

## Ancient Israelite Timeline

It is difficult for an island nation to appreciate the fear of a small nation caught in the crossfire of competing groups. The Bible's most frequent divine message is, 'Do not be afraid', because existential threats have often appeared in Israel's history.

- 1260 Exodus if '40 years in the wilderness' is literal.
- 1240 Exodus if '40 years in the wilderness' symbolises one generation.
- 1220 Hebrews in Canaan (evidence in Egyptian inscription on the Merneptah stele).
- 1020 -1000 Saul reigns.
- 1000 - 960 David reigns and defeats Philistines ('Philistine'='Palestine', partly explaining Israeli attitudes towards Palestinians: EXISTENTIAL THREAT).
- 960- 931 Solomon reigns and builds the Temple.
- 931 Northern anger at Rehoboam's tax policy enables Jeroboam to be northern king.
- 722 Assyria destroys northern kingdom
- 701 Assyria raids Judah but spares Jerusalem, giving Hezekiah time to ban Assyrian idols and close even orthodox shrines so the Temple is the only place to worship Yahweh legally. (Hezekiah welcomed defeated northerners, even naming his son after the northern tribe: Manasseh. Manasseh then allowed Hezekiah's reforms to slide by seeking alliances with Assyria politically and religiously. So did Manasseh's son Amon. Things changed with Amon's son Josiah, the boy king. The English Edward VI, 1547-1553, was presented as another boy king reformer like Josiah.)
- 622 Aged 18, Josiah begins major reform, during which Deuteronomy is found in the Temple.
- 597 First deportation to Babylon (EXISTENTIAL THREAT).
- 586 Second deportation and destruction of the Temple.
- 582 Third deportation. By this time Jeremiah has been taken by his friends against his will to Egypt where it is safer and where he dies naturally.
- 539 Cyrus the Persian is welcomed into Babylon, frees the Jews (in exchange for tax), and so is the closest thing to a messiah in the history of Judaism. On the other hand, the anti-semitic plot by later Persians in the book of Esther is partly why Israel remains wary of Iran (EXISTENTIAL THREAT).
- 515 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple completed by Zerubbabel (governor of Judah and great grandson of Josiah).
- 445 Nehemiah becomes governor of Judah and quickly rebuilds Jerusalem's wall. Around this time, Ezra (priest and scribe) promotes biblical teaching in Jerusalem and prohibits Jews marrying non-Jews (gentiles) in the hope that ethnic purity will help prevent another catastrophe like the Babylonian exile. Ezra's version of Judaism remains a reference point for all Jews, so gentiles=EXISTENTIAL THREAT.
- 332 Alexander the Great brings Greek rule and culture to the Middle East. His successor based in Egypt (Ptolomies) bring some Jews to develop Alexandria and to create the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- 223 Greeks based in Syria (Seleucids) take over Judah from the Ptolomies.

- 167 Antiochus IV 'Epiphanes' desecrates the Temple by introducing pigs to be slaughtered in front of his statue of Zeus ('the Awful Horror' - Daniel 11:31 ).
- 164 Three years to the day, the Temple is rededicated (still celebrated as Hanukkah in mid-December) after Antiochus dies suddenly from an illness while failing to contain the Maccabean revolutionaries. Before this resolution, the book of Daniel is completed by ultra-orthodox Hassidim (devotees) but written in code (apocalyptic) to avoid persecution since it parodies Greek rule, just as Revelation will parody Roman rule.
- 63 A Roman general, Pompey, conquers Jerusalem.
- 37 Caesar installs the Herodian royal family and demotes Judah (previously recognised by the Roman Senate as a nation) to be part of a larger Roman province (Judea).
- 6-4 The Jewish Factions at the Time of Jesus' Birth. Some Hassidim become conservative teachers (Pharisees). Other Hassidim (Essenes) despair of Greek influence on Jerusalem and live in insular communities around Judah. (The community at Qumran wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls.) Aristocrats who tolerate Greek ideas become Sadducees (named after Zadok, David's chief priest, and Zadok, a later chief priest during the relatively gentle Ptolomaic era when Greek culture was first introduced to Jerusalem.) Some aristocrats who resent foreigners in Jerusalem eventually become Zealots, fanatics engaging in terrorism. Aristocrats operate at the royal court of the Hasmonean family, descended from the Maccabees ('the hammers'), and then of the Herodian family installed by Caesar Augustus beginning with Herod the Great, so called because he greatly improves Zerubbabel's rudimentary Temple. A painful illness then induces his murderous paranoia before his death in 4 BCE.

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