

01. Prophetic Oracles in Judah from 628 to 587BC



Google Custom Search

Christian Belief

Christian Living

Church

Creation

Education

Fundamentalism

God

Islam

Liturgy

Mission

MSC

New Testament

Old Testament

Pope Francis

Prayer

Priesthood

Religious Life

RCIA/Cursillo.

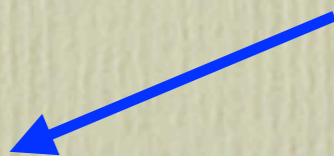
www.mbfallon.com

A u d i o C D ' s H o m i l i e s A r t i c l e s

Welcome to my site

Index of Topics

**For these presentations click on “Old Testament”
then “Prophets” then “5. Jeremiah Retreat”**



I. Prophets in the period prior to the beginnings of writing, which took place in Samaria, the capital of Israel, in the last years of King Jeroboam II who reigned from 788 to 748 BC.

- We know of some prophets by name from the Books of Samuel and Kings
- Kings had prophets attached to the court.
- There are extensive legends about [Samuel](#), [Elijah](#) and [Elisha](#), including mention of associations of prophets attached to them.

II. Writings from the 8th century BC during the western expansion of the Assyrian Empire.

1. In Israel Amos (762-750) Hosea (750-724)

Destruction of Samaria (721)

2. In Judah Isaiah (740-700) Micah (740-725)

Devastation of Judah (701) Jerusalem was spared



What do we mean when we say that words of a prophet are inspired?

1. We are not saying that an outside God puts words in a prophet's mind.
2. We experience God when we experience our own heart in communion with reality, and so with God. A prophet's words are said to be inspired when they are judged to be in touch with reality and to come from an enlightened heart.
3. The words of a prophet are said to be inspired and are treasured and handed on because they speak to our heart, and are judged to come from the prophet's heart-communion with God.
4. This is not true of all their words, for at times their words reveal the limits of the author's insights and the biases of those who treasured and handed on their words. In the prophecies of Jeremiah we see an assumption that God controls history, that God is a warlord who punishes sin and who hates, but uses, the enemies of his chosen people.

A living word from an ever-present God

Generations of scholars were responsible for the evolving sources that the final authors drew on, and there were those who cherished these ancient scrolls and copied them and made sure they were handed on. Inspiration has to cover this whole process of reflecting, listening, discussion and prayer.

In his *A History of Prophecy in Israel* page 3 Joseph Blenkinsopp states that the prophetic books of the Old Testament reveal: ‘a cumulative process of appropriation, assimilation and adaption that ... shades off into an increasingly frequent recycling and reinterpreting of older prophetic material.’

Hence to difficulty sometimes of knowing whether a text comes from the prophet, or from the reflections of later scribes. If the latter then the authors judged they were bringing out meanings that were inspired by the prophet

Prophecy and critique of the present

Of prime importance in Old Testament prophecy is the critique which the prophets make of their contemporary society in God's name. Personal encounter with YHWH sharpened their awareness of the contrast between social behaviour and the authentic Yahwist religious insights. Their task was to 'declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin' (Amos 4:12), insisting that sin must be punished (so including a call to repentance), but also insisting that there was something that transcended punishment, namely, YHWH's fidelity to who YHWH is: YHWH's promises would be kept.

Dianne Bergant

‘The prophetic word was always relevant in the historical moment of proclamation.

Since it was born out of religious or political crisis, its purpose was to speak to that crisis.

It clung to the past to the extent that it was in continuity with the fundamental religious traditions.

It predicted the future to the extent that that future would be the consequence of the present.

The primary intent of prophecy was to call the people to fidelity to their religious responsibilities here and now.’

It is for this reason that it is important to read the prophetic literature in the light of the specific historical circumstances to which the words were addressed or in which the writings were recorded.

The power of the prophetic utterance comes precisely from its specific nature.

Once this is grasped, it is up to us, following the example of the disciples of the prophets, to apply what they say to our changed circumstances, not by a literal application of their words, but by a faithful following of their inspired insights.

Discerning true from false prophecy

Moses is presented as the exemplar of all true prophets.

To be accepted as authentic prophecy, oracles had to be uttered in the name of YHWH (Deuteronomy 13:1-5) and be consistent with the inspired words and deeds of Moses.

Consistency with approved prophecy (Jeremiah 23:9-22).

‘Prophet no less than priest, all practise fraud.
They dress my people’s wound without concern.
Peace! Peace! they say, but there is no peace’(Jeremiah 6:3 = 8:10).

‘Do not listen to what the prophets say, they are deluding you.
They retail visions of their own,
and not what comes from the mouth of Yahweh’(Jeremiah 23:16).

‘I have not sent them, yet they are running;
I have not spoken to them, yet they are prophesying’ (Jeremiah 23:21).

‘Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream as his own!
And let him who receives a word from me deliver it accurately! ...
Does not my word burn like a fire?
Is it not like a hammer shattering a rock?’ (Jeremiah 23:28-29).

‘I never sent them or commissioned them,
and they serve no good purpose for this people’ (Jeremiah 23:32).

‘Say to those who make up prophecies out of their own heads:
The Lord Yahweh says, “Woe to the foolish prophets
who follow their own spirit, without seeing anything!
Like jackals in a ruin, so are your prophets, Israel.
They have never ventured into the breach;
they have never bothered to fortify the House of Israel,
to stand fast in battle.
They have empty visions and give lying prophecies
and say: ‘It is Yahweh who speaks’,
although Yahweh has not sent them ...
Instead of my people rebuilding the wall,
these men come and slap on plaster”’(Ezekiel 13:1-6,10).

Later generations attempted to understand themselves in the light of preserved and treasured prophecy.

They saw the prophetic oracles in a new light from their own circumstances.

They understood particular historical events as realisations of the transcendent hope or of the warnings of the prophet.

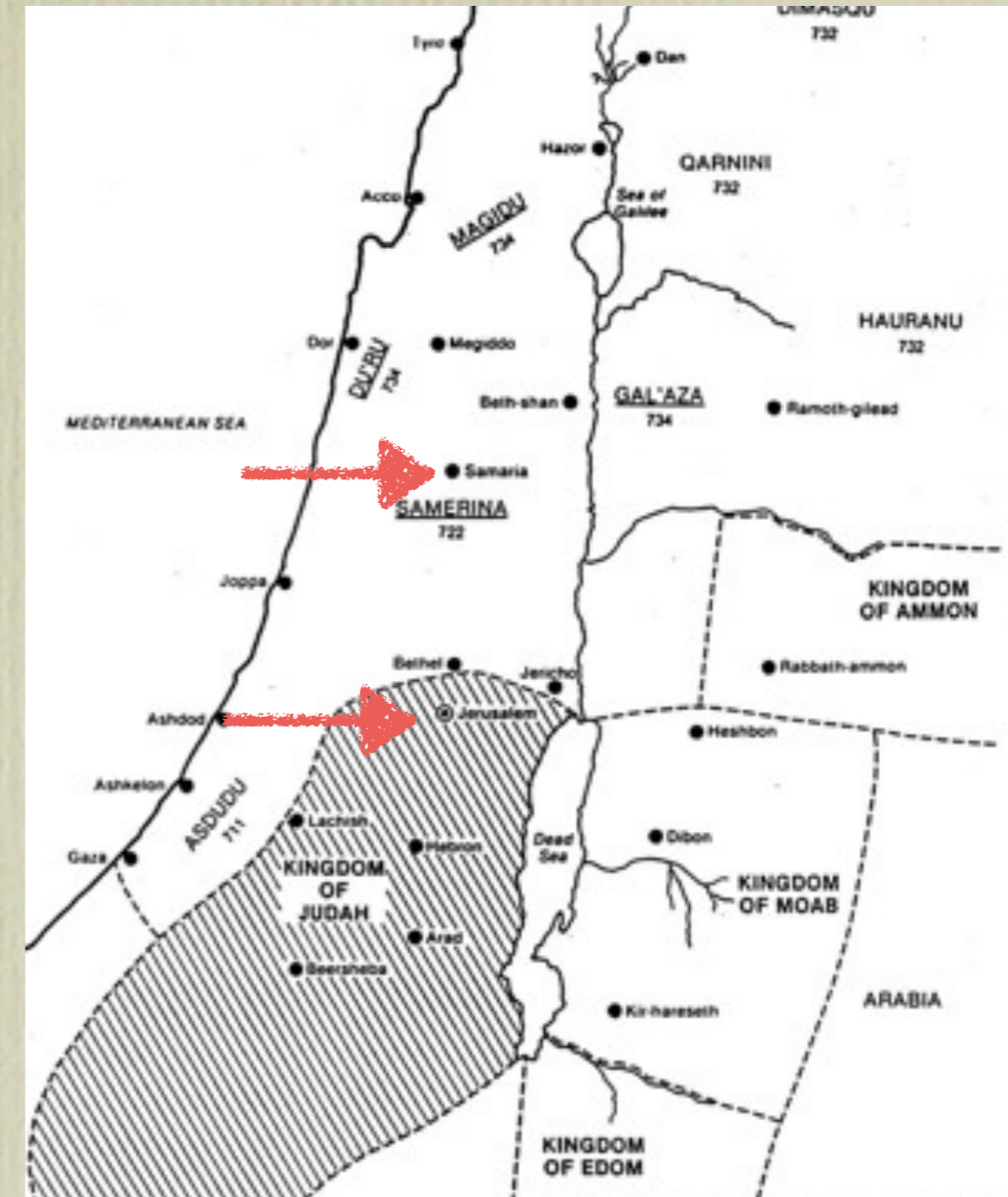
They expected that God's will would be beyond their ability to comprehend fully, and so they approached the inspired word expecting that there would be many hidden meanings to be discovered there. They liked to break it open to see the sparks of light that issued from it, revealing the divine enlightenment hidden within.

The texts expressed inspired insights into the presence and action of a living God in their history. No text could hold it all, and so the history of the development of the Older Testament is a history of prayerful debate, discussion and refinement, always in the light of historical experience.

Last years of the 8th century BC: Hezekiah (727/715 - 699).

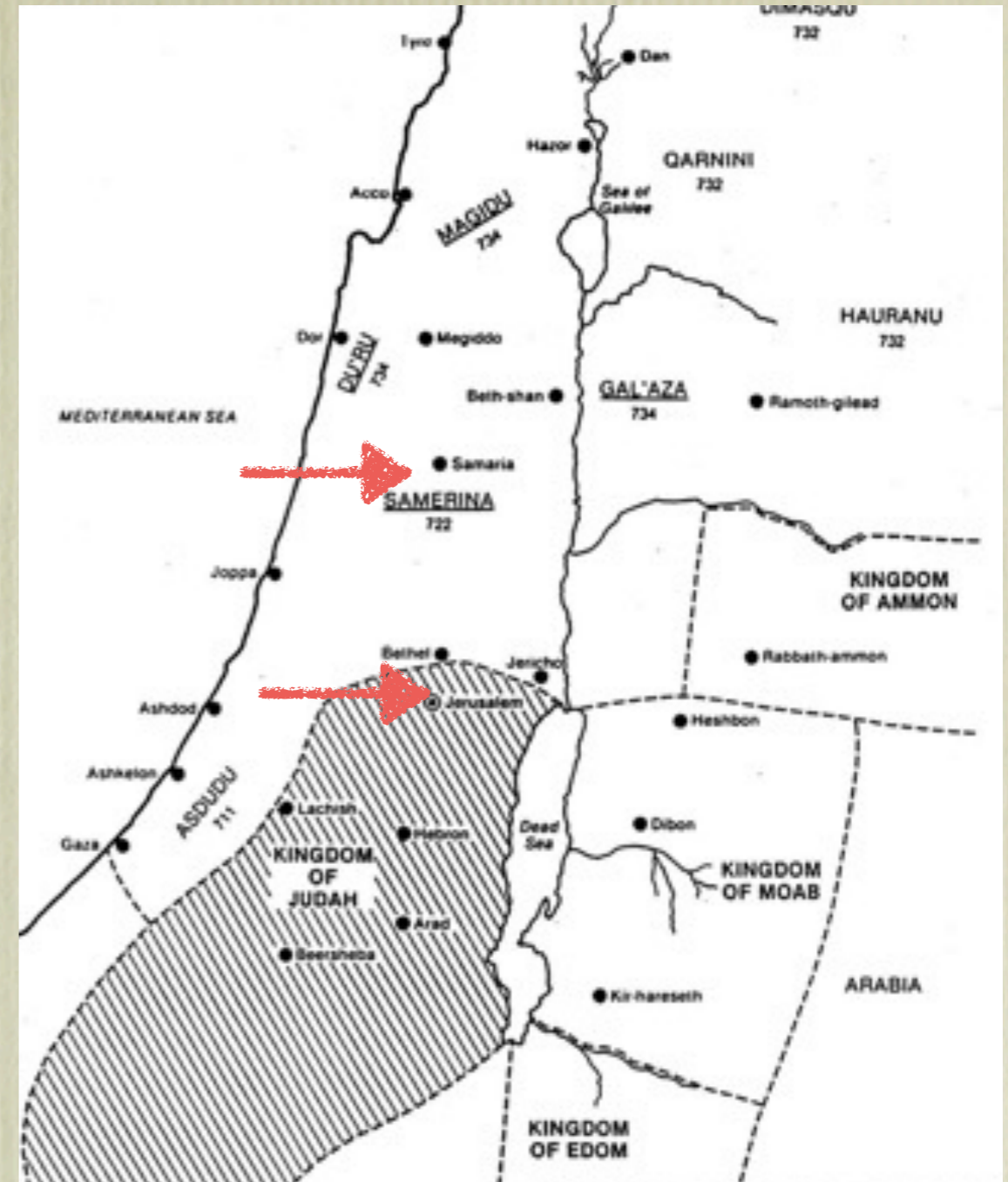
It was during the reign of Hezekiah in Judah (727-699BC), but before he was old enough to rule in his own right (715BC), that the Assyrian army captured **Samaria** (721BC). Refugees from the northern kingdom (Israel) poured into Jerusalem, which had to expand to the western hill.

‘The city’s population may have increased as much as fifteen times, from about one thousand to fifteen thousand inhabitants’ (Finkelstein & Silberman *Unearthing the Bible*, page 243).

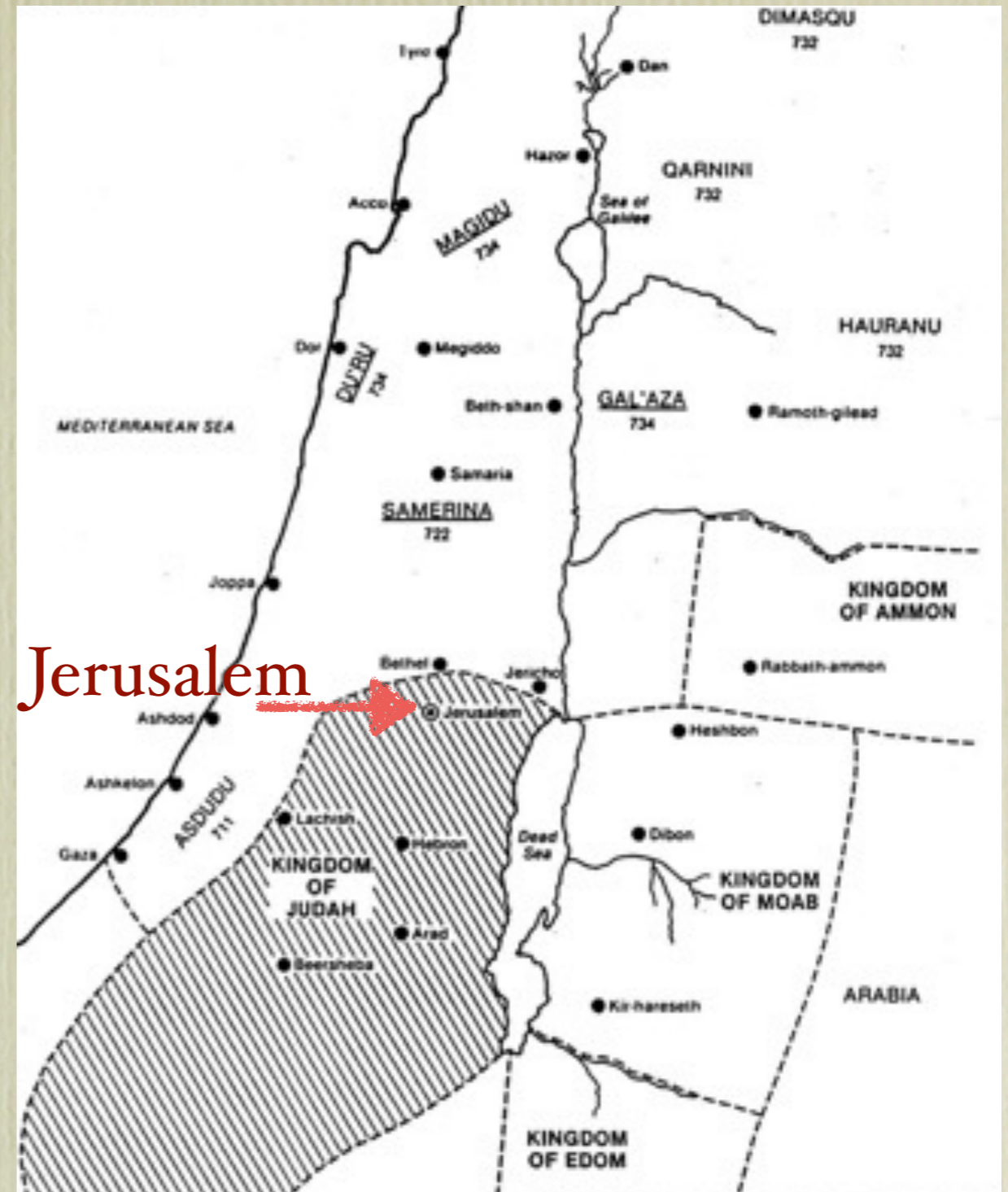


‘The population of Judah, which had long hovered at a few tens of thousands, now grew to around 120,000’ (F&S page 245).

It was during the reign of King Hezekiah (727/715 - 699) that the Assyrian army put down a revolt by the Philistine city-state of Ashdod (713-711). Sennacherib succeeded Sargon II in 705. The death of Sargon led to revolts in every section of the Assyrian Empire. Hezekiah seems to have played a significant role in organising rebellion in Palestine. The prophet **Isaiah** ben Amoz was active in attempting to deter him from a policy which he saw as a failure to trust in YHWH. Hezekiah went ahead and Judah was devastated by the Assyrian army in 701.



Though Judah was devastated in 701, Jerusalem itself survived intact. The tribute demanded by Assyria was to weigh heavily on Judah for the first seventy years of the seventh century.

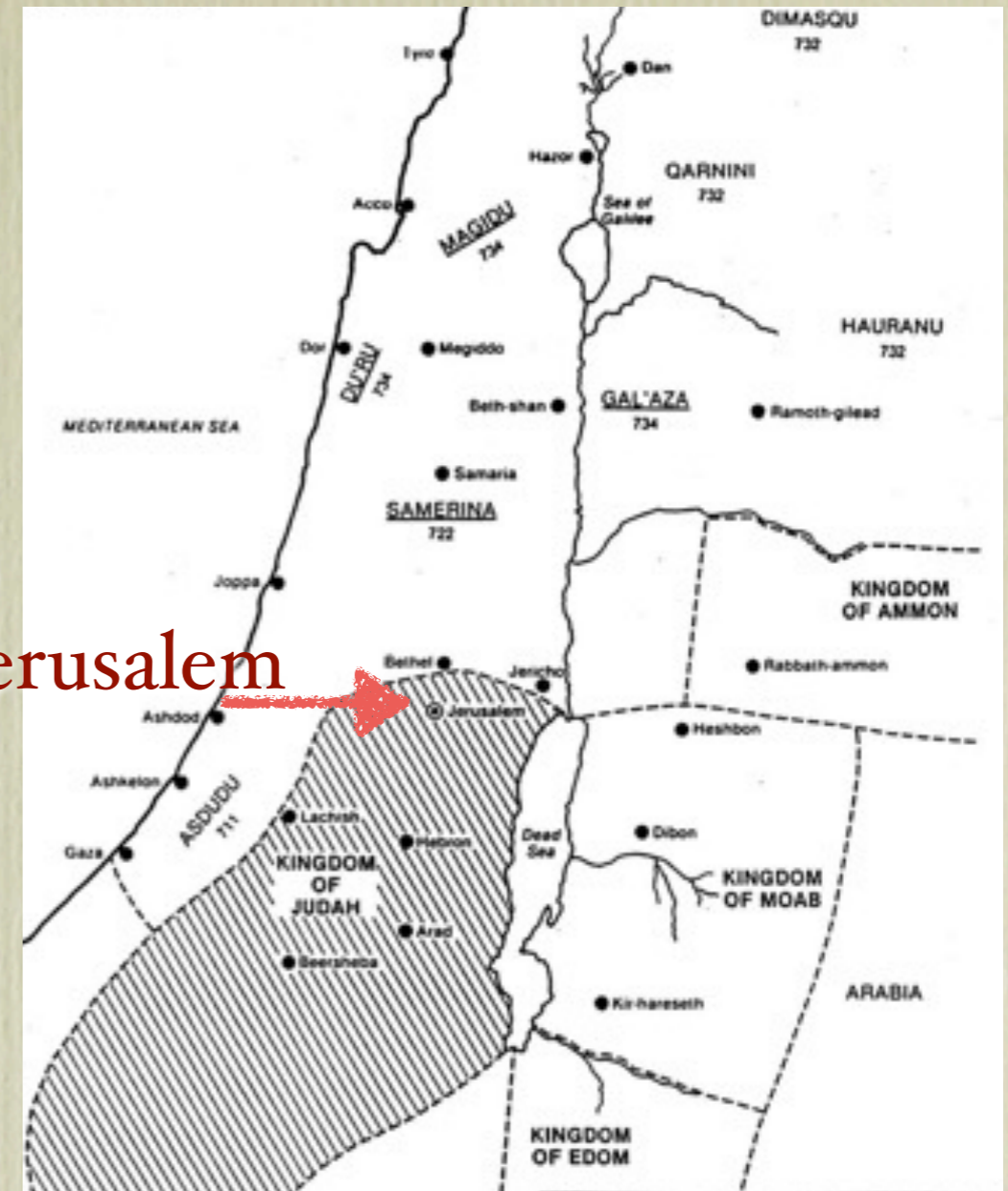


III. No writings in the period of relative stability when Judah was a vassal kingdom in the Assyrian Empire, during the reigns of Manasseh (698-643) and Amon (642-641)

Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, came to the throne as a boy of 12 in 698 and reigned till 643. He had no choice but to submit to being a vassal of the Assyrian king. There would have been those in Judah, probably including priests from the smaller sanctuaries, who blamed Hezekiah for the way things turned out, and many welcomed Manasseh's long reign. Things fell apart religiously (see 2Kings 21:5-16), but because he was a loyal vassal of the powerful Assyrian king there was peace in Judah and growing economic prosperity.

In 641 Manasseh's son, Amon, was assassinated. Amon's eight-year old son, Josiah, inherited the throne. Josiah's twelfth year as king was the year of the death of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria (628). Josiah seized the opportunity to throw off the vassalage that had kept Judah subject to Assyria for a century. He was determined to win back for Judah the northern kingdom and the land that tradition said was promised Israel by YHWH.

Jerusalem



The Exodus saga and the Deuteronomistic 'History' reflects the ideology of Josiah.

(Population of Campbelltown in 2017 160,000)

‘The population of Judah probably did not exceed 75,000, (down from c. 120,000 before the devastation of 701), with relatively dense occupation of the rural areas in the Judean hill country, a network of settlements in the arid zones of the east and south, and a relatively sparse population in the Shephelah. It was in many ways a densely settled city-state as the capital held about 20% of the population. Urban life in Jerusalem reached a peak that would be equaled only in Roman times. The state was well organised and highly centralised as in the time of Manasseh. But in terms of its religious development and literary expression of national identity, the era of Josiah marked a dramatic new stage in Judah’s history’ (Finkelstein & Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, page 289).

Josiah insisted that all cult had to take place in the Jerusalem Temple, and nowhere else. This centralising of the cult was the single most influential change brought about by Josiah's reform. It is backed up again and again in Deuteronomy, and accounts for many changes that dramatically affected the way worship was carried out in Judah. Things would never be the same again.

Josiah cleared Judah of cult sites, and expanded the borders in every direction. This was possible because Egypt was still not strong, and Assyria was fighting a losing battle with Babylon and with the Medes.



- The Torah and the Deuteronomistic History were composed, for the most part, in Jerusalem (the writing continued in Exile). The state of Judah was sufficiently complex and organised for such a project only with the influx of refugees from Israel after 720BC. Some written material was brought down from Samaria which was founded by king Omri (died 873) and which experienced unprecedented prosperity under Jeroboam II (788-747). The Patriarchal narrative and the Deuteronomistic History express the religious convictions and political ambitions of Judah under king Josiah (639-609).

IV. Prophetic Oracles in Judah from 628 to 587

King Josiah (640-609)

01. The Prophet Zephaniah (628-620)

02. The Prophet Nahum (620-612)

04. The Prophet Jeremiah (627-587)

King Jehoiakim (609-598. Son of Josiah)

03. The Prophet Habakkuk (605-590)

04. The Prophet Jeremiah (627-587)

King Jehoiachin (597. Son of Jehoiakim)

Capture of Jerusalem & Exile in Babylon (597-538)

King Zedekiah (597-587. Son of Josiah)

04. The Prophet Jeremiah (627-587)

Jeremiah 1:1-2

The words of Jeremiah (May YHWH lift up?) son of Hilkiah,
of the priests who were in Anathoth (4ks NE of Jerusalem)
in the land of Benjamin,

Abiathar, the last chief priest of Eli's family, was exiled to his estate at Anathoth for having supported a rival of Solomon (see 1 Kings 2:26).

to whom the word of YHWH came in the days of King Josiah
son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. [627]

King Josiah began his reign	640
Death of Ashurbanipal of Assyria	628
'Thirteenth year'	627
Reform	622
Killed by Pharaoh Necho	609

Jeremiah 1:3

The word of God came to Jeremiah also in the days of
King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah

Began his reign 609

Battle of Carchemish 605

(Babylonian army victorious over Assyria and Egypt)

Egypt defeats the Babylonians 601

(Chaldaeian, Aramaean, Moabite and Ammonite forces
ravaged Judah (see 2 Kings 24:2).

Died during siege of Jerusalem 598

and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah
of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

Began his reign 597

Organises an anti-Babylonian coalition 594

Killed 586