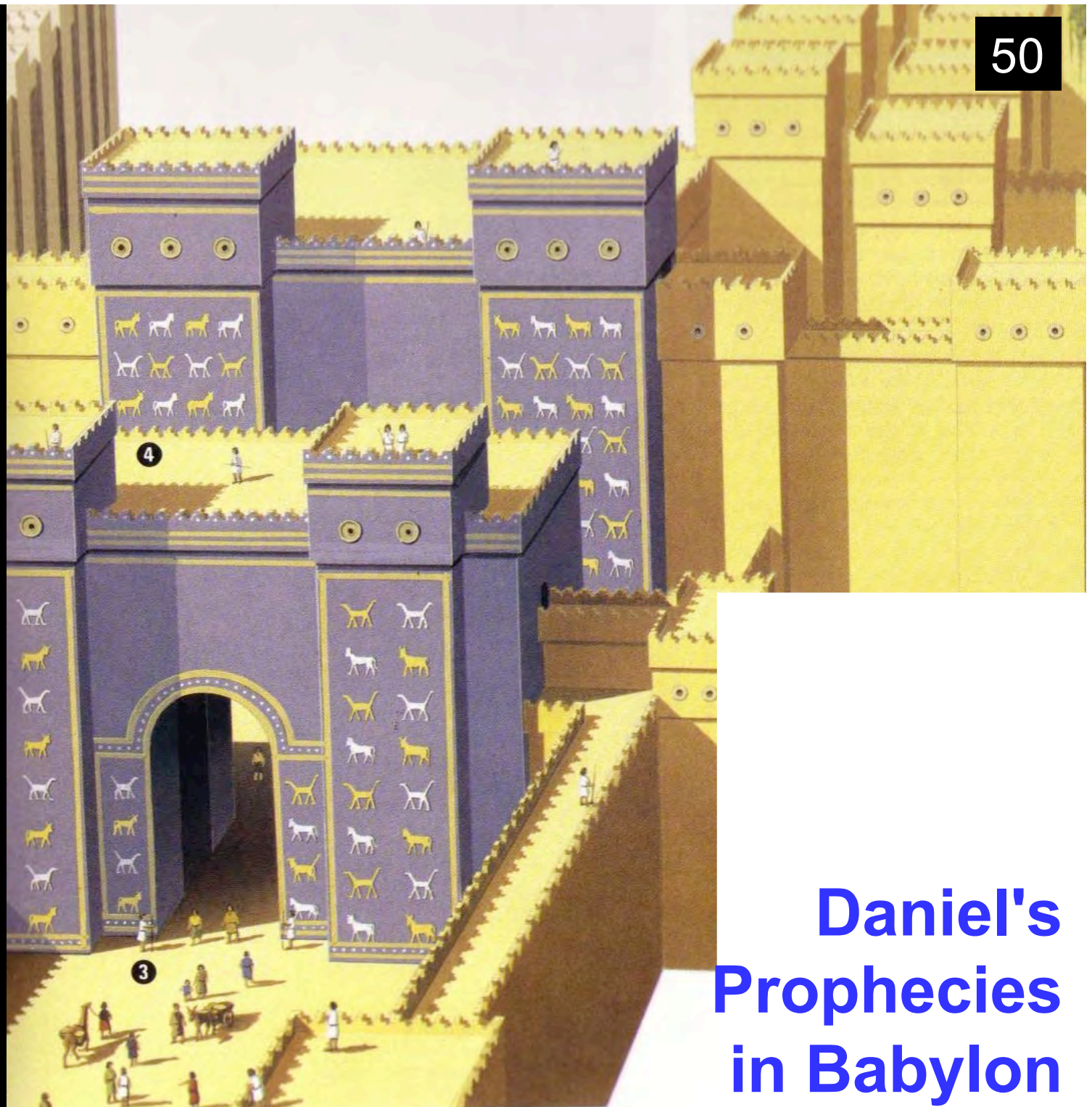


The Babylonian Kingdom

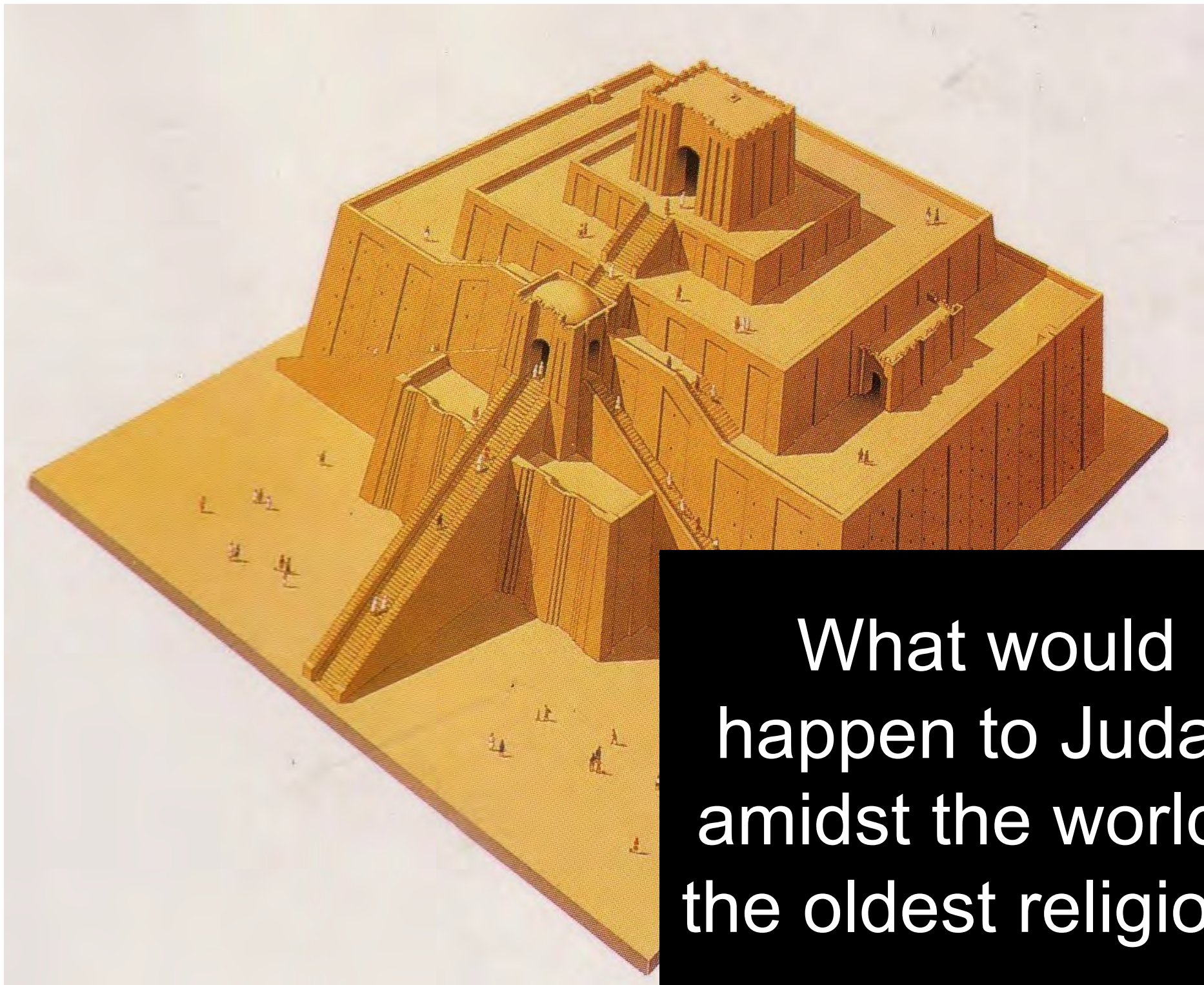


■ **Context:**
Written during the Exile (605-536 BC)

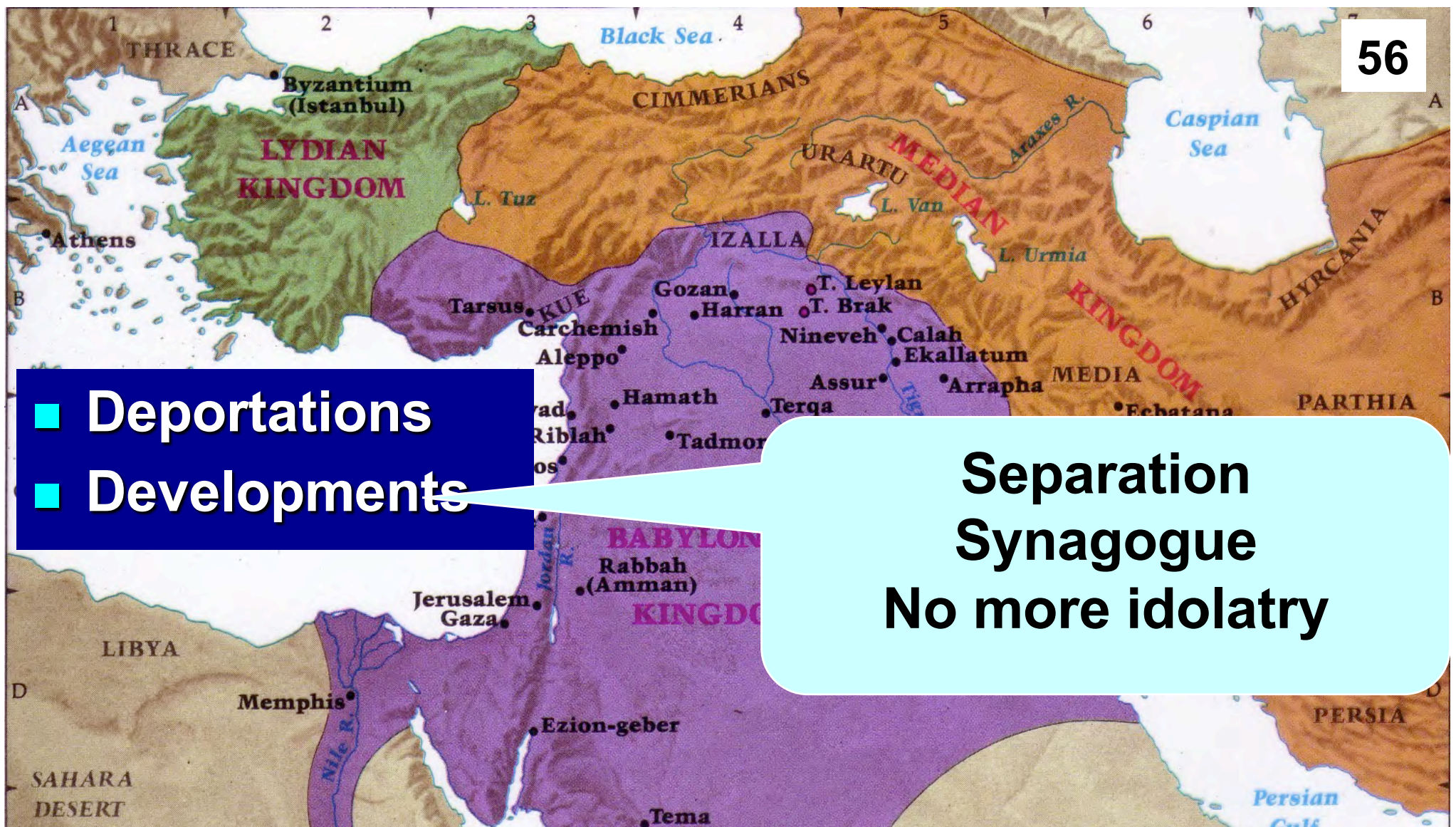
■ **Content:**
Foretells 4 kingdoms (605 BC-AD 476)



**Daniel's
Prophecies
in Babylon**



What would
happen to Judah
amidst the world's
the oldest religion?



- Deportations
- Developments

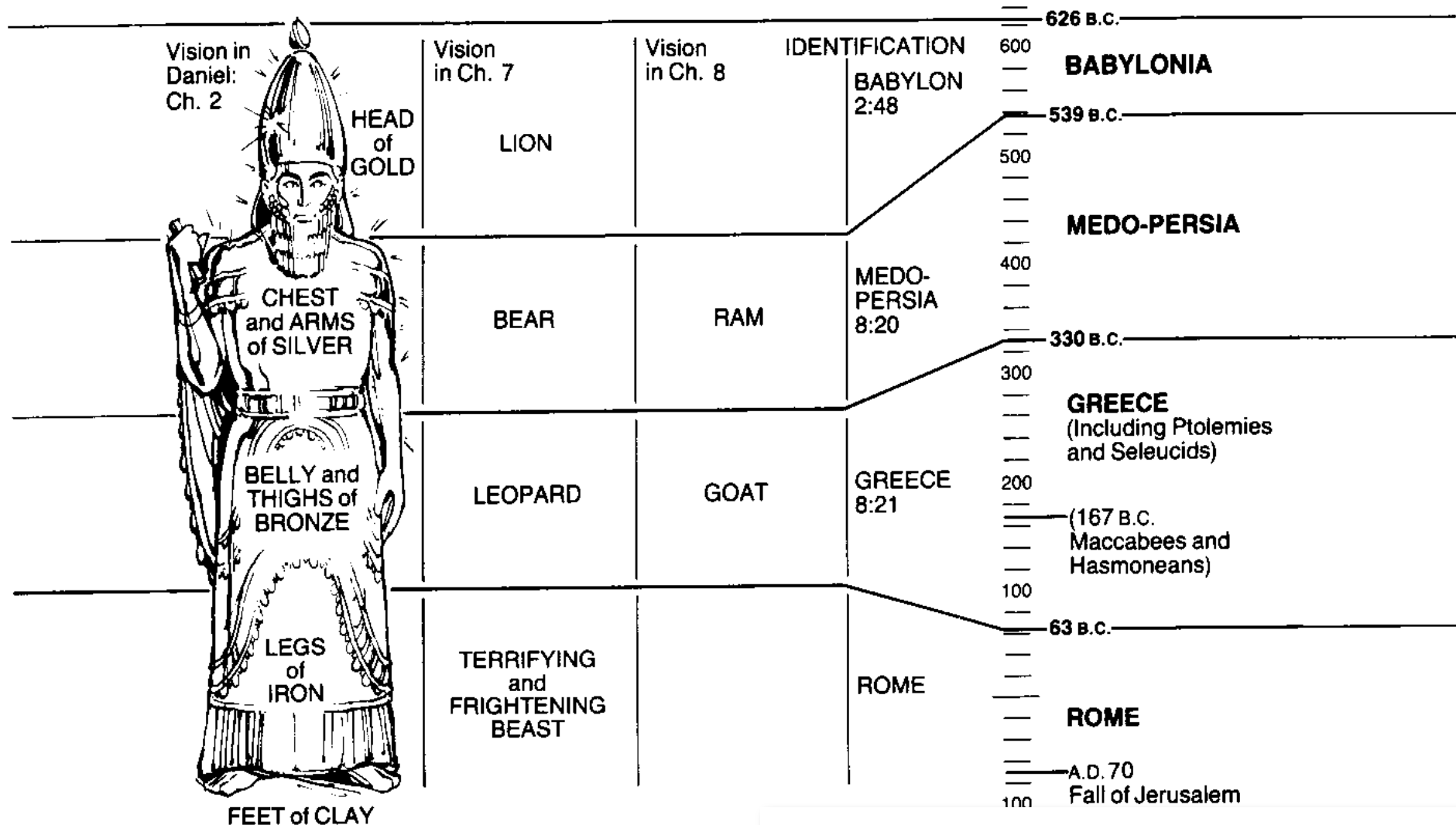
Separation
 Synagogue
 No more idolatry

Babylonian Rule over Palestine

World Empires in Daniel

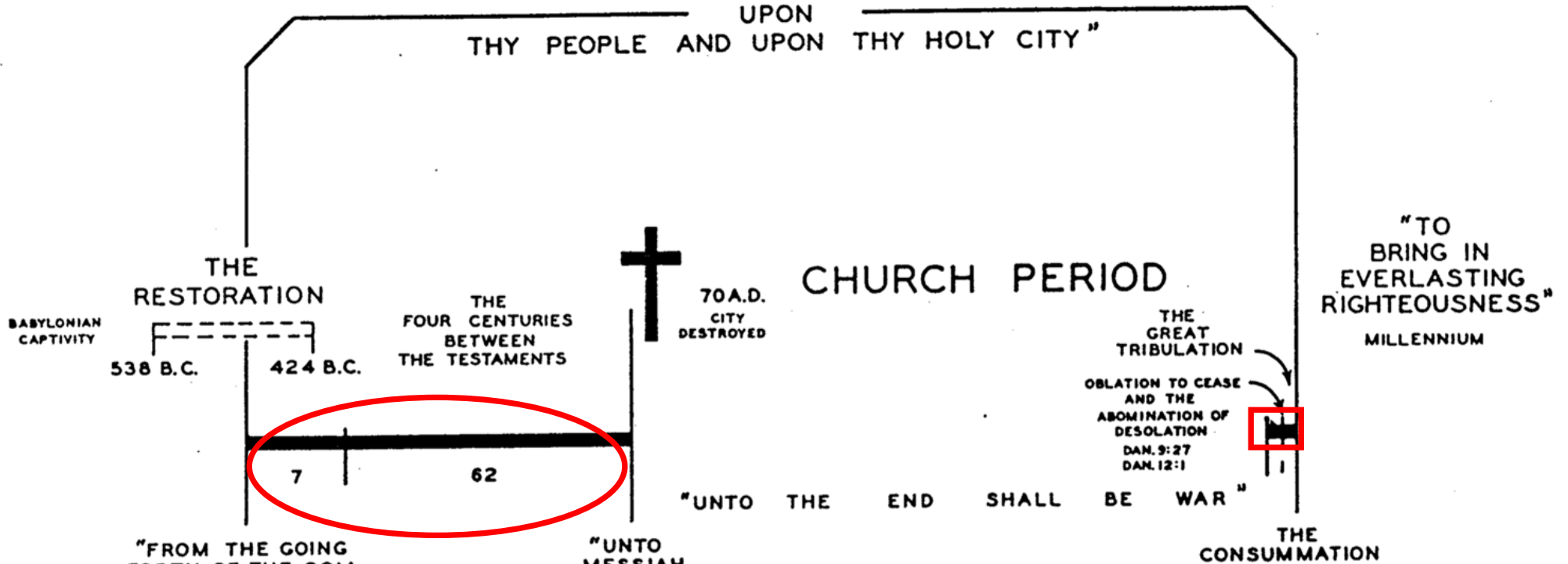
Identification of the Four Kingdoms

Chronology of Major Empires in Daniel



Daniel's 70 Weeks (Dan. 9:24-27)

"SEVENTY WEEKS ARE DETERMINED
UPON
THY PEOPLE AND UPON THY HOLY CITY"



444 BC → AD 33

THE SEVENTY WEEKS
— OF —
THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET DANIEL
CHAPTER 9:24-27

Determinations of the Seventy Weeks

The 483 Years in the Jewish and Gregorian Calendars

Jewish Calendar
(360 days per year*)

$(7 \times 7) + (62 \times 7)$ years = 483 years

483 years
× 360 days
<hr style="width: 100%;"/>
173,880 days

Gregorian Calendar
(365 days a year)

444 B.C. to A.D. 33 = 476 years†

476 years
× 365 days
<hr style="width: 100%;"/>
173,740 days
+ 116 days in leap years‡
+ 24 days (March 5–March 30)
<hr style="width: 100%;"/>
173,880 days

*See comments on Daniel 9:27b for confirmation of this 360-day year.

†Since only one year expired between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1, the total is 476, not 477.

‡A total of 476 years divided by four (a leap year every four years) gives 119 additional days. But three days must be subtracted from 119 because centennial years are not leap years, though every 400th year is a leap year.

Belshazzar Humbled



• Rembrandt

Fall of Babylon

BABYLON FELL (539 BC)

Cyrus entered under the water gates



Daniel 5

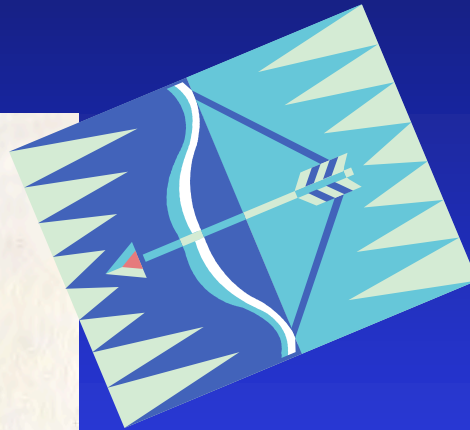
(Belshazzar's Feast)



Babylon Today

Persian Rule over Israel

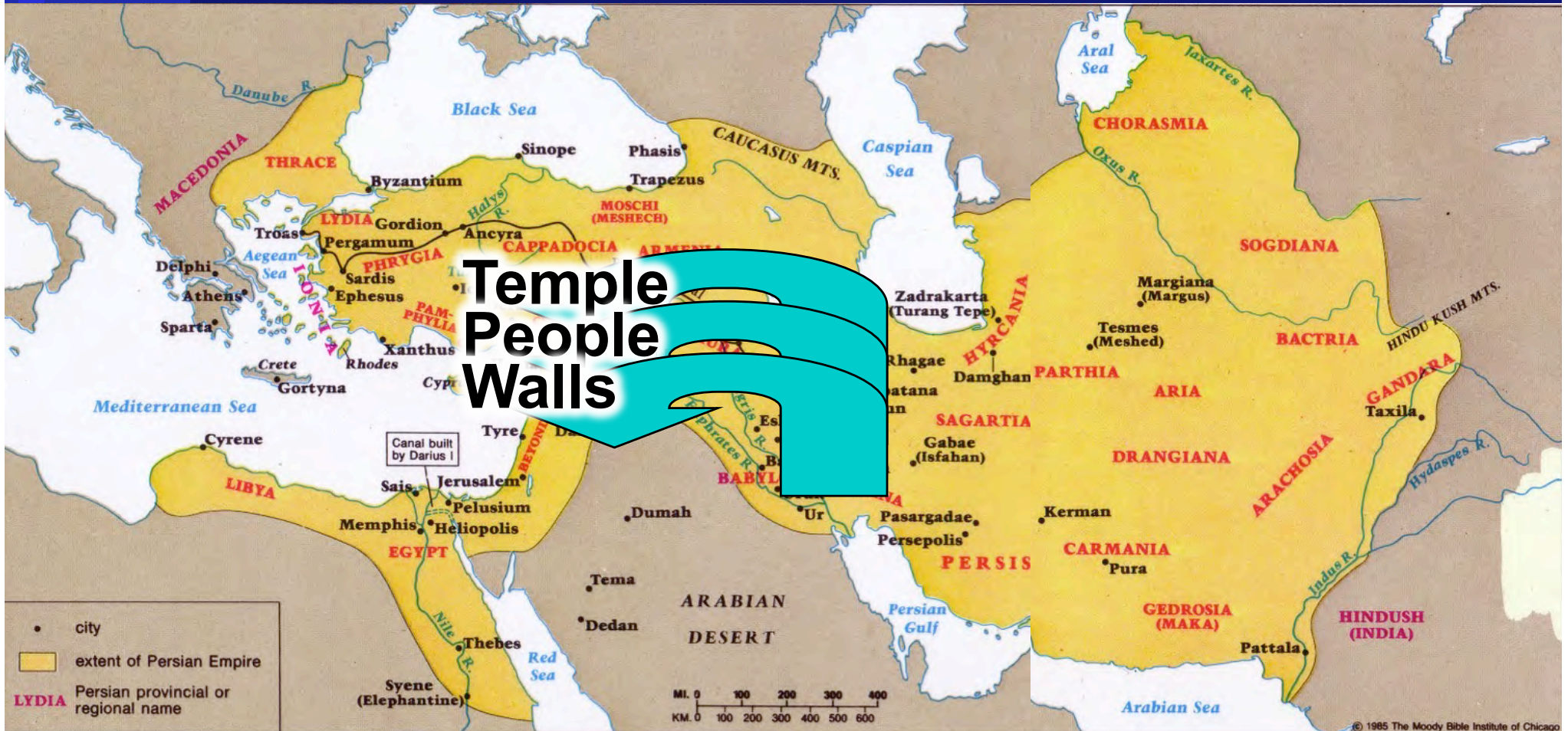
Cyrus of Persia



Belshazzar of Babylon

The Persian Era

- Returns
- Developments

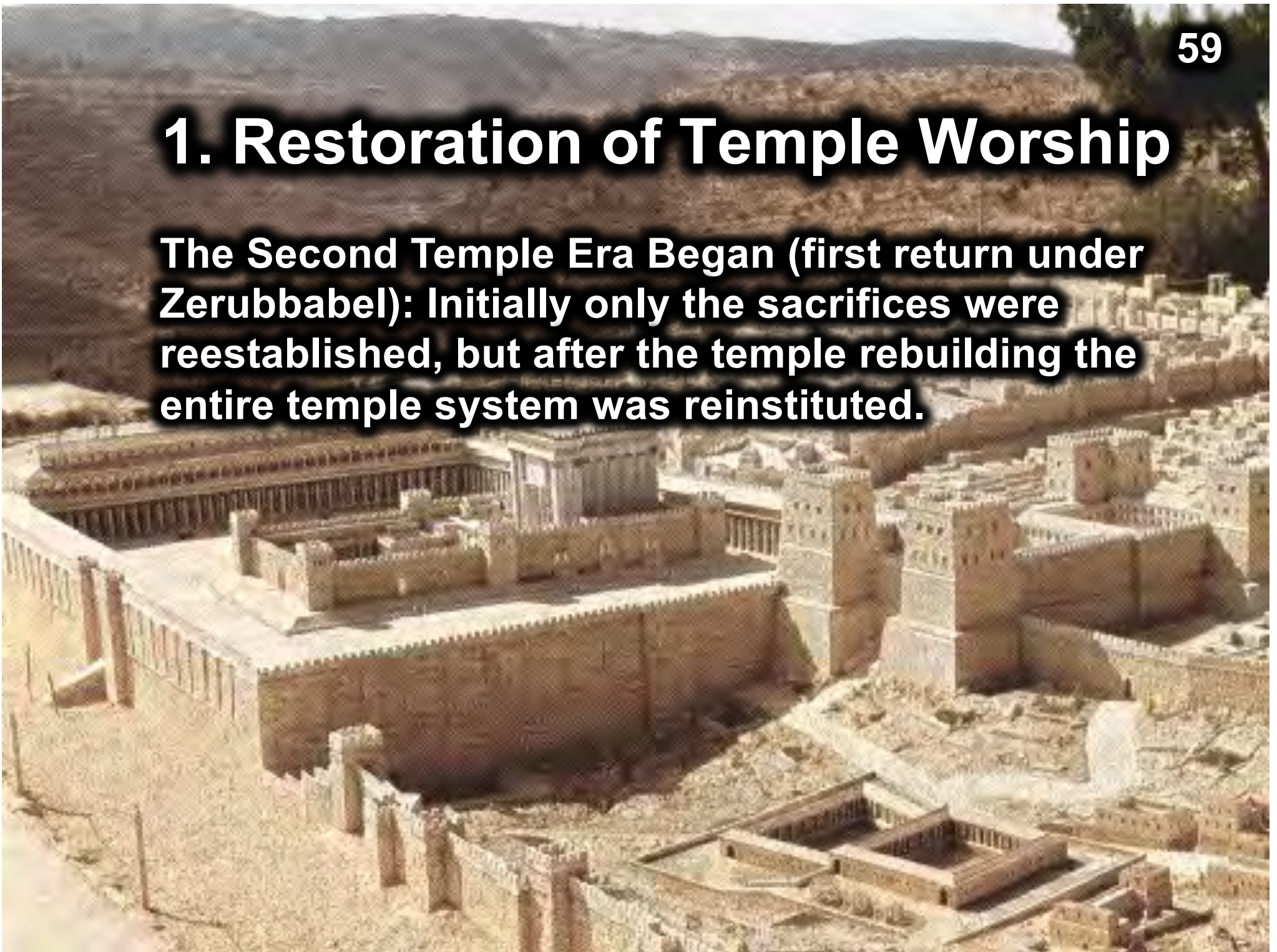


Key Developments with Israel Under Persia



1. Restoration of Temple Worship

The Second Temple Era Began (first return under Zerubbabel): Initially only the sacrifices were reestablished, but after the temple rebuilding the entire temple system was reinstated.



2. Law of Moses Reestablished

I AM THE LORD THY GOD
THOU SHALT HAVE NO
OTHER GODS BEFORE ME
THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO
THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE
THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE
NAME OF THE LORD THY
GOD IN VAIN
REMEMBER THE SABBATH
DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY

HONOUR THY FATHER AND
THY MOTHER
THOU SHALT NOT KILL
THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT
ADULTERY
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL
THOU SHALT NOT BEAR
FALSE WITNESS
THOU SHALT NOT COVEY

Ezra the priest and scribe (1 Chron. 6:3-15; Ezra 7:6-7) taught the law and enforced it by order of the king (Ezra 7:14, 25-26), especially in respect to prohibiting intermarriage (Ezra 9-10; Neh. 10:30; 13:23-31) This led to copying scrolls of the OT used even in the time of Jesus.

3. Economic and Spiritual Life Revived

After Nehemiah's third return saw the restoration of the walls, repopulating of Jerusalem, reinstatement of the Sabbath, spiritual revival among the people, and renewal of the intermarriage prohibition. These placed Israel more firmly in the land.



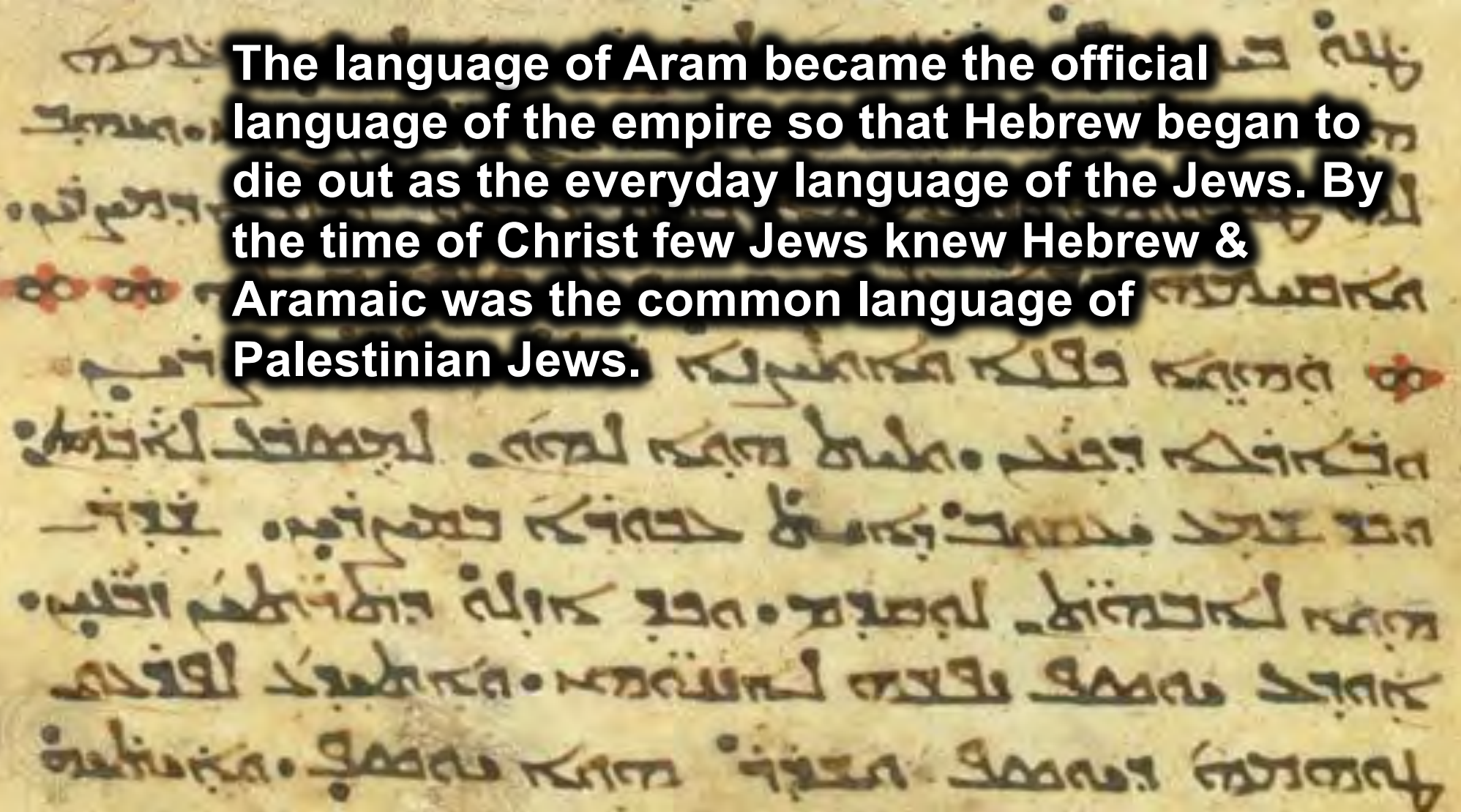
4. Rise of the Temple State

Though Judah was still a vassal state, Persia allowed the people a great deal of autonomy (especially in cultural & religious matters) to win their allegiance. This resulted in peace, prosperity, and security. Eventually the Persian governor was replaced by a council of elders closely allied with leading priestly families and directly accountable to the Persian king.



5. Aramaic Language

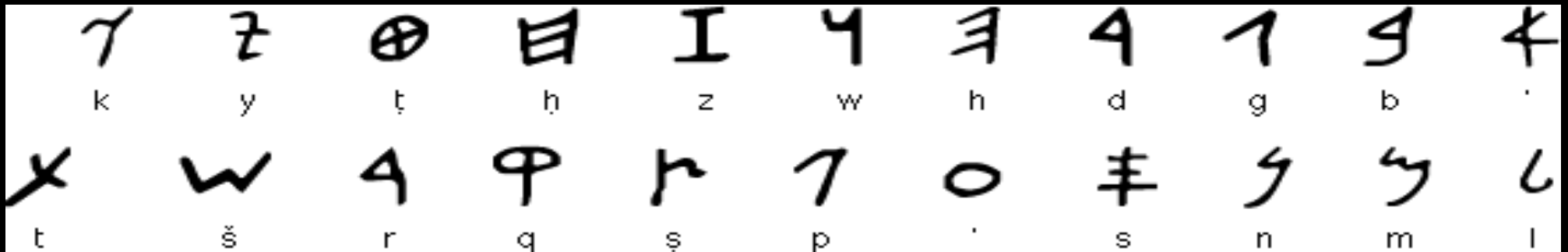
The language of Aram became the official language of the empire so that Hebrew began to die out as the everyday language of the Jews. By the time of Christ few Jews knew Hebrew & Aramaic was the common language of Palestinian Jews.



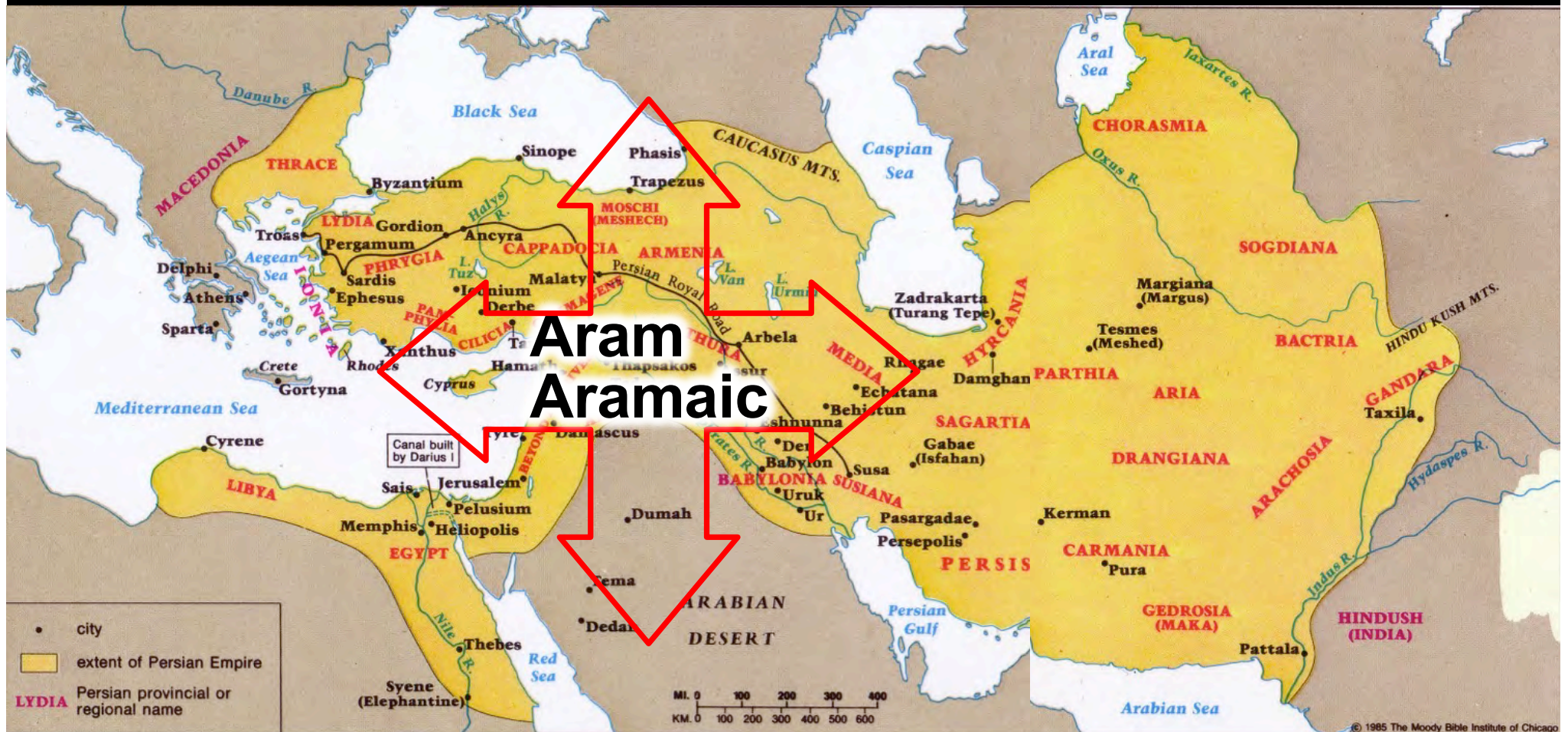
The Key Aramean Influence During Persian Rule

Aramaic Alphabet (Alep-beet)

- **A consonant alphabet with no vowel indication**
- **Written from right to left in horizontal lines**



Aramaic in the Persian Era



Aramaic became the Ancient Mid-East trade language due to Aram's location and language

6. Jewish Diaspora

Persians allowed the Jews to return to Israel and reestablish their religion & customs, but very few did so. Those remaining in foreign lands became known as the Diaspora so that many Jewish settlements could be found around the empire. Paul later used the Synagogues of these groups as points of contact in evangelising the Roman world.



7. Samaritans

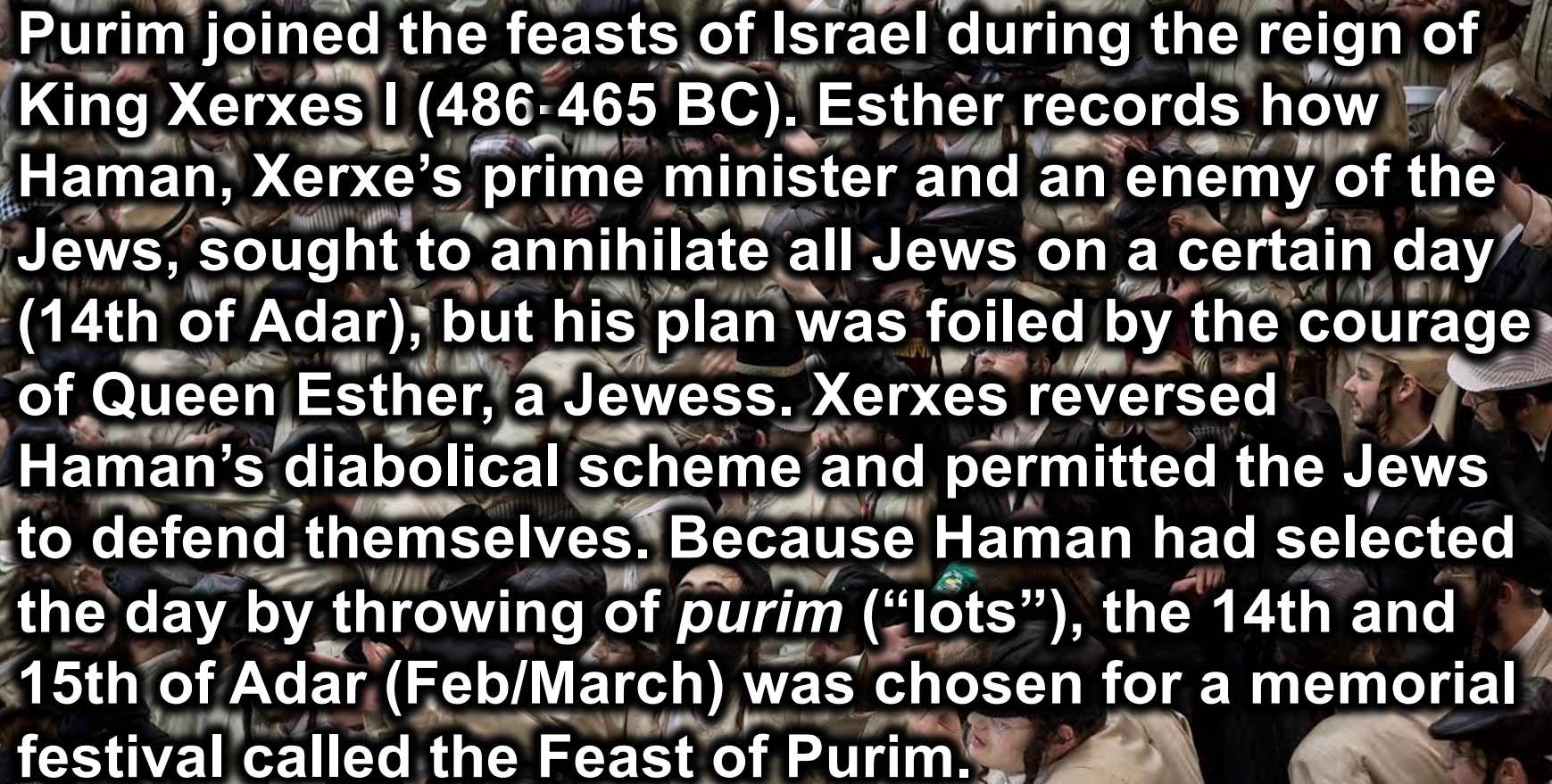
59

Inhabitants of Samaria to the north of Jerusalem had earlier resulted from intermarriage with pagans during Israel's Assyrian exile. Jews rejected them as true Israelites due to their "mixed blood" (2 Kings 17). Therefore, the Jerusalem community separated from them (Ezra 4:1-12) and this alienation & rivalry finally led to political provinces (Samaria and Judea) and two sanctuaries of worship (Mt. Gerizim and Jerusalem) later under Alexander the Great. Years later the Samaritan woman spoke with Jesus at the well about these two sanctuaries (John 4:20).



8. Purim

59



Purim joined the feasts of Israel during the reign of King Xerxes I (486-465 BC). Esther records how Haman, Xerxes's prime minister and an enemy of the Jews, sought to annihilate all Jews on a certain day (14th of Adar), but his plan was foiled by the courage of Queen Esther, a Jewess. Xerxes reversed Haman's diabolical scheme and permitted the Jews to defend themselves. Because Haman had selected the day by throwing of *purim* ("lots"), the 14th and 15th of Adar (Feb/March) was chosen for a memorial festival called the Feast of Purim.

9. Close of the OT Canon

The prophet Malachi preached during the Persian rule (432-425 BC). As the last of the prophets, the end of his ministry began what is now known as the “400 silent years” (425-5 BC) when no prophets spoke until the time of John the Baptist.

10. Judaism

Judaism became the term depicting the Jewish way of life in both its cultural and religious aspects from the post-exilic period onward. Orthodox Judaism strictly resisted outside influences that would seek to absorb or change it.

Key Developments with Israel Under Persia

1. Restoration of Temple Worship
2. Law of Moses Reestablished
3. Economic & Spiritual Life Revived
4. Rise of the Temple State
5. Aramaic Language



Key Developments with Israel Under Persia

6. Jewish Diaspora
7. Samaritans
8. Purim
9. Close of the OT Canon
10. Judaism

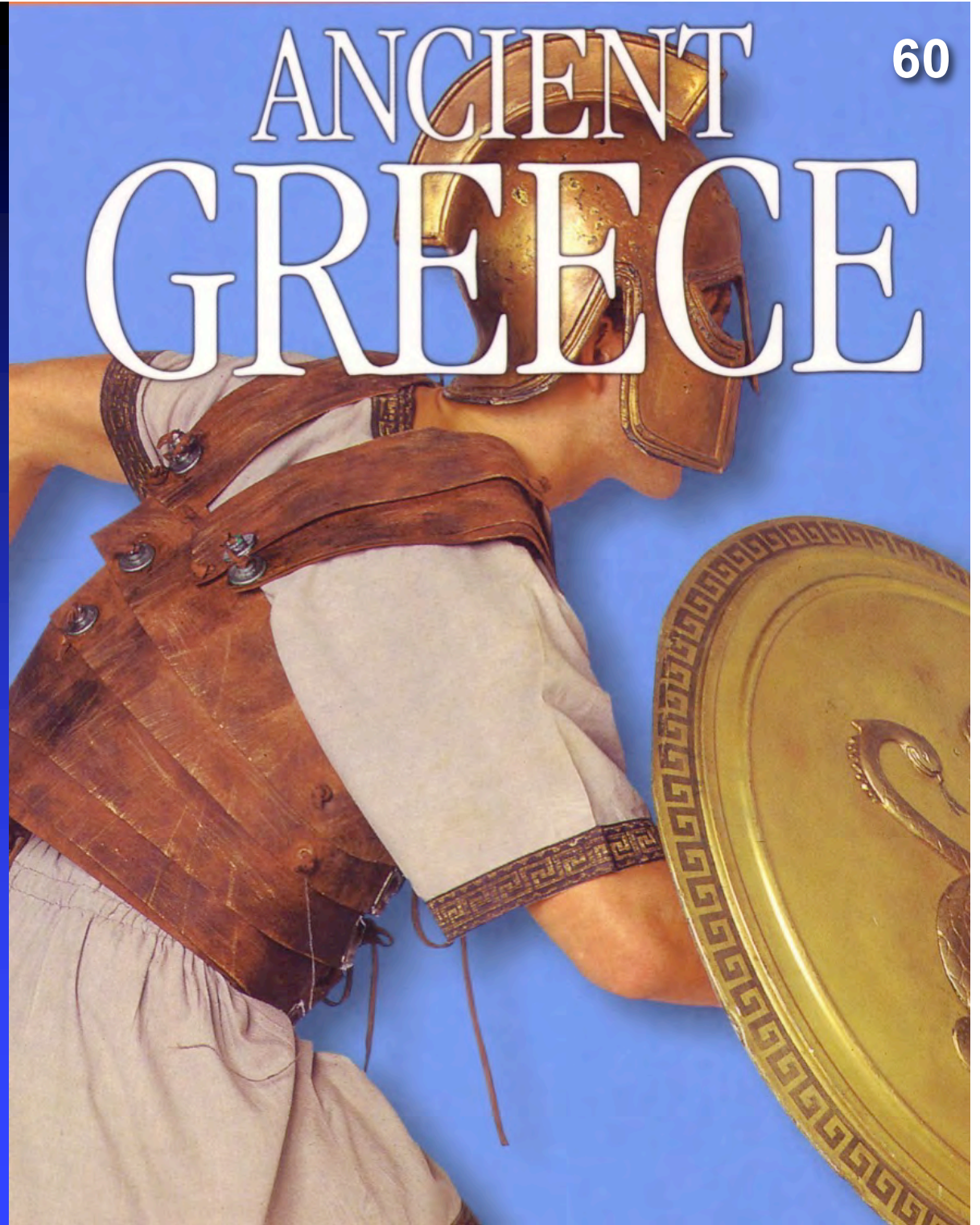


Greek Rule over Israel

- Alexander
- Struggle for Supremacy
- Hellenistic Empire Developments

ANCIENT GREECE

60



What was so **Great** about **Alexander**?



- Colonization (Hellenization)
- Conquest
- Consolidation (Greek Language)

Map of Greece



Alexander & His Horse

The ancient Greeks established a tradition of making and decorating pottery that lasted for over 1,000 years. Certainly, some of the objects they produced would look very strange to us – cups and bottles, for example, that could not be set down on a flat surface because they had curved or pointed bases. Many others, though, such as simple rounded jugs and storage pots, are almost exactly the same as the ones in a twenty-first century kitchen.

Colour was very important to the ancient Greeks, especially in the Hellenistic period (from 323 to about 30 B.C.). In fact, many of the white marble statues we associate with this time were once brightly painted.

Alexander the Great was given his horse Bucephalus, when he was 12 years old. No adult could control the animal, but Alexander discovered that the horse was frightened of his own shadow, so he calmed him by turning his head to the sun.

Alexander and
his horse



Four Beasts of Daniel 7



Beast 1: Winged Lion (Babylon)



Beast 2: Bear (Medo-Persia)



Beast 3: Leopard (Greece)



Beast 4: Terrifying (Rome)



Little Horn on Beast 4 (Antichrist)



Daniel 8

*Can God know
the future
almost 300
years in
advance?*

*Well, of course
He can!*

The Date of Daniel

Daniel's Ministry
(1:1; 10:1)

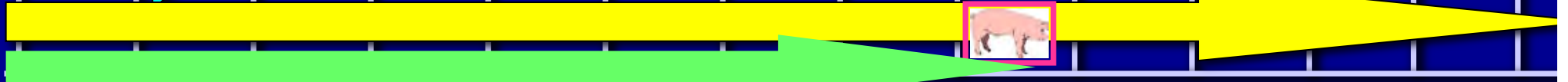
Daniel's Prophecies
(Dan. 2-11)

Antiochus Desecrates Temple

605-536

605-AD 70

167-164



Critics see historical events recorded as "prophecies"

Alexander the Great

Critics Date Daniel after 164

3	2	2	1	1		B	
0	5	0	5	0	5	C	5
0	0	0	0	0	0	/	0
						A	
						D	

800 B.C.-300 B.C. THE 800 B.C.-300 B.C.

GREEK NEWS

THE GREATEST NEWSPAPER IN CIVILIZATION



ALEXANDER WINS!

HOW A BOLD YOUNG MAN FROM MACEDONIA, IN THE FAR NORTH OF GREECE, WON AND THEN LOST AN EMPIRE.

PLUS, LAND OF THE BRAVE: A SPECIAL REPORT ON SPARTA. AND, WINNING AT ALL COSTS: OLYMPICS SPOILED BY CHEATS!

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FASHION



FARMING



TRADE



THEATER

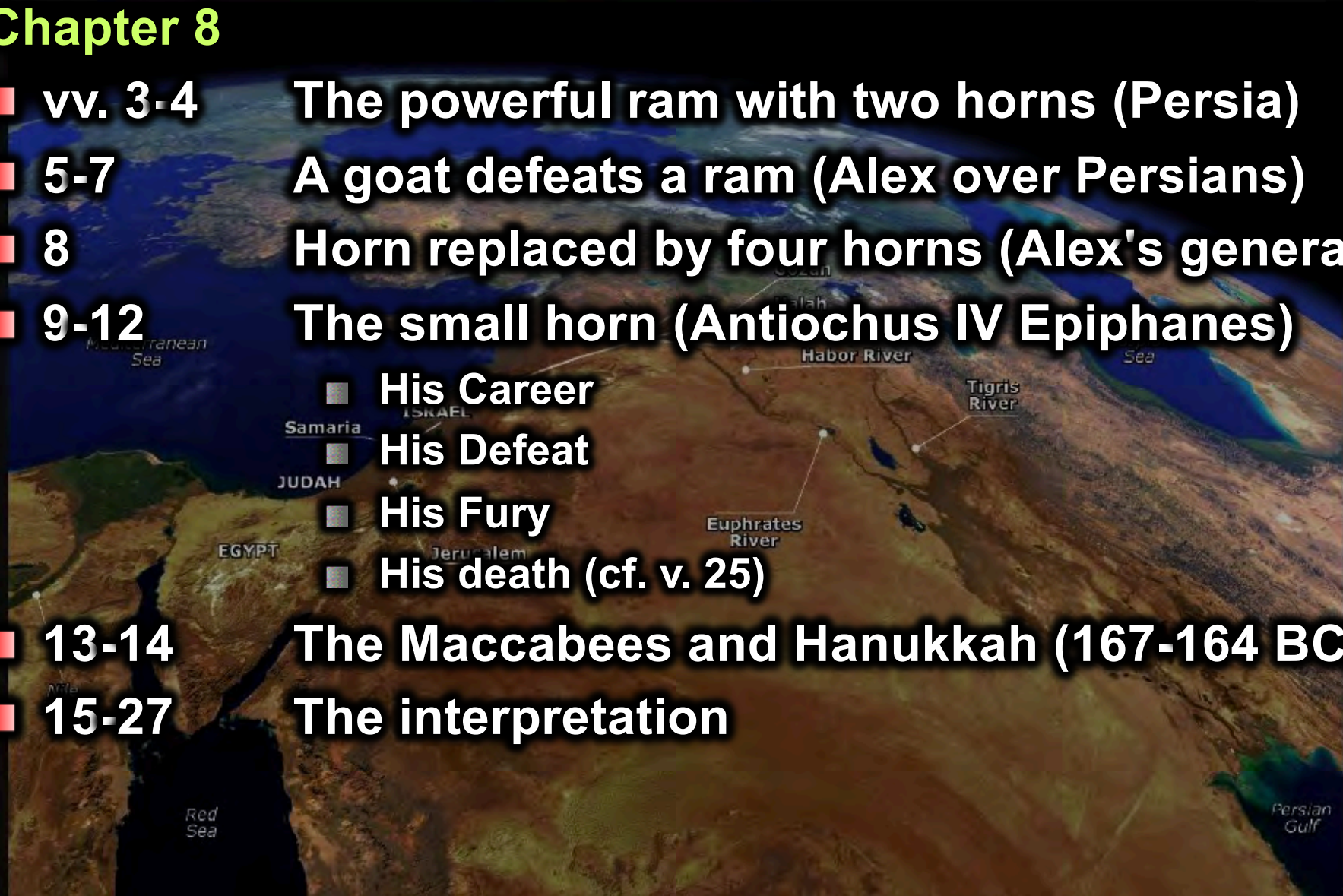


FOOD

Flow of Daniel 8

Chapter 8

- vv. 3-4 The powerful ram with two horns (Persia)
- 5-7 A goat defeats a ram (Alex over Persians)
- 8 Horn replaced by four horns (Alex's generals)
- 9-12 The small horn (Antiochus IV Epiphanes)
 - His Career
 - His Defeat
 - His Fury
 - His death (cf. v. 25)
- 13-14 The Maccabees and Hanukkah (167-164 BC)
- 15-27 The interpretation



Which is stronger & faster?



Goat?



Ram?

Goat Beats Ram (Dan. 8)?

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The Ram and Goat (Dan. 8)





The mad frenzy of Alexander riding in the front lines with his men endeared their support rather than riding behind thousands of them at the rear.

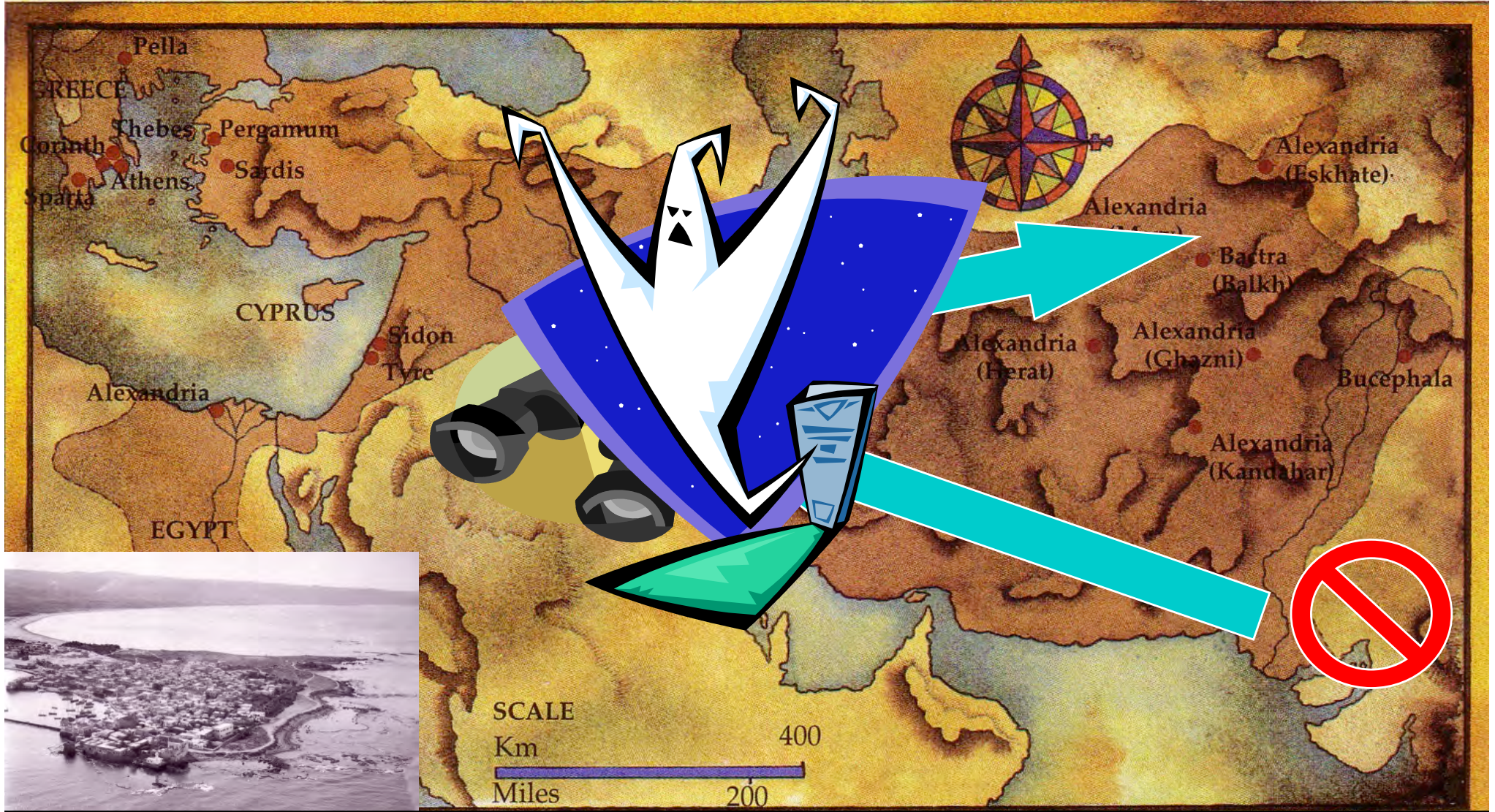


His long lance pierced victims before they had a chance

Alexander Fulfilled Daniel 8



Alexander's Conquests





His Downfall

Due to Pride:

- **Desire for worship**
- **Wine**
- **Women**
- **Song**



Alexander fell ill at Babylon



Alexander died at Babylon at age 32

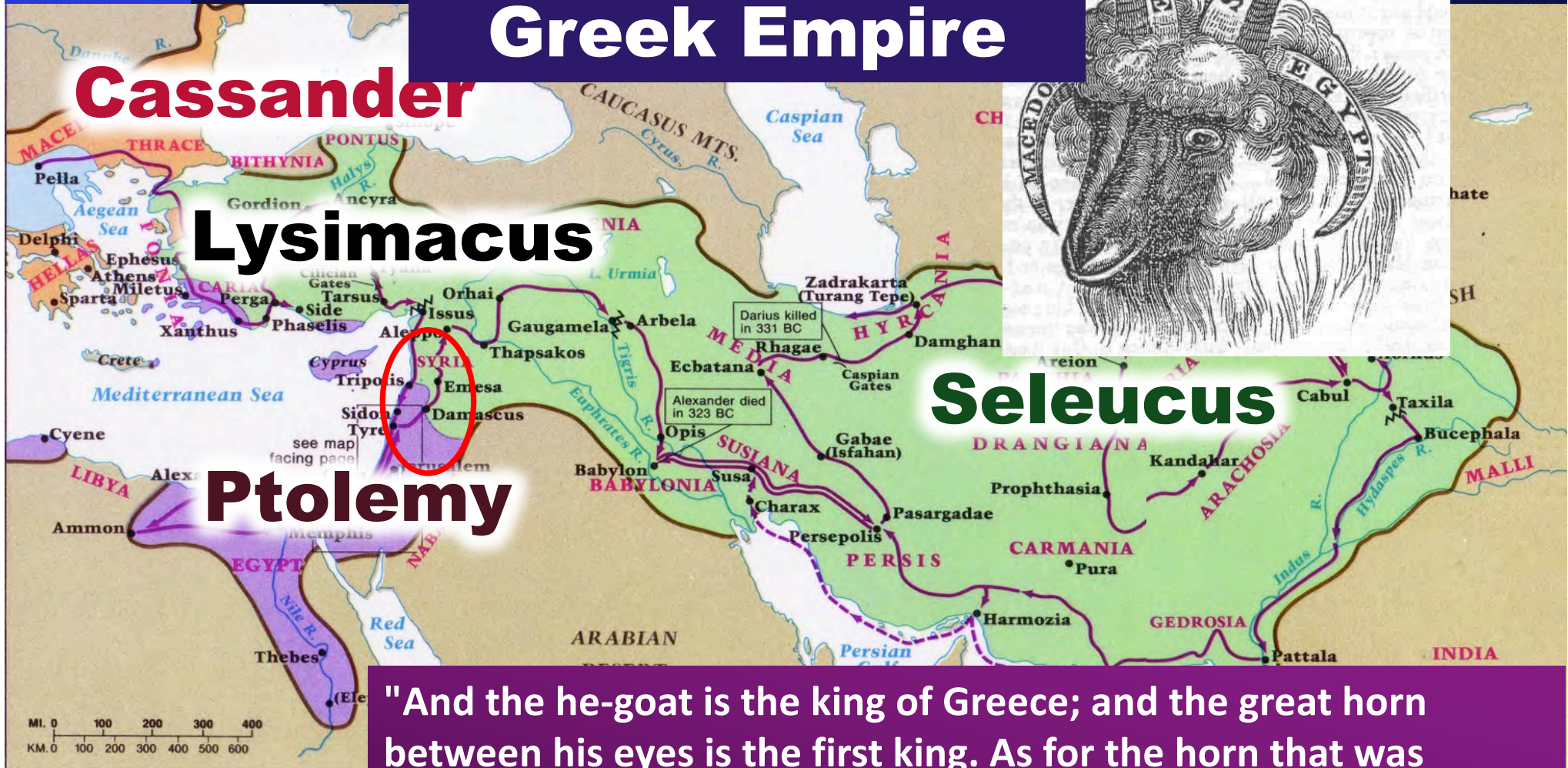




He was married to Roxane for 10 years but never had a child

After Alexander...

Greek Empire



Cassander

Lysimachus

Ptolemy

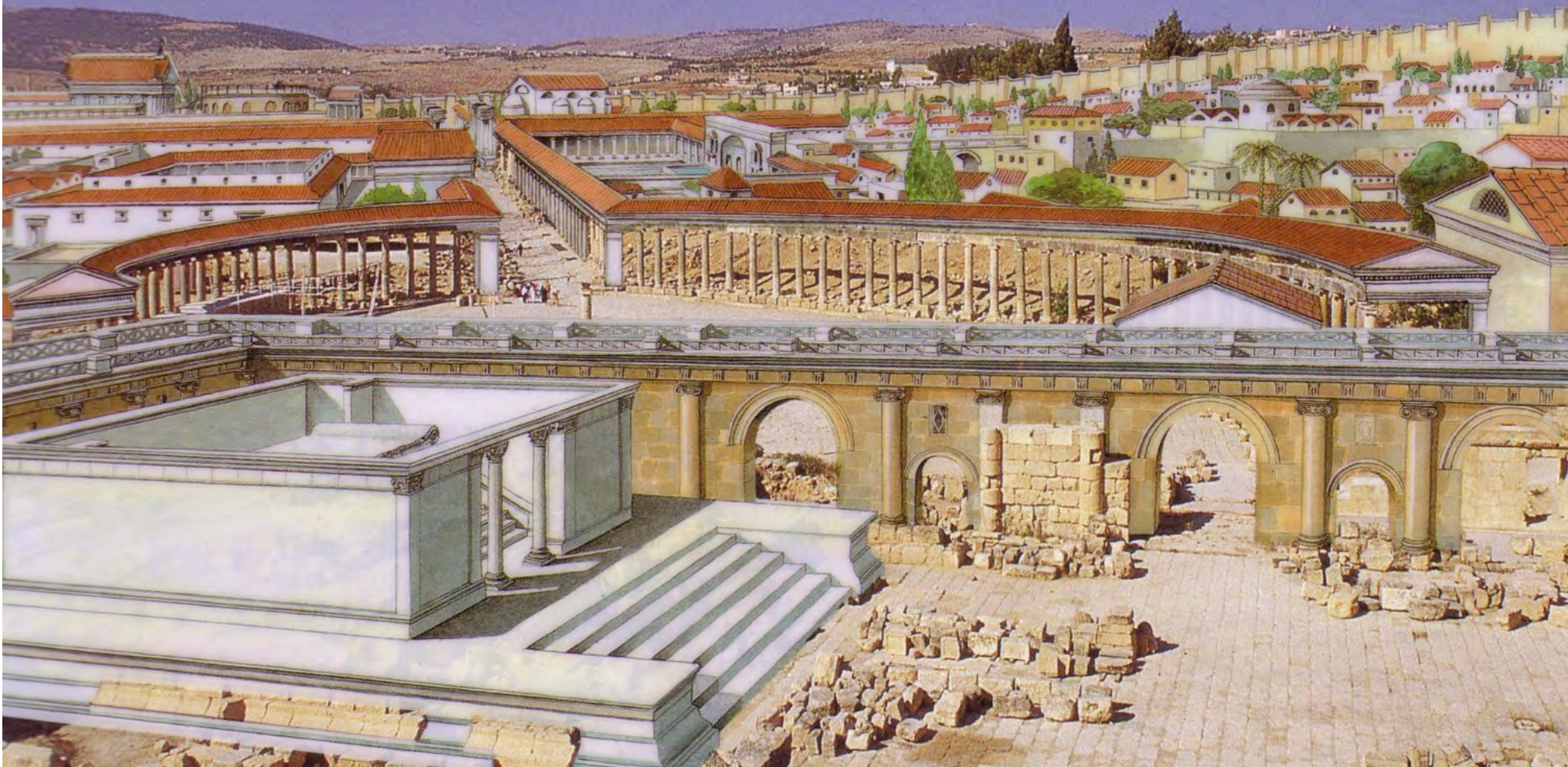
Seleucus

"And the he-goat is the king of Greece; and the great horn between his eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation but not with his power" (Daniel 8:21-22 RSV)

Jerash of the Decapolis



Jerash in Its Glory Days



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